

DIGEST OF E-MAILS

From: HM Prison Service official
Sent: Monday, December 05, 2005 5:53 PM
To: HM Prison Service official
Subject: Mr Othman [Abu Katada]

"Sir, ----- has asked me to email the memo regarding a meeting with Mr Othman earlier today as described briefly by telephone".

MEMORANDUM

From: Head of Security, HMP-----
Date: 5 December 2005
To: HM Prison Service Official

Detainee ----- Mr Othman (ie Abu Qatada)

Mr Othman has expressed a view that he may be able to somehow pass a message through his solicitor Gareth Peirce that may be of assistance to the hostages currently being held in Iraq.

This was made known to staff through Mr ----- who acts as an interpreter for Mr Othman who does not appear to be able to speak much English. I interviewed both of the above detainees this evening in the company of SO ----- one of the Unit Senior Officers and Principal Officer ----- . Mr Othman (through his interpreter) stated that he does not seek any reward for which he sees this as a humanitarian act.

If this is sanctioned he wishes to produce a video or audio message and he asked me what facilities we had. I explained that this was not something to be discussed until an answer in principle was received from HQ.

I told him that I would inform our Headquarters of his offer. He reminded me that there was a deadline of this Thursday in relation to the hostages.

Mr Othman was unable to contact his solicitor this evening. Mr ---- will keep in touch with the Unit staff as and when contact has been made. Any further developments will be reported to the above addresses as soon as they are known.

Head of Security

From: HM Prison Service official
Sent: Tuesday, December 06 2005 8:11 AM
To: Home Office official
Subject: Mr Othman (aka Al Qatada) – VERY URGENT

----- Please see the attached note from ----- . Mr Othman is detained there pending deportation on national security grounds. He wishes to make a video or audio-taped appeal for the lives of the four hostages currently held in Iraq. He will be making Gareth Peirce, his legal representative, aware of his request. She will undoubtedly publicise his offer, particularly if it is not supported.

I presume that this will need to be discussed with the relevant FCO colleagues immediately --- ----- . Would you initiate the discussion with the FCO? I stand by to offer what assistance you may require and to implement whatever decision is taken.

You will be aware that Mr Othman is to be deported to Jordan in accordance with the recently agreed MOU with that country”.

From: Home Office official
Sent: Tuesday, 06 December 2005 8:23 AM
To: Home Office official
Subject: Mr Othman (aka Al Qatada) – VERY URGENT

“----- to see. Have left messages for both ----- and ----- [ie FCO officials] to ring me about this. -----let’s think through the issues/implications carefully”.

From: Home Office official
Sent: 06 December 2005 8:25 AM
To: HM Prison Service official
Subject: Mr Othman (aka Al Qatada) – VERY URGENT

“----- thanks for this. Have left urgent messages with two FCO colleagues to come back on this.

From: HM Prison Service official
Sent: Tuesday, December 06, 2005 8:11 AM
To: Home Office official
Subject: Mr Othman (aka Al Qatada) – VERY URGENT

“----- I have been advised that Gareth Peirce intends to contact FCO today with Mr Othman’s offer”.

From: Home Office official
Sent: 06 December 2005 9:27 AM
To: Home Office official
Subject: Mr Othman (aka Al Qatada) – VERY URGENT

“----- Yes there was a similar situation with one of the former ACTS A detainees, -----, who wanted to issue a written statement. He was at the time not in detention but was the subject of a control order and was raised by his legal rep – also Birnberg Peirce and we were given a copy of the statement.

There was nothing in the statement that caused us any problems and in any case we suspected that it had already been transmitted – so we did not object.

Apart from an assessment of what the impact will be – and whether it would be helpful there are some other considerations.

I think a video/taped audio appeal raises some different issues – what language will it be in – how do we ensure that it does what its stated aim is? Could it be used for other purposes beyond that for which it was intended. Will we see it broadcast time and time again after the currency of the immediate situation?

These are my immediate thoughts – and I am sure that Othman (aka Abu Qatada) would also use this as an example of his good character during the appeals – but I think that is neither here nor there in the overall scheme of things”.

From: FCO official
Sent: 06 December 2005 10:19 AM
To: Home Office official

Subject: Kember – Abu Q

“----- We (FCO – inc. ----- Baghdad [ie British Embassy, Baghdad], ----) want to take up our Jordanian friend on his kind offer. Can you advise how and how quickly (time being of the essence) that we can get it done”.

