

IMMEDIATE

S (6)  
 PS/SIR I GILMOUR (3)  
 PS/MR HURD  
 PS/PUS  
~~SECRET~~  
 MR J C MOBBLEY  
 LORD BRIDGES  
 LORD H G LENNOX  
 MR EVANS

~~MISS BROWN~~ *No Brantwhite*

HD/LED  
 HD/EPD  
 HD/REHAD  
 HD/URD (2)  
 HD/DEF DEPT  
 HD/WAD  
 HD/ES & SD (2)  
 HD/PUSD (2)  
 HD/NETS DEPT  
 HD/BCD (E)  
 HD/CCNS DEPT  
 RESIDENT CLERK

PS NO 10 DOWNING ST ✓  
 SIR R ARMSTRONG )  
 ASSESSMENTS STAFF ) CABINET  
 MR R WADE GERY ) OFFICE  
 MR LE CHEMINANT )  
 MR W N WERBAN SMITH )  
 DIO )

MR R WILLIAMS CRE5 DOT  
 MR W <sup>J. LAMES</sup> WENTHROP DEPT OF TRADE  
 MR C BENJAMIN DOI  
 MR D LE B JONES ) DEPT OF  
 MR C LUCAS ) ENERGY

CONFIDENTIAL

FM BRITISH INTERESTS SECTION TEHRAN 311056Z  
 TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
 TELEGRAM NO 383 OF 31 AUGUST 81.  
 INFO PRIORITY BAGHDAD, WASHINGTON AND STOCKHOLM.

ASSASSINATION OF IRANIAN PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER.

1. AS REPORTED BY NEWS SERVICES WORLDWIDE, PRESIDENT RAJAI, THE PRIME MINISTER DR BAHONAR, AND AT LEAST ONE MEMBER OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S STAFF WERE KILLED IN A BOMB EXPLOSION AT THE PRIME MINISTRY IN CENTRAL TEHRAN YESTERDAY AFTERNOON (30 AUGUST). THEIR FUNERALS WERE HELD THIS MORNING WITHOUT INCIDENT. PUBLIC OFFICES ARE CLOSED FOR THE DAY AND OFFICIAL MOURNING WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE END OF THE WEEK. THE CITY HAS A STUNNED AIR.

2. IT IS REPORTED THAT THE EXPLOSION TOOK PLACE DURING A MEETING OF THE SUPREME DEFENCE COUNCIL AND THAT ONE OR TWO OTHER MINISTERS, INCLUDING THE NEW DEFENCE MINISTER, WERE ALSO KILLED, BUT THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION OF THIS. AN EMERGENCY SESSION OF THE CABINET WAS HELD LAST EVENING AT WHICH THE PRESIDENT OF THE MAJLES, RAFSANJANI, WAS PRESENT. THEY TOOK UNSPECIFIED SPECIAL MEASURES, NO DOUBT TO INTENSIFY SECURITY. APART FROM KHOMEINI HIMSELF,

DOUBT TO INTENSIFY SECURITY. APART FROM KHOMEINI HIMSELF, RAFSANJANI IS NOW PERHAPS THE MOST PUBLICLY PROMINENT AND INFLUENTIAL LEADER OF THE REGIME. HE AND OTHERS HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR DETERMINATION THAT DESPITE THE MARTYRDOM OF THEIR FELLOWS THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION SHOULD CONTINUE.

3. THE PRESIDENCY HAS BEEN ASSUMED BY A THREE-MAN PROVISIONAL COUNCIL COMPRISING RAFSANJANI, AYATOLLAH ARDEBILI (PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT) AND ONE OTHER. IT WOULD NORMALLY BE THE PRIME MINISTER AND IT IS NOT CLEAR WHO IS TAKING THIS PLACE ; THERE WAS NO OFFICIAL DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER. ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTION A NEW PRESIDENT SHOULD BE ELECTED WITHIN 50 DAYS AND HE MUST THEN NOMINATE THE PRIME MINISTER. WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THE PROVISIONAL COUNCIL CAN SHORT-CIRCUIT THIS BY NOMINATING A PRIME MINISTER THEMSELVES.

