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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

FLO Resident Clerk
informed 21/6
G. Baldwin
Duty Clerk. (1)

20 June 1980

Prime Minister

After lunch?

Agreed

Paul 21/6

mb

Dear Michael,

Attack on our Embassy in Baghdad

/ The Prime Minister may wish to see the attached telegram from Baghdad giving an account of yesterday's attack on the Embassy.

/ In the light of a recent report of which the Prime Minister is aware, Lord Carrington thinks it would be helpful if the Prime Minister could send a message to President Saddam Hussein thanking him for the action which the Iraqi authorities took to deal with the situation. The underlying point of such a message would be to remind the Iraqi authorities of the responsibility they have for the protection of British diplomats. It might also serve incidentally to improve the climate of our general, particularly our commercial, relations. I attach a draft telegram containing a suggested text.

Yours etc

Paul

(P Lever)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

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RE

GR 540
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FM BAGHDAD 191235Z JUN 80
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 261 OF 19/6/80

TOP COPY

MIPT: ATTACK ON EMBASSY

1. THE ATTACK BEGAN AT 1015 LOCAL TIME TODAY WHEN THREE OR FOUR YOUTHS FAILED TO STOP WHEN CHALLENGED BY THE POLICE AT THE MAIN GATE AND RAN UP THE DRIVE. THEY OPENED FIRE WITH PISTOLS AT LONG RANGE AT OUR ARCHIVIST WHO WAS ENTERING THE CHANCERY BUILDING. HE SOUND^{ED} THE RIOT ALARM AND THE CONSUL WAS ABOUT TO CLOSE THE MAIN DOORS AS THE FIRST GRENADE EXPLODED, DOING MINOR DAMAGE TO THE ENTRANCE AND HALLWAY. THE DOORS WERE FULLY CLOSED AND WINDOW SHUTTERS SECURED BEFORE THE SUBSEQUENT GRENADES, THREE OR FOUR IN ALL, WERE THROWN.
2. MOST OF THE STAFF TOOK REFUGE IN REGISTRY AND THE CHANCERY WAS EFFECTIVELY BATTENED DOWN IN LITTLE MORE THAN A MINUTE. THE CONSULAR AND ADMINISTRATION STAFF HAD BARRICADED THEMSELVES IN THEIR RESPECTIVE BUILDINGS. THE ATTACKERS CIRCLED THE CHANCERY BUILDING FIRING AND THROWING THE GRENADES APPARENTLY AT RANDOM. ONE OF THEM SAW ME THROUGH A WINDOW AS I RETURNED BRIEFLY TO CHECK MY OFFICE AND FIRED TWO SHOTS, NEITHER DID MUCH DAMAGE.
3. I TELEPHONED TO THE MFA AT ABOUT 10.20 BUT REPEATED CALLS FAILED TO REACH A RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL UNTIL ABOUT 1035 WHEN I SPOKE TO THE DG OF PROTOCOL, ASKED FOR IMMEDIATE REINFORCEMENTS FOR THE POLICE GUARD (THE POLICE HAD IN FACT ALREADY SUMMONED THESE) AND GAVE PERMISSION FOR THE SECURITY AUTHORITIES TO ENTER THE PREMISES. FIRING, SOME OF IT DIRECTED AT THE CHANCERY, CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THIS TIME AND INTENSIFIED WHEN THE MAIN SECURITY REINFORCEMENTS TOOK OVER SHORTLY BEFORE 1045. BY ABOUT 1105 THE SECURITY AUTHORITIES HAD CORNERED AND KILLED THREE OF THE ATTACKERS AND A FOURTH HAD SURRENDERED. THE DG OF PROTOCOL LATER TOLD ME THAT THE AUTHORITIES WERE NOT CERTAIN WHETHER THIS MAN HAD IN FACT TAKEN PART IN THE ATTACK. THE VISITOR'S DRIVER (PARA 2 OF MY TEL NO 258) HAD NOT BEEN HURT, BUT HAS BEEN TAKEN FOR QUESTIONING. THE ALL-CLEAR WAS GIVEN AT ABOUT 1115. A SUBSTANTIAL ARMED GUARD IS STILL IN THE GROUNDS.
4. THE ATTACKERS WERE SCRUFFY YOUTHS DRESSED IN SHIRTS AND SLACKS, INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM MOST LOCAL YOUTHS. AS THEY WENT STRAIGHT INTO THE ATTACK AND WERE PROMPTLY ENGAGED BY THE POLICE, ONE OF WHOM WAS WOUNDED, THERE WAS NO OPPORTUNITY TO IDENTIFY THEM. NOR DID THEY SPEAK AT ANY STAGE, AND I WAS UNABLE TO SATISFY THE SUBSEQUENT CURIOSITY OF THE ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE DG OF PROTOCOL WHO WERE ANXIOUS TO KNOW WHAT DEMANDS THEY HAD MADE AND IN WHAT LANGUAGE. (THE OBVIOUS BUT SO FAR UNCONFIRMED SUPPOSITION IS THAT

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/ THEY WERE

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THEY WERE IREANIAN ARABS FROM KHUZESTAN.) THE IRAQI NEWS AGENCY HAS ISSUED A BRIEF STATEMENT ABOUT THE ATTACK. I HAVE NOT SEEN THE TEXT BUT I GATHER THAT IT REFERS TO HOSTILE ELEMENTS ATTEMPTING TO DISTURB THE ELECTIONS.

5. WE HAD NO CASUALTIES OR EVEN MINOR INJURIES AND THE GRENADE DAMAGE IS SURPRISINGLY SMALL. I MOST WARMLY COMMEND THE COURAGE OF ALL MY STAFF, WHO REMAINED ENTIRELY COMPOSED THROUGHOUT THE UNPLEASANTLY NOISY ASSAULT. THE LOCALLY ENGAGED TELEPHONIST, HUSSEIN, DESERVES ESPECIAL PRAISE FOR REMAINING AT HIS POST WITHIN A FEW FEET OF THE WORST EXPLOSIONS AND GUNFIRE.

STIRLING

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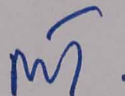
EMBASSY ATTACK

1. Provided you see no objection, please arrange for the following message to be forwarded to President Saddam Hussein from the Prime Minister.

Begins

I am most grateful for the prompt and effective way the Iraqi authorities dealt with the attack on the British Embassy on 19 June. Please pass on my thanks and congratulations to all those involved whose swift and courageous action resolved the incident without harm to our Embassy staff.

Ends



Copies to:-

220 JUN 1980

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