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FM HARARE 090700Z DEC 82
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 723 OF 8 DECEMBER.

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MY TELNO 712 : TORTURE OF AIR FORCE OFFICERS.

1. I CALLED ON THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE YESTERDAY TO GO BRIEFLY OVER THE GROUND COVERED BY MR ELAM (HIS TELNO 674) AND DISCUSS A NUMBER OF OTHER PROBLEMS IN THE JUSTICE PORTFOLIO. MUBAKO TOOK THE INITIATIVE IN RAISING THE TORTURE QUESTION, SAYING THAT IT WAS AMONGST THE MATTERS CAUSING MOST (AND, HE IMPLIED, VERY UNDERSTANDABLE) CONCERN TO THE WHITE COMMUNITY HERE AND INTERNATIONALLY. WITHOUT ADMITTING IT IN TERMS, HE MANAGED TO MAKE CLEAR THAT HE ACCEPTED THAT SOME OF THE AIR FORCE HAD INDEED BEEN TORTURED. HE ALSO ACCEPTED THAT, LEAVING RULES OF EVIDENCE ASIDE, THIS MADE THE VERACITY OF CONFESSIONS UNASSESSABLE. HE SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THE CONFESSIONS OF ONE OR TWO OF THE OFFICERS WERE GENUINE AND GIVEN WITHOUT TORTURE. HE ACCEPTED AS ONLY TOO LIKELY MY SUGGESTION THAT, IF ANY OF THE OFFICERS HAD INDEED BEEN INVOLVED IN THE SABOTAGE ON SOUTH AFRICAN INSTRUCTIONS, THEIR INSTRUCTIONS MIGHT HAVE INCLUDED ORDERS TO IMPLICATE THE MORE LIBERAL SENIOR AIR FORCE OFFICERS IF THEY WERE CAUGHT: THEREBY SABOTAGING THE HIERARCHY AS WELL AS THE AIRCRAFT.

2. HE SAID WE SHOULD NOT SEE WHAT HAD HAPPENED AS IN ANY WAY AN ANTI-WHITE MOVE. HE HAD COMPLAINTS OF POLICE MALPRACTICE AGAINST BLACKS FROM MATABELELAND ALSO. THERE HAD UNFORTUNATELY BEEN EXAMPLES OF THE POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES REVERTING, UNDER THE STRESSES OF THE LAST FEW MONTHS, TO SOME OF THE BAD PRACTICES OF THE WAR YEARS. IF THERE HAD BEEN TORTURE, THE PERPETRATORS WOULD BE PEOPLE WHO WERE DOING THE SAME THING IN EARLIER YEARS. THAT WAS NOT TO CONDONE IT. PROPER CONDUCT OF INVESTIGATION WAS A GENERAL PROBLEM (HE IMPLIED THAT HIS COLLEAGUE OF HOME AFFAIRS WAS PART OF IT). BUT THE GOVERNMENT HAD MATTERS IN HAND. THINGS WERE IMPROVING. HE CONFIRMED MY IMPRESSION THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO SUGGESTION OF TORTURE OF SUSPECTS SINCE THE AIR FORCE CASE.

3. HE ADDED THAT HE WAS DETERMINED THAT THE CASE OF THE AIR FORCE OFFICERS SHOULD COME TO COURT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THERE WAS PLENTY OF ROOM FOR IT IN THE NEXT SESSION OF THE HIGH COURT. THE ONLY QUESTION WAS WHETHER THE POLICE WOULD HAVE COMPLETED THEIR ENQUIRIES. HE BELIEVED THEY HAD VIRTUALLY DONE SO. HE SAID THE CASE WOULD COME TO COURT PROBABLY IN JANUARY AND BY FEBRUARY AT THE LATEST. I ENCOURAGED HIM AND SAID THAT, FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF EXTERNAL REACTION AND ZIMBABWE'S IMAGE, IT WAS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO HAVE THIS CASE BROUGHT TO COURT AND SATISFACTORILY DISPOSED OF AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE.

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THIS TELEGRAM WAS NOT ADVANCED