From: FCO official
Sent: 06 December 2005 1:28 PM
To: Officials handling Kember kidnap
Subject: RESTR: Kember: Abu Qatada Appeal for Release of the CPT4 (ie 4 individuals from Christian Peacemaker Team)

“All, As some know already, Abu Qatada has offered to do a video appeal for release of the CPT4. We (-----) have agreed to take him up on this. Logistical arrangements are in hand. Also in hand is an opportunity for ----- to check that ----- to satisfy ourselves that it will not hinder our efforts

Earliest this might happen is a recording at 1700. Probably significantly later tonight.

Home Office are kindly seeking formal agreement from the Home Secretary (which is required). We are hopeful. But clearly can not actually move to recording until we have his approval.

Press Office – advice please on how best to publicise the appeal, including getting the video out to AL, Al A [ie Al Jazeera and al Arabiya], and the national and internationals. Including on techie detail (video cassette versus DVD or whatever). Including if we’re looking at a late night release.

If this happens, Prison Service rightly intend to refer calls to us.

NB all – this is on close hold inside the Prison Service and is obviously sensitive at this stage”.

From: Home Office official
Sent: 06 December 2005 2:56 PM
To: Home Office official
Subject: URGENT RE: Kember – Abu Q

“Just to confirm that private office have indicated that the Home Secretary is content for the proposed video/tape recording to go ahead – subject of course to the points that ----- made in his early e-mail (enclosed) -----.

----- has suggested that we ought to give BBP the option of being present, is anyone in touch with BBP (ie solicitors) already, does anyone know who the BPP contact is and who is best to establish contact – we will presumably need to tell them the arrangements etc but would not want to add an unnecessary delay.

The question has arisen on how the tape should be transferred – our preference would be this to go direct to Al Jazeera rather than through BBP as an intermediary – but does anyone have any views to the contrary?”

From: HM Prison Service official
Sent: 06 December 2005 3:05 PM

To: Home Office official
Subject: RE: URGENT RE: Kember – Abu Q

“----- I think that the involvement of BBP will delay things as they would have to travel -----
----- . I think the film is likely to be made at around 1900 this evening. Given the fact that
he has asked to do this, he may be happy to proceed without the need to raise the question of
his legal reps with him. The Governor will be able to test out his reaction when he is told the
video has been approved.

I will ask ----- to let our Video Unit people know the tape has to be to broadcast standard
– presumably he can seek technical advice from Press Office without revealing the purpose of
the request.

Presumably FCO Press Office are going to deal with any issues relating to this?”

From: Home Office Press Officer
Sent: 06 December 2005 3:22 PM
To: Home Office Press Officers
Subject: FW: Kidnapping in Iraq of Norman Kember -----

“Hi. I have just heard from ----- [Home Office official] in ----- [Home Office unit] that
Abu Qatada has offered to make a televised appeal to free the hostages and FCO has
accepted this offer.

----- and will let us know more”.

From: FCO Official
Sent: 06 December 2005 4:01 PM
To: HM Prison Service, Home Office and FCO officials
Subject: RE: URGENT RE: Kember – Abu Q

“-----
We risk slowing release while we look for the fastest acceptable option of getting it released.

So I wonder if we turn this on its head and:

-----;
-----;
- once we are satisfied that release of the tape is ok, give it to them there.

Grateful for views asap”.

From: Home Office Press Officer
Sent: 06 December 2005 4:09 PM
To: Home Office Press Officers
Subject: Kidnapping in Iraq of Norman Kember

“Further details. Crew is on its way to prison. Recording likely to be at 1900 hrs. -----
but no script and being done in native language. Translator will be present. Will be offered to
Al Jazeera. They want to get it out to broadcast asap. ----- ”.

From: Home Office Press Officer
Sent: 06 December 2005 4:15 PM
To: Home Office Press Officers

Subject: Kidnapping in Iraq of Norman Kember

“The crew are now at the prison, interview scheduled for 18:00”

From: HM Prison Service official
Sent: Tuesday, December 06, 2005 4:19 PM
To: FCO and Home Office officials

Subject: RE: URGENT RE: Kember – Abu Q

“I’ve advised the Governor that BBP are going to be contacted and invited to be present when the video is made. The Governor understands this may cause a delay -----
----- . We would be prepared to hand the tape over to an Al Jazeera representative subject to suitable arrangements on identification and another audit trail asking us to do it!”

From: FCO official
Sent: 06 December 2005 4:27 PM
To: HM Prison Service, FCO and Home Office officials
Subject: RE: URGENT RE: Kember – Abu Q

“Thanks. I’m expecting a call from Gareth P in the next 30 minutes or so”.

