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FM HARARE

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 068

OF 260800Z FEBRUARY 86

INFO IMMEDIATE LUSAKA

INFO PRIORITY PRETORIA, CAPE TOWN, GABORONE, MASERU, DAR ES SALAAM

INFO PRIORITY LAGOS, NEW DELHI, CANBERRA, OTTAWA

PRETORIA TELNO 8 TO FCO: COMMONWEALTH GROUP

SUMMARY

1. FIVE OF THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP MET PRIME MINISTER MUGABE FOR A FRIENDLY AND MODERATE DISCUSSION OF THE GROUP'S ACTIVITIES AND PROSPECTS. NOTHING ELSE HAS BEEN ARRANGED HERE.

DETAIL

2. THE FIVE COMGEP MEMBERS IN TUR (ABSENTEES BEING OBASANJO, CURRENTLY IN THE US, AND SWARAN SINGH, WHO MAY NOT JOIN GROUP UNTIL JOHANNESBURG) AND SUPPORTING STAFF ARRIVED AT HARARE YESTERD AFTERNOON. RAMPHAL AND ANYAOKU JOINED THEM HERE AFTER OVERNIGHT FLIGHT FROM LONDON. THEIR ONLY OFFICIAL ENGAGEMENT WAS A CALL ON PRIME MINISTER MUGABE IN MID-AFTERNOON. ZIMBABWEANS HAVE PROVIDED NO ENTERTAINMENT. THE GROUP LEAVE TODAY FOR VICTORIA FALLS, WHERE THEY WILL SPEND THE NIGHT, AND THEN ON TO LUSAKA TOMORROW.

3. LORD BARBER TOLD ME YESTERDAY EVENING IN CONFIDENCE (PLEASE PROTECT) THAT IN THEIR HOUR'S DISCUSSION MUGABE HAD BEEN FRIENDLY, SUPPORTIVE OF COMGEP, UNCRITICAL OF BRITAIN'S SOUTHERN AFRICAN POLICY AND GENERALLY MODERATE AND RESTRAINED. MUGABE SAID HE ACCEPTED IMPORTANCE OF THE MISSION AND WISHED THEM WELL IN THEIR DIFFICULT TASKS. MALACELA MENTIONED UDF'S DOUBTS ABOUT THE COMGEP ON THE SPECIFIC GROUNDS THAT THE GROUP WAS A BRITISH CREATURE INVENTED AT NASSAU. MUGABE SAID THAT ON THE CONTRARY IT WAS THE COMMONWEALTH, NOT BRITAIN, THAT HAD ESTABLISHED THE GROUP. MUGABE WENT ON TO SAY THAT, WHEN TAMBO WAS HERE A FEW WEEKS AGO, HE HAD BEEN DISCOURAGING ABOUT THE GROUP BUT HAD BEEN CHIDED BY MUGABE AS BEING TOO PESSIMISTIC. THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSION THERE WAS NO MENTION OF SANCTIONS, OF THE ACCEPTABILITY OF THE USE OF VIOLENCE TO TAKE OVER POWER OR OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF NO PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE BY THE END OF JUNE. LORD BARBER SAID HE HAD BEEN SURPRISED AND ENCOURAGED BY MUGABE'S LOW-KEY AND SENSIBLE ATTITUDE.

COMMENT

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4. MUGABE'S APPARENT CHANGE OF HEART ON THE COMGEP REPORTED IN MY TELNO 53 SEEMS TO BE STILL IN PLACE. WHATEVER HIS MOTIVE THIS CAN ONLY BE USEFUL.

MELHUISH

YYYY

HGHPAN 1100

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