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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 2233 OF 27 NOVEMBER 80

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MS

Read in full. I am
sure we should try to meet
the military requirement.

MIPT : MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ZIMBABWE

1. THE ZIMBABWEANS WILL LOOK TO US TO HELP THEM MAKE A SUCCESS OF THE NEW PLAN: MUGABE HAS ASKED GENERAL PALMER ON 26 NOVEMBER WHETHER WE CAN PROVIDE ADDITIONAL TRAINING ASSISTANCE. HE SAID THAT HE HAD RECEIVED NO REPLY FROM THE NIGERIANS TO HIS REQUEST FOR TRAINERS, AND THOUGHT THAT THEY SHOULD NOT BE COUNTED ON FOR THE NEW PROGRAMME.

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2. THE ROLE OF BMATT HAS BEEN CRUCIAL IN ALL THAT HAS SO FAR BEEN ACHIEVED BY WAY OF AMALGAMATION AND THE BATTALIONS OF THE NATIONAL ARMY FORMED UNDER THEIR TUTELAGE HAVE GIVEN GOOD ACCOUNT OF THEMSELVES IN RECENT DISTURBANCES. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT WITHOUT OUR INVOLVEMENT AND ASSISTANCE THE AMALGAMATION EXERCISE WOULD HAVE GROUND TO A HALT LONG AGO, WITH ALL THE CONSEQUENT DANGERS FOR EVERYTHING ELSE THAT WE ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE IN AND FOR ZIMBABWE. A PARTICULARLY CRUCIAL ROLE HAS BEEN PLAYED BY THE TRAINING CO-ORDINATOR TEAMS OF ONE OFFICER AND ONE WARRANT OFFICER WHICH ARE ATTACHED TO EACH NEW BATTALION AS IT IS FORMED. THEIR NOTIONAL ROLE IS MERELY TO ADVISE ON WORK UP TRAINING, BUT IN PRACTICE THEY DO FAR MORE THAN THAT AND WITHOUT THEM THE NEW BATTALIONS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE COME APART AT THE SEAMS: AFTER A CRASH BASIC TRAINING COURSE THEY STILL HAVE VERY LITTLE IDEA ABOUT HOW TO ORGANISE THEMSELVES AND SURVIVE AS AN ELEMENT OF A REGULAR ARMY.

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3. ONCE THE ZIMBABWEANS HAVE FIRMED UP THEIR NEW PLAN, GENERAL PALMER WILL BE REPORTING TO THE MOD ON THE PRECISE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF BMATT. WHAT IS CLEAR ALREADY IS THAT, IF WE ARE TO RESPOND TO MUGABE'S REQUEST, WE SHALL NOT BE ABLE TO RUN DOWN THE STRENGTH OF OUR TEAMS PROVIDING LEADERSHIP TRAINING (THE SAUSAGE MACHINE) AT GWELO, THOUGH PALMER THINKS WE MAY BE ABLE TO MANAGE THE ENHANCED SAUSAGE MACHINE WITHOUT SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASING IT. WE SHALL ALSO HAVE TO PROVIDE TRAINING COORDINATOR TEAMS FOR THE ADDITIONAL NEW BATTALIONS AS THEY ARE FORMED IF THEY ARE TO SURVIVE. THERE WILL PROBABLY BE A REQUIREMENT FOR 2 OR 3 OTHER POSTS. GENERAL PALMER CAN ALREADY FORESEE CLEARLY THAT BMATT WILL NEED TO BE REINFORCED PROGRESSIVELY BETWEEN JANUARY AND APRIL 1981 BY APPROXIMATELY 40 OFFICERS AND SENIOR NCOS ABOVE ITS CURRENT STRENGTH OF 137. SOME REDUCTION MAY BE POSSIBLE THEREAFTER, BUT CLEARLY NOT

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TO THE LEVEL OF A TOTAL STRENGTH OF 85 WHICH HE HAD PREVIOUSLY PROPOSED FOR BMATT AFTER APRIL 1981.

4. I FULLY REALISE THAT BOTH THE FINANCIAL AND MANPOWER IMPLICATIONS OF THIS WILL BE MOST UNWELCOME IN LONDON. ON THE OTHER HAND I DO NOT SEE THAT WE HAVE ANY REAL ALTERNATIVE TO DOING OUR BEST TO PRODUCE THE MINIMUM NECESSARY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE AMALGAMATION EXERCISE. IF WE WISH TO PROTECT OUR POLITICAL AND AID INVESTMENTS IN ZIMBABWE AND OUR TRADE PROSPECTS HERE (HAWK AIRCRAFT, RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION, ETC). I AM CONSTANTLY REMINDED NOT LEAST BY VISITING BRITISH BUSINESSMEN CONSIDERING INVESTMENT, THAT EVERYTHING DEPENDS UPON POLITICAL STABILITY. THAT IN TURN DEPENDS UPON CONTAINING AND EVENTUALLY DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM OF THE RIVAL ARMIES, AND THE PROPOSED EXPANDED AMALGAMATION IS THE BEST SCHEME YET PRODUCED FOR THAT. IT MAY WELL BE ASKED, IN VIEW OF THE ALARMS OF THE LAST FEW WEEKS, WHETHER WE SHOULD NOT SIMPLY BE POURING GOOD MONEY AFTER BAD. IT IS WORTH BEARING IN MIND THAT THE TROUBLES HAVE BEEN AMONG UNAMALGAMATED ELEMENTS OF ZIPRA AND ZANLA AND THAT THE ELEMENTS AMALGAMATED UNDER BMATT'S TUTELAGE HAVE SO FAR HELD ALMOST ENTIRELY STEADY UNDER THE STRAIN. OF COURSE THERE CAN BE NO GUARANTEE THAT THE RIVALRIES HERE WILL NOT AT SOME STAGE PULL EVERYTHING APART. IF THEY DO WE SHALL SAVE SOME PLANNED EXPENDITURE ON BMATT (AND PROBABLY ON SEVERAL OTHER THINGS). BUT, AS I HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, WE ARE WIDELY SEEN AS BEING COMMITTED TO THE AMALGAMATION EXERCISE AND WE MUST DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO SECURE ITS SUCCESS.

5. DESPITE THE ENORMOUS DIFFICULTIES, I HOPE THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE, ONCE GENERAL PALMER IS ABLE TO MAKE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS, TO FIND WAYS OF MEETING THEM. OUR PRESTIGE AND OUR INTERESTS WILL SUFFER IF THE AMALGAMATION GOES WRONG AND I AM SURE THAT WE OUGHT NOT TO LET IT BE AT RISK FOR LACK OF 40 OR SO MEN.

BYATT

STANDARD
CAF D
JEF D
H. DAY
SIR L. ALLISON
MR P. TOBERLY

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Dir CABINET OFFICE

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THIS TELEGRAM
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