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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Prime Minister.

London SW1A 2AH

To note.

A.J.C. 2/2

2 February 1984

John John,

A.J.C. 6/2

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Angola: The Prime Minister's Messages to President
Dos Santos

Correspondence on this subject rests with my letter of 24 January. On 30 January our Ambassador in Luanda delivered the Prime Minister's messages to President Dos Santos. I attach Luanda telno 115 of 30 January which reports the meeting.

As you will see the President reaffirmed that the British mercenary prisoners would be released very soon. Our Embassy is now discussing practical arrangements with the Angolan authorities on the basis of a target date for release of 13 or 16 February (possibly earlier). There is a public relations problem in that the ex-mercenaries are likely to be critical at the failure of HMG to secure their release sooner. We are considering separately how best to handle this.

On the main message, President Dos Santos asked Mr Goulding to convey to the Prime Minister his satisfaction with its "rich content". He was grateful for the Prime Minister's concern about the situation in southern Angola, and he shared the Prime Minister's desire to strengthen our bilateral relations.

(R B Bone)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esa
10 Downing Street

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FM LUANDA 301415Z JAN 84
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 115 OF 30 JANUARY
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON PRIORITY CAPE TOWN PRETORIA PARIS BONN
OTTAWA UKMIS NEW YORK

YOUR TELNOS 89 TO 91 (NOT TO ALL): PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGES TO
PRESIDENT DOS SANTOS

SUMMARY

1. PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE DELIVERED ON 30 JANUARY. DOS SANTOS CONFIRMS THAT THE MERCENARIES WILL BE RELEASED VERY SHORTLY. HE SPEAKS WARMLY ABOUT OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. HE EXPRESSES SCEPTICISM ABOUT THE CHANCES OF THE 31 JANUARY TRUCE HOLDING BUT SAYS THAT SWAPO WILL OBSERVE IT.

DETAIL

2. I WAS RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT DOS SANTOS FOR 15 MINUTES THIS MORNING (30 JANUARY). WE WERE ALONE. I HANDED OVER BOTH THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGES, EXPLAINING WHY SHE HAD WISHED TO TREAT THE MERCENARIES SEPARATELY.
3. ON THE MERCENARIES, PRESIDENT DOS SANTOS REAFFIRMED WHAT HE HAD SAID ON 4 JANUARY. THE LAWYERS WERE STILL WORKING ON THE DETAILS BUT THE PRISONERS WOULD BE RELEASED VERY SOON. I SAID THAT, AS REQUESTED BY LOPO, WE HAD KEPT THE MATTER CONFIDENTIAL AND HAD NOT EVEN INFORMED THE PRISONERS' FAMILIES. IT WAS PERHAPS IN THE INTERESTS OF ALL OF US THAT THERE SHOULD NOT BE UNDUE PUBLICITY ABOUT THEIR RELEASE. WAS IT HIS INTENTION TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT OR TO LET THEM GO QUIETLY? DOS SANTOS SAID THAT THIS WAS ONE OF THE ISSUES HIS LAWYERS WERE STUDYING. HE HAD INSTRUCTED VENANCIO DA MOURA TO DISCUSS WITH ME DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PRISONERS' HANDOVER AND TRAVEL. DA MOURA HAD BEEN BUSY WITH THE TALKS WITH THE AMERICANS BUT WOULD SEE ME IN THE NEXT DAY OR TWO. I EXPRESSED WARM THANKS.
4. AS REGARDS THE PRIME MINISTER'S MAIN MESSAGE, DOS SANTOS ASKED ME TO CONVEY TO MRS THATCHER HIS SATISFACTION WITH ITS QUOTE RICH CONTENT UNQUOTE. HE WAS GRATEFUL FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S CONCERN ABOUT THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN ANGOLA; AND HE SHARED HER DESIRE TO STRENGTHEN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. PROGRESS HAD BEEN SLOW ON THESE AT ONE TIME BUT THAT WAS A THING OF THE PAST. LOPO'S VISIT HAD BEEN A GREAT SUCCESS. HE HAD IDENTIFIED VARIOUS PROJECTS TO STRENGTHEN OUR ECONOMIC COOPERATION. ANGOLA WAS SINCERE IN HER DESIRE TO COOPERATE WITH ALL COUNTRIES IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR POLITICAL SYSTEMS. ANGOLA RESPECTED OTHER COUNTRY'S QUOTE POLITICAL OPIONS UNQUOTE: ALL THAT SHE ASKED WAS THAT THEY SHOULD RESPECT HERS.
5. I SAID THAT THE BOTB MSSION WAS THE NEXT EVENT IN THE BILATERAL CALENDAR. WOULD DOS SANTOS GIVE LORD JELLCOE AN AUDIENCE? DOS SANTOS SAID HE WOULD CONSIDER THIS: IN PRINCIPLE HE WOULD LIKE TO, IF HIS DIARY PERMITTED.