From: HM Prison Service official
Sent: 06 December 2005 4:38 PM
To: FCO and Home Office officials
Subject: RE: URGENT RE: Kember – Abu Q

“The Governor informs me that Mr Othman has spoken to his legal adviser and afterwards said to prison staff that he doesn’t need his solicitor there. If they agree you may have to look at the tape being brought back to London for handover to BBP at that point”.

From: FCO official
Sent: Tuesday, December 06, 2005 4:42 PM
To: HM Prison Service, Home Office and FCO officials
Subject: RE: URGENT RE: Kember – Abu Q

“Thanks. I take it that the Governor would equally not object to a BBP representative (or courier) going up to collect it after the fact?”

From: HM Prison Service official
Sent: 06 December 2005 4:42 PM
To: FCO and Home Office officials
Subject: RE: URGENT RE: Kember – Abu Q

“No. I think we would be able to facilitate that subject to identification and timings being known”.

From: FCO official
Sent: 06 December 2005 4:55 PM
To: HM Prison Service, Home Office and FCO officials
Subject: RE: URGENT RE: Kember – Abu Q

“Spoke to Peirce ----- She will try to speak to him (and asked if anything could be done to help him contact her – mentioning that his phone card might not have minutes on it and asking if the Governor could help with that).

She was clear that whatever could be done to help the hostages should be done.

She is calling back soon.”

From: HM Prison Service official
Sent: 06 December 2005 4:57 PM
To: FCO and Home Office officials
Subject: RE: URGENT RE: Kember – Abu Q

“I’ve spoken to ----- . He will ensure that Mr Othman is able to speak to Gareth P without fear of being cut off”.

From: FCO official
Sent: Wednesday, December 07, 2005 10:16 AM
To: FCO official
Subject: RE: Kember: Abu Qatada

“----- We have spoken to our contact at Al J who was on his way to the offices with the tape in his hands. He will advise us later what Al J propose to do with it. -----“

From: Home Office Press Officer
Sent: 07 December 2005 10:29 AM
To: Home Office Press Officers
Subject: Abu Qatada appeal

“ ----- have just confirmed that the Qatada appeal is about to be broadcast on Al Jazeera, so is likely to get picked up by other outlets shortly. -----“

From: Home Office official
Sent: 07 December 2005 11:01
To: Foreign Office official
Subject: RE RESTR; KEMBER: ABU QATADA

“----- Translator will produce an English language version by about 12.30 and will forward both you and me a copy. ----- I understand that it was only 5 minutes long and included a clear plea for the release of the kidnapped 4. He said that they were men of peace and shouldn’t be attacked. Attacks should be confined to people who attack you (ie his audience). The 4 had no link with criminal governments. The rest was his legal opinion as to why the peaceful should not be attacked.

I await the translation”.

From: Home Office Press Officer
Sent: 07 December 2005 11:55
To: Home Office official
Subject: RE: RESTR: Kember: Abu Qatada

“----- Here are FCO lines to take and our current lines as well.

Lines to take

- The kidnapping of Norman Kember (and appeals for his release) are a matter for FCO.

FCO lines for information only – to be used once recording is broadcast:

- Confirm that Abu Q has made an appeal which has been transmitted to Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera via his lawyers. This is one of many public statements calling for the release of the hostages.

Why is the government using what the judge in his ongoing trial has referred to as a “murderer”?

- Abu Qatada offered to make the statement and his lawyers are distributing it. We simply facilitated the recording. This is one of many public statements calling for the release of the hostages.
- This statement has no bearing on current legal proceedings.

Home Office lines

If asked: did Qatada make this recording from prison?

For guidance: Can confirm that the Prison Service facilitated a video recording by a prisoner yesterday Tuesday 7 December.

Where is Abu Qatada detained?

We do not disclose the whereabouts of individuals detained by Her Majesty’s Prison Service. He is detained in a high security prison.

Will this affect Qatada’s hearings?

The recording has no bearing on current legal proceedings, which will be decided on their merits.

Why is Abu Qatada detained?

He has been detained under the Home Secretary’s immigration powers to deport those whose presence in the UK is not conducive to the public good on national security grounds.

Is Abu Qatada believed to be dangerous?

We believe that all those who we intend to deport represent a threat to the national security of the UK.

When will he be deported?

This is a matter for the Special Immigration Appeals Commission.

