

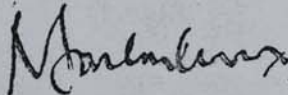
PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

PS/PUS

cc: Private Secretary

MR MARK THATCHER

1. I attach a minute recording action taken by the FCO in support of the search for Mr M Thatcher up to noon today. It was written before the unconfirmed reports that Mr Thatcher has been spotted. But since these may take some time to confirm, I see merit in issuing the report as it stands, to be supplemented later if necessary.
2. It is clearly right for NENAD to have been placed in charge of this operation, and that this should continue for its duration. I do not believe that any more elaborate structure to deal with the situation is necessary, beyond the measures referred to in paragraph 10 of the report. It is quite clear to me that Mr Howarth has done a very professional job in coordinating operations in the last two days.



Lord N Gordon Lennox

14 January 1982

CONFIDENTIAL

PS/PUS

cc: Private Secretary
PS/LPS
PS/Mr Hurd
Mr Wright
Mr J Moberly

Mr Miles o.r.
WAD
Defence Dept
Consular Dept
News Dept
Mr Harding (DSS MOD)

MR MARK THATCHER

1. This minute records action taken by the FCO (and the MOD) in support of the efforts to find Mr M Thatcher. It represents the situation at noon today, 14 January. There have since been further developments, reported to those concerned separately.

2. The last confirmed sighting of Mr M Thatcher was by Swiss rally driver Michel Bosi on Friday, 8 January at approximately 70 kms North East of Timeiaouine. Mr Thatcher's car had reportedly broken down (reports of the cause and of whether or not there is a mechanic in addition to Mr Thatcher's co-driver are conflicting). According to the rally search supervisor, Mr Sabine, four search vehicles reached the point where Mr Bosi had left Mr Thatcher on Tuesday, 12 January, but the car was no longer there. There have been no confirmed sightings since.

3. Unconfirmed reports include:

(a) Two 'missing' persons had been recovered (AFP, 13 January)

(b) Mr Thatcher's car and co-driver located, but Mr Thatcher himself missing (Times Correspondent Paris, 13 January).

(c) Vehicle sought and persons answering to description of Mr Thatcher and companions crossed into Mali on 12 January via Irharen en route towards Gao. (Unspecified officials at the Algerian/Mali frontier, 13 January).

(d) There is no evidence (see press speculation) that the Polisario or the Libyans are involved in Mr Thatcher's disappearance.

4. Mr Denis Thatcher, accompanied by HM Ambassador Algiers, our Vice-Consul, and an Algerian Genarmarie liaison officer are in Tamanrasset where the Algerian search and rescue operation is based. The Algerians have undertaken to set up a telex link from Tamanrasset to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Algiers to which Mr D Thatcher and HMA would have access.

/5.

CONFIDENTIAL

5. The Algerians, French and Malian authorities are all cooperating fully.

(a) The Algerians have committed four aircraft (one equipped for aerial survey) and one helicopter with medical equipment and supplies on board, in addition to land forces.

(b) The French have three aircraft based in Gao searching the area between Bamako and Gao and between Gao and the Algerian frontier. The French are in touch with the Algerian authorities in order to allow French aircraft to conduct searches in Algeria.

(c) The French Charge d'Affaires in Bamako has conveyed HMG's concern to the Malian Foreign Minister, who has promised to take early action. It has since been confirmed that the Governor of Gao and his authorities have been alerted and are joining in the search.

(d) The rally organisers are themselves searching.

6. Our other personnel in the area (apart from our posts in Dakar and Algiers) are as follows: Miss Coombe, Second Secretary, Chancery, Dakar, is with one of the French aircraft at Gao, and Mr Richard White, also of the Embassy in Dakar, should now be in Bamako in order to keep in close touch with the Malian and French authorities there.

7. The MOD have already diverted an RAF Hercules en route from UK to Dakar (on routine business), to Gibraltar where it picked up rescue packs. The MOD are now sending the aircraft on to Dakar where it will stand by in case of need. The MOD are also consulting No 10 on the possibility of using a Canberra aircraft for aerial reconnaissance over the area. The MOD also considered, but for operational reasons, rejected the use of a Nimrod. But no decision has been taken by No 10 on whether the Hercules or the Canberra should be used. The MOD have pointed out that if either of the aircraft are used in response to an Algerian or Malian request for assistance, no costs will have to be charged.

8. We consulted HM Embassies in Algiers and Dakar on 13 January on likely Algerian and Malian reactions to a UK offer to help. Algiers reported that it would be best to await the scale and effectiveness of Algerian operations before making an offer. Dakar thought it best to leave efforts to the French for 24 hours and only consider UK assistance if it became clear that Mr Thatcher was not in the area now being searched.

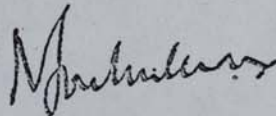
9. For the present it is not clear what further can be done except to await the results of today's search and decide in the light of developments whether to make an offer of assistance to Algeria and Mali.

CONFIDENTIAL

3

10. A group of interested FCO Departments (NENAD, WAD, Consular, News and Defence Departments) met under Lord N Gordon Lennox (AUSS) this morning to discuss this report, which has been drafted by Mr Howarth (NENAD). They agreed that NENAD would remain operationally in charge of this matter within the FCO, reporting regularly to Lord N Gordon Lennox who would convene further interdepartmental meetings as necessary. No more elaborate structure seems at present needed. The meeting also discussed and approved guidance for News Department. They agreed that HM Ambassador in Dakar, at present in Banjul, should be asked to return to Dakar as soon as possible.

11. Since the above was drafted, there have been unconfirmed reports that Mr M Thatcher has been found.



Lord N Gordon Lennox

14 January 1982

CONFIDENTIAL