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TO IMMEDIATE NEW DELHI
TELEGRAM NUMBER OTTER 543 OF 22 NOVEMBER
FOR JONES FROM SALVIDGE
WESTLAND HELICOPTERS

M I P T GAVE BACKGROUND ON WESTLAND HELICOPTER PROBLEMS. I HAVE CONSULTED WESTLAND (STANTON-JONES, A MAIN BOARD DIRECTOR) AND AIR DIVISION HERE, WHO HAVE BEEN MONITORING DEVELOPMENTS WITH M O D AND ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT.

WESTLAND HAVE AN INTENSIVE FLIGHT TEST PROGRAMME UNDER WAY, SUPPORTED BY THE ROYAL AIRCRAFT ESTABLISHMENT, TO DETERMINE WHY THE TAIL ROTOR PITCH CONTROL LEVER FAILED. THEY AIM TO PUT A FULLER TECHNICAL BRIEF TO THE INDIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (AND ALL THEIR OTHER ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS) BY EARLY NEXT WEEK, SETTING OUT TH REASONS FOR THE FAILURE AS THEY UNDERSTAND THEM AND HOW THEY PROPOSE TO REMEDY THE FAULT. ALTHOUGH I PRESSED WESTLAND, THEY DO NOT PROPOSE TO CONTACT INDIAN AUTHORITIES MEANWHILE. THEY TOLD THEM OF THE INCIDENT SHORTLY AFTER IT HAPPENED, BUT BEFORE C A A AND F A A GROUNDED THE AIRCRAFT. WESTLAND'S FIRM HOPE IS THAT A MAJOR RE-DESIGN WILL NOT BE NECESSARY BUT SEE M I P T, PARA 3.

IF THE ISSUE IS RAISED WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, WE SUGGEST RESPONDING ON THE FOLLOWING LINES:-

(I) PROBLEMS OF THIS SORT ARE DISCONCERTING BUT FAMILIAR WITH ALL AIRCRAFT PROJECTS. THERE IS NO REASON AT ALL TO SUPPOSE THAT IT WILL NOT SWIFTLY BE OVERCOME.

(II) WESTLAND KNOW EXACTLY WHAT FAILED, AND HAVE AN INTENSIVE FLIGHT TEST PROGRAMME, BACKED BY THE ROYAL AIRCRAFT ESTABLISHMENT, TO FIND THE CAUSE AND THE CURE.

(III) WESTLAND APPRECIATE NEED TO PUT FULL PICTURE TO INDIAN AUTHORITIES AND WILL SEND TECHNICAL BRIEFING TO THEM BY EARLY NEXT WEEK AT THE LATEST, SETTING OUT RESULTS OF LATEST WORK.

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