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TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 712 OF 07 DECEMBER

INFO MODUK (FOR DS11 DSS AND DS6)

NO 10 DOWNING STREET

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ZIMBABWE AIR FORCE: TORTURE

1. GENERAL SHORTIS, BNATT COMMANDER, CALLED ON MUGABE ON 3 DECEMBER PRIOR TO SHORTIS'S CURRENT VISIT TO LONDON. SEKEMAYI AND THE ARMY COMMANDER, GENERAL NHONGO, WERE PRESENT. AFTER THEIR DISCUSSION ON ARMY MATTERS, AND AS SHORTIS WAS TAKING HIS LEAVE, MUGABE ASKED HIM 'TO TELL LONDON' OF HIS CONCERN ABOUT THE ALLEGATIONS OF TORTURE OF THE AIR FORCE MEN. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE FELT THAT HE COULD NOT INTERVENE AT THIS STAGE BECAUSE THE CASES WERE NOW BEFORE THE COURTS AND SUB JUDICE. FOR THE SAME REASON HE HAD DECLINED REQUESTS FOR MEETINGS FROM RELATIVES OF THE AIR FORCE OFFICERS, THERE BEING NOTHING THAT HE COULD SAY TO THEM OR DO AT PRESENT (YOU MAY RECALL THAT HE AGREED TO MEET THE YORKE PARENTS AND RELEASED THEIR SONS TO THEM). HE SAID TO SHORTIS, HOWEVER, THAT ONCE THE MATTER HAD COME TO THE COURTS AND HAD BEEN DECIDED HE WOULD INVESTIGATE AND TAKE ACTION AS APPROPRIATE. SHORTIS UNDERTOOK TO PASS THIS ON AND HAS REPORTED IN A LETTER TO THE DMO. HE COMMENTS THAT HE WAS IMPRESSED BY MUGABE'S EVIDENT SINCERITY AND CONCERN.

2. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THIS MESSAGE AND WHAT MUGABE SAID TO MR NOTT PROBABLY REFLECTS A CHANGE IN MUGABE'S PERCEPTION RATHER THAN A REACTION TO EXTERNAL PRESSURES. WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT AT THE TIME HE SPOKE TO MR NOTT HIS INFORMATION WAS THAT THE TORTURE CHARGES WERE FALSE, BUT THAT HE HAS SINCE LEARNT OTHERWISE.

3. IT IS MY IMPRESSION (WHICH SHORTIS COULD CONFIRM IN LONDON) THAT MUGABE WOULD REGARD THIS EXPRESSION OF CONCERN AND INTENTION AS BEING TRANSMITTED TO US IN CONFIDENCE AT THIS STAGE.

BYATT

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