4. NO GROUP HERE HAS AS YET CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EXPLOSION, FOR WHICH THE AUTHORITIES ARE PREDICTABLY BLAMING AGENTS OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM. THE MOJAHEDIN-E KHALQ MUST BE CONSIDERED PRIME CANDIDATES. WE BELIEVE THEY HAVE THE CAPACITY TO MOUNT SUCH A SOPHISTICATED OPERATION THOUGH IT BEARS LITTLE RELATION TO THE RECENT OFTEN AMATEURISH ATTACKS ON RELIGIOUS FIGURES. THE LATTER WERE PROBABLY CARRIED OUT BY FRINGE MOJAHEDIN MILITIA, WHEREAS THE BOMBING OPERATION WOULD SEEM TO HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY PLANNED BY HARD-CORE ELEMENTS. THE STRONG MODERN BUILDING WAS RIPPED APART AND IT IS REPORTED THAT BODIES WERE UNRECOGNISABLE. IT COULD HAVE BEEN NO EASY TASK TO INFILTRATE SUCH A CHARGE OF EXPLOSIVES INTO A TOP LEVEL MINISTERIAL MEETING.

5. FOLLOWING THE EARLIER EXPLOSION AT THE IRP HEADQUARTERS IN JUNE, THIS INCIDENT HAS DEMONSTRATED THE CURRENT IRANIAN LEADERSHIP'S CONTINUED INABILITY TO PREVENT OPPONENTS PENETRATING ITS INNER COUNCILS. THE VACANT POST WILL NO DOUBT BE FILLED IN DUE COURSE, THOUGH THE QUEUE OF VOLUNTEERS MAY NOT BE A VERY LONG ONE. BUT THERE WILL BE A DANGER OF THE REGIME LOSING CREDIBILITY IF THE NEXT APPOINTEES ARE ALSO STRUCK DOWN. THE MAJORITY VIEW OF EXPERIENCED OBSERVERS HERE IS THAT THE REGIME IS STRONG ENOUGH TO MAINTAIN CONTROL DESPITE SUCH EVENTS. THE MULLAHS AND THEIR RELIGIOUS SUPPORTERS HAVE THEIR BACKS TO THE WALL AND HAVE A STRONG VESTED INTEREST IN MAINTAINING REPRESSION AND CONTROL. OPPOSITION ELEMENTS THEMSELVES SEEM, FROM WHAT WE KNOW OF THEIR VIEWS, TO BE THINKING MORE IN TERM OF A GRADUAL EROSION OF SUPPORT FOR THE REGIME IN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS TO ONE YEAR FOLLOWING A MARKED DETERIORATION IN THE ECONOMIC SITUATION. BUT EXCEPT FOR SOME SECTIONS OF

THE NEXT SIX MONTHS TO ONE YEAR FOLLOWING A MARKED DETERIORATION IN THE ECONOMIC SITUATION. BUT EXCEPT FOR SOME SECTIONS OF THE LOWER INCOME GROUPS THE REGIME SEEMS TO ME NOW TO BE INTENSELY UNPOPULAR AND I WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED AT ANY CONVULSIONS WHICH MIGHT TAKE PLACE.

6. IN THE MEANTIME, THE PROCESS OF BUILDING A STABLE GOVERNMENT CAPABLE OF TAKING DECISIONS HAS ONCE AGAIN BEEN INTERRUPTED, WHICH MEANS WE CAN EXPECT LITTLE MOVEMENT ON MATTERS AFFECTING OUR OWN INTERESTS.

BARRINGTON.

AD (2)  
DEPT DEPT  
AD  
NNNS & SD (2)  
PUSD (2)  
NEWS DEPT  
OCD (E)  
OCS DEPT  
RESIDENT CLERK

MR R WILLIAMS CREB  
MR W. DEPT CE. 4  
MR C BENJAMIN DOI  
MR D LE B JONES ) DEPT C  
MR C LUCAS ) EMBE