

SECRET

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GRS 460
SECRET

DESKBY 290330Z
FM FCO 281915Z JULY 83
TO IMMEDIATE COLOMBO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 144 OF 28 JULY
INFO PRIORITY NEW DELHI, KATHMANDU
INFO MODUK (DS11 AND DI4C AND DEPUTY CDS).
YOUR TELEGRAM NO 183 (NOT TO ALL): SRI LANKA: POSSIBLE REQUEST
FOR MILITARY AID

1. AS YOU SURMISE A FORMAL REQUEST FROM THE SRI LANKANS FOR US TO PROVIDE GURKHA TROOPS FROM HONG KONG WOULD PRESENT SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE DO NOT WANT TO APPEAR TO REBUFF THE SRI LANKANS UNDULY AT SUCH A DIFFICULT TIME AND IN VIEW OF PAST HELP THEY HAVE GIVEN US, EG THEIR UN VOTE ON THE FALKLANDS. WE SEE ADVANTAGE IN YOUR TAKING ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO FORESTALL FURTHER PRESSURE AND PREVENT POSSIBLE LEAKS (IF HAMEED'S INTEREST IS IN THE DETERRENT VALUE OF THE GURKHAS, HE MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO LEAK HIS APPROACH TO US).
2. ALTHOUGH HAMEED REFERRED SPECIFICALLY TO THE GURKHAS (ON WHOM SEE BELOW) HE ALSO REFERRED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF OTHER ARMY UNITS AS WELL. IT IS IMPORTANT IN GIVING OUR NEGATIVE ANSWER TO PREEMPT AS FAR AS POSSIBLE FURTHER UNACCEPTABLE SRI LANKAN REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE. (YOUR ANSWER WILL ALSO BE A CONVENIENT OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE KNOWN OUR CONCERN OVER CURRENT EVENTS IN A CONVENIENTLY INDIRECT WAY.) YOU SHOULD THEREFORE MAKE CLEAR TO HAMEED THAT QUITE APART FROM THE CURRENT STRAIN ON OUR MILITARY RESOURCES WORLDWIDE, EXACERBATED BY THE FALKLANDS, WHICH MAKES ADDITIONAL COMMITMENTS VERY DIFFICULT INDEED TO CONTEMPLATE, IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR US, NOT LEAST IN PRESS AND PARLIAMENTARY TERMS, TO PLACE BRITISH TROOPS IN THE MIDDLE OF INTER-COMMUNAL STRIFE OF THE SORT THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE. MOREOVER, THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL SRI LANKAN COMMUNITY IN THIS COUNTRY INCLUDING TAMILS WHO ARE NATURALLY FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENTS

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WITH THE CLOSEST ATTENTION. WE DO NOT WISH TO INFLUENCE EMOTIONS HERE. THERE IS ALSO THE INDIAN DIMENSION (DELHI TELNO 505), ALTHOUGH YOU MAY THINK IT BEST TO LEAVE THIS OUT.

3. AS FAR AS THE GURKHAS ARE CONCERNED, WE ARE IN ANY CASE EXCLUDED FROM USING THEM BY THE 1947 TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT ON GURKHA RECRUITMENT (UK, INDIA AND NEPAL) WHICH CONTAINS AN EXCLUSION CLAUSE THAT GURKHAS MAY NOT BE USED AGAINST UNARMED HINDU MOBS. SINCE THE TAMILS ARE LARGELY HINDU, THE GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE WHOLLY OPPOSED TO THE USE OF GURKHAS AND MIGHT WELL HOLD US TO OUR AGREEMENT. THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD BE NO LESS OPPOSED.

4. THE TERMS OF THE TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT ARE CONFIDENTIAL AND WE WOULD NOT WISH TO DISCLOSE THEM NOW, BUT YOU SHOULD SAY TO HAMEED ON THE GURKHAS ONLY THAT WHILE WE HAVE GREAT SYMPATHY FOR THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT IN THEIR PRESENT PREDICAMENT WE ARE PRECLUDED BY THE TERMS OF OUR CONFIDENTIAL AGREEMENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL GOVERNING GURKHA RECRUITMENT FROM PROVIDING GURKHA TROOPS IF REQUESTED IN THIS CASE.

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