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From: PS/PUS

Date: 6 November 1996

cc: [REDACTED] LAD

Mr Marsden

CALL BY MR JOHN BROWNE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF BP: 5 NOVEMBER

1. Mr Browne called on the PUS yesterday afternoon to discuss BP's operations in Colombia. You kindly joined them. The PUS was grateful for the briefing LAD provided for this meeting.

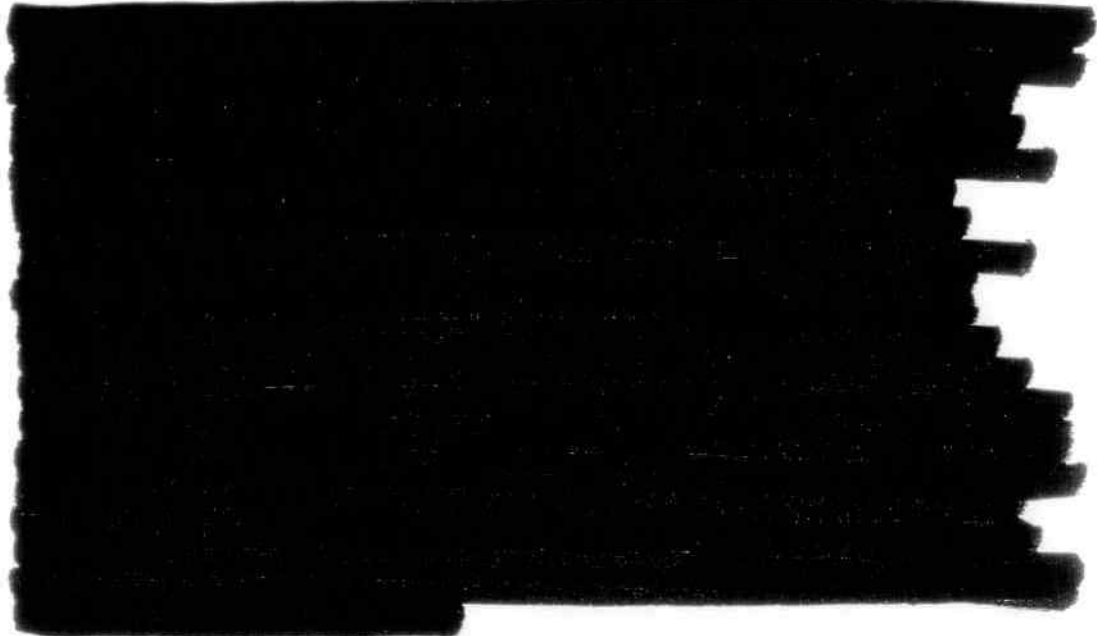
2. Mr Browne outlined the adverse publicity BP had recently received about their operations in Colombia. He referred to articles in The Sunday Express; The Observer; Scotland on Sunday; an interview on Newsnight; and the possibility of a forthcoming World in Action report. He summed up the various reports as alleging that BP were playing fast and loose with human rights in Colombia; specifically that they were colluding with the army in the suppression of legitimate dissent. He said that BP of course strenuously denied all such allegations which were without basis. BP suspected that the allegations were part of a co-ordinated effort by a Colombian guerilla faction to discredit foreign investors.

[REDACTED] BP had concluded that the problem was unlikely to go away. [REDACTED]

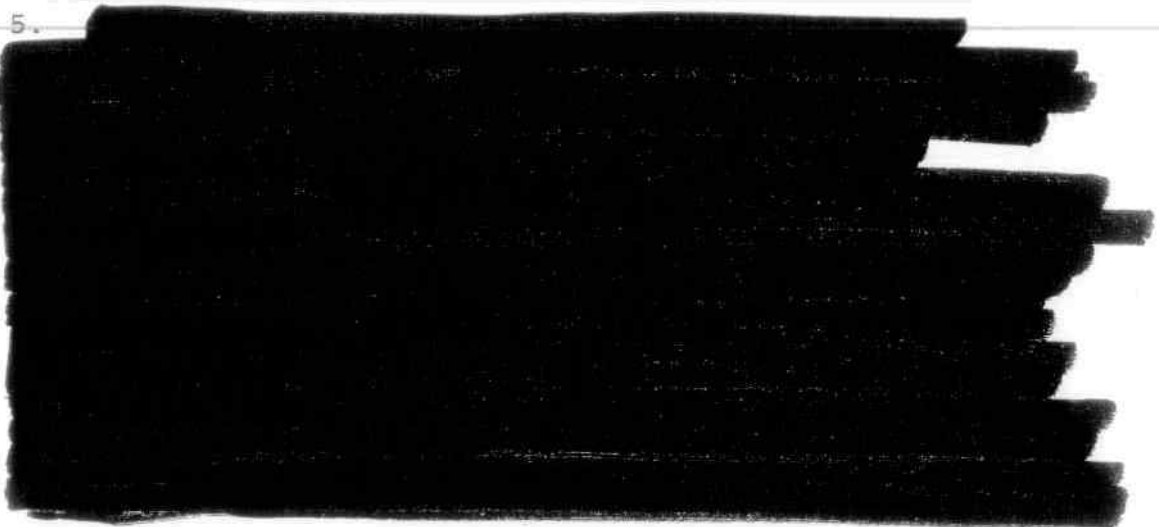
3. Mr Browne said that against this background he had been considering various options:

- to encourage the Colombian Prosecutor-General to follow up his inter-departmental investigation, which in BP's view simply amounted to a set of uncorroborated allegations. BP had written to the Prosecutor-General on 1 November saying that they wanted these charges fully investigated and the results published in an official report. BP were confident that the charges would be found to be groundless;
- to review BP's relations with the Colombian authorities and in particular the Colombian army. BP provided the army with non-lethal aid (housing, food and a per diem fee towards the cost of troops protecting BP's installations). This was legal; others did the same. BP were not inclined to pursue alternative arrangements, eg private security. (You commented that you agreed). It was true that the army

were charged with human rights abuses. The Colombian government were trying to do something about this. BP did not see that there was anything they could do about essentially internal Colombian affairs;



4. Mr Brown asked a number of questions: did the FCO have any advice to offer on the course of action he proposed; did we think that there was anything in this course of action likely to cause offence to the Colombian government; what were our views on Colombia's human rights record; and lastly, a due diligence question, was there anything the FCO knew which BP did not and which might affect BP if it came to light?





6. The PUS asked whether there was anything in the allegations that BP had handed over photos of the Colombian opposition to the army. Mr Browne said that BP had videotaped meetings with the local community and passed the films to the Department of the Environment. But they were legally required to do this by the terms of their licence.

7. The PUS asked whether Amnesty International had shown any interest. Mr Browne said that they had talked to BP and had suggested that BP should check that their operations in Colombia were abiding by the company's code of conduct. The PUS said that it was worth staying in touch with Amnesty, who were a responsible (and influential) organisation.

8. You said that we were not aware of anything that BP did not know about but which could be harmful to them if it came to light. That said we would check again with HMA Bogota, asking him this specific question and we would report back to BP. We would also reflect further here and with the Ambassador about whether there was anything more that could be done to encourage the human rights record in Colombia. Again we would come back to BP about this. (Comment: you kindly agreed to pursue these points with HMA Bogota. The PUS wishes to remain the point of contact with Mr Browne.)



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