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CONFIDENTIAL

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FM WASHINGTON 072320Z MAY 82

TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NO 1668 OF 7 MAY

INFO IMMEDIATE BRASILIA, MONTEVIDEO, BERNE, UKMIS GENEVA, MODUK
(DS11).

MYTELNO 1648: REPATRIATION OF POWS

OUR REQUEST FOR A US CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT HAS BEEN CONSIDERED AT HIGH LEVEL IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND IN CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN STATE DEPARTMENT AND THE PENTAGON.

IT IS CLEAR FROM A NUMBER OF CONVERSATIONS WHICH WE HAVE HAD WITH STATE DEPARTMENT THAT, DESPITE THE POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES TO THEM OF HELPING TO REPATRIATE THE POWS (MENDING FENCES IN LATIN AMERICA ETC) THEY ARE RELUCTANT TO GET INVOLVED IN HANDLING PRISONERS OF WAR AND CLEARLY FEAR THAT TO DO SO COULD BE MISUNDERSTOOD IN LATIN AMERICA AS AN UNHELPFUL US INTERVENTION.

2. THE AMERICANS DO NOT WANT TO GIVE US AN OUTRIGHT 'NO' AND, WERE WE TO SAY THAT WE ATTACHED THE UTMOST POLITICAL IMPORTANCE TO THEIR SUPPLYING AN AIRCRAFT, THEY MIGHT, RELUCTANTLY, AGREE TO DO SO. BUT, SINCE WE HAVE AN ALTERNATIVE, WE DOUBT IF IT IS IN THE U.K. INTEREST TO PRESS THE AMERICANS ON THIS ISSUE. THERE HAVE BEEN AND NO DOUBT WILL BE, MANY OTHER INSTANCES WHERE THEIR HELP IS ESSENTIAL AND IT IS BETTER TO AVOID USING UP CREDIT UNLESS WE HAVE TO.

3 WE HAVE JUST SEEN YOUR TELNO 153 TO UKMIS GENEVA. WHILE IT IS CLEARLY PRIMARILY AN ISSUE FOR US, THE AMERICANS WOULD HAVE NO DIFFICULTIES ABOUT ACCESS TO ASCENSION BY A DUTCH CHARTER AIRCRAFT.

4. IN ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT SEEMS BEST ONLY TO REVERT TO THE POSSIBILITY OF AMERICAN HELP IF OTHER OPTIONS PROVE UNFEASIBLE.

HENDERSON

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