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ANGLO/LIBYAN CRISIS: SITUATION REPORT AS AT 1900 HOURS 25 APRIL 1984

PRESS COMMENT

1. The Home Secretary's statement was well received. His post-statement interviews were carried on early evening TV and radio news programmes. Initial reactions to the statement in the press gallery were approving of HMG's stance and in particular of the Home Secretary's handling of the situation, although the interviewers tended to concentrate on the fact of the killer "getting out Scot-free".

ACTION AT THE SCENE

2. There has been little activity for police officers manning the cordon in St James' Square. The cordon at Ennismore Gardens remains busier but has not been the cause of any complaint today.

DISCUSSIONS WITH SHAI BI

3. After the initial meeting with Shaibi last night, COBR this morning discussed the response to his main question, the continued use of diplomatic premises after Sunday. Shaibi and Fitouri made two visits to the Saudi embassy, and evidence began to emerge of packing at diplomatic premises other than St James' Square.

4. A meeting was held with Shaibi at 5.00 pm. It was the longest yet in the series, lasting nearly two hours. He had two main points:

a. he raised objections to the initial search procedures, which he argued were inconsistent with diplomatic immunity. He was reminded firmly of the murder, committed from within the embassy, and eventually appeared to accept the search as "cooperation in a matter of public safety" (and notably did not deny that the offence was committed from within the LPB).

b. he remains suspicious about the rendezvous at Sunningdale.

5. The key points which emerged from the meeting were:

a. a freighter and a passenger aircraft will take many of the Libyan families away tomorrow.

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- b. those from the LPB may go to Sunningdale: but not for a night's stay and they will refuse all questioning.
 - c. they see some attractions in being shielded from the press at Sunningdale, and completing immigration formalities there in private (this has been arranged with the immigration authorities).
6. They accepted the firm rebuff on continued use of buildings after Sunday.
 7. They will report all this to Tripoli. There will be a further meeting at 10.00 am tomorrow.
 8. The indications are that they will now start moving out quite quickly.

DEPARTURE OF BRITISH EMBASSY STAFF FROM TRIPOLI.

9. At lunchtime today the Libyans agreed that dependents could leave on 26 April "in principle" which appears to mean "subject to progress of discussion in London". Since then we have instructed our Ambassador to inform the Libyans that we want all our Embassy staff to leave Tripoli on 26 April and all the Libyans to leave London at the same time. We await the Libyan reaction to this but it is far from certain that they will be able to move so quickly. They will aim for simultaneous departures from London and Tripoli. There has been no indication that they intend to stay after the deadline.
10. An additional B-Cal flight to Tripoli has been arranged for 26 April in case the Libyans agree to our proposals.
11. Restrictions on movements of Embassy staff and entry of packers into staff houses have eased slightly, but could easily be reimposed.

PROTECTING POWERS

12. The Libyans have agreed that the Italians should look after our interests in Libya and we have agreed that Saudi Arabia should look after Libya's interests in the UK. In addition the Libyans want the Syrians to act as "observers". The Ghanaians and the Kuwaitis are acting in the same capacity in Tripoli.

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INTEREST SECTIONS

13. We have informed the Libyans that we are prepared to allow two Libyan diplomats to operate in London. We know from secret sources that the Libyans would prefer three. It is clear that the Libyans would also prefer to operate from one of their existing four premises in London but we have told them that this is not acceptable and that they will have to operate from Saudi premises. The Libyans have so far simply taken note.

INTERNATIONAL REACTION

14. Genscher has sent a message to Tripoli to say that his visit (30 April to 1 May) is not possible because "the dates are no longer available". He has told the Libyans that he still wishes to have political talks in due course but that his diary is extremely full. The German message made no direct reference to events in London, but the Germans feel the connection will be clear to the Libyans. This is helpful.

15. The French have issued a statement deploring the violation of international conventions and principles which had led to the severance of diplomatic relations between Britain and Libya. This low-key statement has been barely noticed by the French press. Meanwhile, Gutmann, the PUS French Foreign Minister, went to Libya on 24 April. The French have not told us the reason for the visit but it may well have been connected with Chad.

16. In his talks with Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Japanese Foreign Minister stressed that Japan deplored the behaviour of the Libyans in London.

OVERALL SITUATION

17. It does seem (particularly from talks with Shaibi in London) that the departure of both staffs as soon as possible is now agreed. It seems unlikely that all our staff will be ready to return from Tripoli tomorrow, but efforts are being made for as many as possible to do so.

ACTION AGAINST LIBYANS

18. Matuq continues in police detention pending deportation. Misbah was detained at Heathrow and questioned connection with the bombing of the Blue Angel night club in London on 10 March. After consultation with the DPP, who decided there was insufficient evidence on which to proceed against him in connection with the bombing,

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was held by the police for traffic offences and he is now detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

19. Of 31 Libyans who arrived in Britain in the last 2 days, 19 have been allowed to enter as bona fide businessmen or students, 8 are being detained for questioning and 4 were excluded.

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