

GRS 280
CONFIDENTIAL
FM NEW DELHI 150530Z MAY 85
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 616 OF 15 MAY 1985
INFO PRIORITY ODA, DTI

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Mo

WESTLANDS: TACTICS

SUMMARY.

1. RECOMMENDATION THAT WE SIT TIGHT FOR THE TIME BEING, DESPITE LACK OF INDIAN RESPONSE.

DETAIL

2. WHEN GANDHI'S PRIVATE SECRETARIES SAW ME ON HIS BEHALF ON 3 MAY (MY TELNO 577) THEY MADE CLEAR THAT THIS WAS THE INDIAN RESPONSE TO MY INSTRUCTIONS TO SEEK A CALL ON HIM. THEY ALSO PROMISED, AS THE NEXT MOVE, TO COME BACK TO US WITHIN ABOUT A WEEK. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THEY HAVEN'T.

3. WE THEREFORE NEED TO CONSIDER
(A) WHETHER TO CHASE THEM:
(B) WHETHER TO RENEW MY REQUEST FOR A CALL ON THE PM.

I RECOMMEND THAT FOR THE TIME BEING WE DO NEITHER.

4. WE ARE UNLIKELY TO SUCCEED WITH (B), GIVEN GANDHI'S CURRENT PREOCCUPATION WITH THE PUNJAB AND HIS IMPENDING TRAVELS TO MOSCOW AND (LATER) ELSEWHERE. EVEN IF I DID SEE HIM, HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON 2 AND 4 MAY MAKE IT UNLIKELY THAT THE MEETING WOULD BE PRODUCTIVE.

5. IF WE DO NOTHING ABOUT (A), IT MAY WELL BE A LONG TIME BEFORE WE HEAR ANYTHING MORE, EXCEPT INDIRECTLY. BUT PRESSURE FOR A RESPONSE BEFORE THEY ARE READY IS UNLIKELY TO PRODUCE ANYTHING SATISFACTORY AND SEEMS CERTAIN TO PUT INDIAN BACKS UP. MORE POSITIVELY, THE ONLY FAINT CHANCE I SEE OF ALTERING THE PM'S CURRENT ATTITUDE IS TO ALLOW HIM AND HIS ADVISERS PLENTY OF TIME FOR REFLECTION ON THE REASONABLENESS OF OUR CASE AND ON THE DIFFICULTY OF FINDING REASONABLE ANSWERS TO IT: AND PERHAPS ALSO FOR MAKING PROGRESS TOWARDS THE FORMATION OF A HELICOPTER CORPORATION, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND IS WHAT THEY INTEND. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THIS CORPORATION WILL OWN AND OPERATE WHATEVER HELICOPTERS ARE BOUGHT FOR OFFSHORE OIL USE, AS WELL AS OTHERS BOUGHT FOR OTHER CIVIL PURPOSES: AND THAT THE FINAL DECISION ON W30 MAY NOW BE POSTPONED UNTIL THE CORPORATION HAS RE-EVALUATED ALL THE OPTIONS

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6. AS SEEN FROM HERE, THE ONLY DISADVANTAGES TO US IN SITTING TIGHT ARE (I) WHAT WESTALNDS MAY NOT RELISH PROLONGING THE AGONY: AND (II) THAT IF THE GOI DELAY TOO LANG IN FORMALLY TELLING US THEY DO NOT WANT HELICOPTERS, WE MAY RUN OUT OF TIME IN WHICH TO SPEND IN THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR EVEN THE REDUCED VOLUME OF AID PROPOSED IN MY TELNO 607. BUT I ASSUME THAT NEITHER OF THESE CONSIDERATIONS IS LIKELY TO BECOME COMPELLING BEFORE, SAY, THE END OF JUNE.

7. GRATEFUL FOR INSTRUCTIONS.

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