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6. TURNING TO THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN PART OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE, HE SAID THAT IT HAD BEEN DRAFTED BEFORE THE CAPE VERDE MEETING. YOU HAD BEEN PLEASED THAT THAT MEETING HAD TAKEN PLACE AND HOPED THAT THE TRUCE WOULD TAKE HOLD TOMORROW. DOS SANTOS ASKED WHETHER HE THOUGHT IT WOULD. HE SAID THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE A GOOD CHANCE OF ITS DOING SO. HE SAID THAT HE HOPED SO BUT WAS NOT VERY CONFIDENT. HE SAID WE HOPED THAT THE TRUCE WOULD LEAD ON TO WITHDRAWAL OF THE SADF (QUOTE LET'S HOPE SO UNQUOTE, HE SAID, WITHOUT MUCH CONVICTION) AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SCR 435 (QUOTE LET'S HOPE SO UNQUOTE, AGAIN, WITH EVEN LESS CONVICTION). BUT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT ALL SIDES SHOULD EXERCISE MILITARY RESTRAINT AND THAT THERE SHOULD NOT BE EXAGGERATED REACTIONS TO MINOR BREACHES OF THE TRUCE IN THE FIRST FEW DAYS. SOUTH AFRICA SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN AN EXCUSE TO CALL THE TRUCE OFF. DOS SANTOS SAID THAT SWAPO UNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION. THEY WOULD OBSERVE THE TRUCE. NUJOMA HAD MADE A STATEMENT IN LUSAKA YESTERDAY ACCEPTING IT. SWAPO AFTER ALL WERE THE PRINCIPAL INTERESTED PARTY.

7. THERE WAS NO MENTION OF OUR ABSTENTION ON SCR 546.

COMMENT

8. DOS SANTOS WAS VERY FRIENDLY. HE ADMITTED THAT HE WAS PREOCCUPIED WITH THE EFFECTS OF THE TORRENTIAL RAINS WHICH AGAIN DEVASTATED LUANDA THIS WEEKEND AND HE DID NOT ENCOURAGE A LONG CONVERSATION. BUT HE WAS EVIDENTLY VERY PLEASED BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S MAIN MESSAGE AND, ON THE BILATERAL FRONT, HIS REMARKS COULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN WARMER. HE CLEARLY REMAINS DETERMINED TO RELEASE THE MERCENARIES, POSSIBLY AS SOON AS THIS COMING WEEKEND, AS INDICATED BY DA MOURA IN CAPE VERDE (YOUR TELNO 102).

9. HE WAS LESS REASSURING ON SOUTH AFRICA/NAMIBIA. INsofar as ONE CAN JUDGE FROM A FEW MINUTES' CONVERSATION, HE SEEMS READY TO GIVE THE TRUCE A TRY BUT DOUBTS SOUTH AFRICA'S GOOD FAITH. AND HIS REMARKS ABOUT SWAPO SUGGEST THAT HE ASSUMES THAT THEY WILL REGARD THE TRUCE AS BEING IN THEIR INTEREST AND DISCOUNTS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE THEIR OWN REASONS FOR BREAKING IT. THIS IS NOT REASSURING, GIVEN NUJOMA'S ABSENCE IN LUSAKA AND THE INDICATIONS WE AND OTHERS HAVE RECEIVED IN RECENT DAYS THAT SWAPO ARE WORRIED ABOUT WHAT THE ANGOLANS ARE UP TO.
FCO PSE PASS ALL

GOULDING

REPEATED AS REQUESTED

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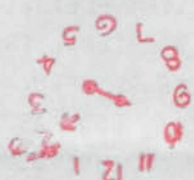
SIR J LEAHY

MRS QUIRE

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Angora Int Sit Oct 79



- 2 Feb 1984