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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH



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12 August 1980

Prime Minister

Dear Mike,

Namibia

As Canningham mentioned to you the continuing difficulties in Namibia. Here is a summary

You have asked to be brought up to date on Namibia. *of the position.*

On 20 June the UN Secretary General replied to a South African message of 12 May raising various points about the UN plan. The South African reply to Dr Waldheim's letter is now awaited. From the soundings which we and the Americans have taken, we expect the South African reply to state a number of assumptions about the implementation of the UN plan, leaving it to Dr Waldheim to challenge them if necessary. We do not judge that the South Africans are yet ready to make a firm commitment to a date for the cease-fire and implementation of the UN plan. Mr P W Botha's domestic problems make it unlikely that he would wish to add to them at present by a controversial decision to go ahead with UN-supervised elections in Namibia. In particular the South Africans would like the main internal party in Namibia to have more time to try to gain support in the country before facing SWAPO at the polls.

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The Front Line States continue to show interest in a peaceful settlement under the UN plan. They would like to see the Five put more pressure on South Africa but seem to recognise that the South Africans are unlikely to make any major move towards agreement before the latter part of the year. However, if the South African reply now awaited shows no progress towards agreement, the temperature at the United Nations will rise with the beginning of the General Assembly in September. There will be increasingly strident demands for a positive decision by the South Africans or for punitive action against them if by the end of the year they still persist in refusing to agree to implement the UN plan.

The South Africans carried out large scale raids on SWAPO targets in Angola in June and a further raid in the last few days of July, causing Angolan as well as SWAPO casualties and the destruction of some Angolan Government buildings as well as SWAPO installations. The South Africans justified the raid as a response to a smaller-scale attack across the border into Namibia by SWAPO.

/The Five

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The Five have been concerned about the steady growth in numbers of locally raised forces in Namibia and raised this question with the South African Government a few days ago. The South Africans assured the Five that arrangements for handling the internal forces would not be inconsistent with the UN plan.

There has been some difference of opinion between Britain and our partners in the Five over the desirability of direct talks between SWAPO and the South Africans and of an all parties conference on Namibia, in which the South Africans, the Front Line States and SWAPO have all expressed interest but with widely varying ideas about scope, objectives and composition. Our view is that talks or a conference might be useful in helping to buy time until the South Africans are more likely to agree to implementation of the UN plan. They might also secure greater international recognition of the internal parties as being on the same footing as SWAPO. The rest of the Five, particularly the Americans, tend to regard any idea of talks or a conference as a delaying tactic by the South Africans which could even lead to the collapse of the Namibia negotiations. However, our partners have now conceded that if the Front Line States, SWAPO and the South Africans remain genuinely interested in the idea of talks and in an eventual conference it is not for the Five to try to stop them.

Discussion in the Five currently centres on possible action with the South Africans and the United Nations over the South African reply and what further assurances could be given to persuade the South Africans to agree to implementation.

yours ever
Roderic Lyne

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Private Secretary

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