Now that you have secured a Memorandum of Understanding with Jordan, and a monitoring body is in place, when do you intend to begin deporting individuals including Abu Qatada to Jordan?

See above. Decisions to deport are subject to review by the UK courts. Not in a position to say when deportation might take place.”

From: Home Office official
Sent: 07 December 2005 11:56 AM
To: Home Office officials
Subject: kidnapping – AQ tape

“ -----

Kidnapping of Norman Kember and others: Abu Qatada video

This is just a short note to record that:

- Abu Qatada approached the prison authorities in -----, where he is currently detained, on Monday and offered to make a video or audio message appealing to the kidnappers of the above to release them.

- Gareth Peirce was then notified and offered an opportunity to be present when the tape was made. She agreed to take receipt of the tape and make it public through Al Jazeera. She decided in the end not to be present but arranged for a courier to collect the tape and transport it to her. The courier received the tape just after 10 last night.
- FCO informed the family so that they are aware.
- -----
- We are in touch with FCO. FCO press office have lines to take.
- -----

From: Home Office official
Sent: 07 December 2005 14:21
To: FCO and Home Office officials
Subject: RE: ABU QATADA VIDEO

“ ----- . The video has been running on ITV rolling news for the last 2 hours or so. Our press office has had a number of calls”.

Please note that the content of the two e-mails immediately below is in the public domain and is therefore exempt under Section 21. However, we have still provided this information in order to be of assistance to you.

From: FCO Press Officer
Sent: 08 December 2005 11:34
To: FCO and Home Office officials
Subject: Abu Qatada’s appeal does not carry weight – ITV24

“**Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed:** [from Lebanon] Abu Qatada’s appeal does not carry weight..pressure shld be put on UK Govt ..Mr Bigley was a victim of the same foreign policy..the matter is in the hands of the Muhajiddin..I appeal to them to show mercy.....*Can it ever be right to threaten the life of a peace campaigner?* People have been put in Guantanamo.. I see a victim .. we are not accusing him of anything (ITV24 1130 i/v)

From: Home Office official
Sent: 08 December 2005 11:55 AM
To: Home Office official
Subject: AQ coverage for info

⋮

“Group holding 4 Westerns in Iraq extend deadline by 48 hrs over demand US & UK free all Iraqi prisoners..al-Jazeera says deadline moved to Saturday..Swords of Truth Brigade are threatening to kill hostages ...extension comes hrs after Abu Qatada appealed for their release (T’dy b’tins)...Grp holding Norman Kember extends deadline by 48 hrs (GMTV 0630)..radical cleric in UK prison urges kidnappers to free hostages (GMTV 0640) ..new video emerges of Norman Kember pleading with TB to work for his release (Sky 0645) ...Kember issues fresh appeal to TB for help (IRN b’tins)

- reports: Hawley: Appeal by Abu Qatada only came on TV here late last night .. think video released before that..kidnappers want maximum publicity..pretty disturbing to see Kember & Fox in orange jumpsuits .. clear hostage-takers trying to differentiate btwn 2 Canadians & Kember & Foz..making point that Canada has no troops in Iraq ..Contact w/kidnappers? Dfct to say ..Western dipl told me contact had been made ..FCO says no officially sanctioned contact ..UK Muslim envoy Anas Al-Tikriti says he's exhausted all avenues in Iraq ...says he's not sure whether Abu Qatada's appeal will help or not (BBC 0705). Childs May be glimmer of hope..kidnappers prepared to show flexibility. FCO response cautious .. Straw reinforces msg that he wants to hear what kidnappers have to say (Tdy 0600).. Ando Speculation deadline extended after Abu Qatada makes extraordinary televised appeal for clemency from prison cell ..message urges kidnappers to spare Kember .. but latest video carries sinister echoes of film of Ken Bigley (BBC 0630)

- Govt: **Straw**: Have made repeatedly clear UK Govt's posn of this & other kidnappings .. Norman Kember peace activist ..hard to imagine terrible distress family must be suffering ..thought & prayers w/them .. if kidnappers want to get in touch w/ us, we want to hear what they have to say .. have ppl in Iraq & region .. ready to hear from kidnappers .. *Any hope of making contact tdy?* Have no more to add to statement .. if there is news we can release, we will release it (Sky, BBC, ITV24 0850)

- other: **Norman Kember**: I'm a Christian peacemaker & friend of Iraq .. have been opposed to TB's war from beginning .. now I ask him & his Govt to work for my release & release of Iraqi ppl from oppression (Sky 0610 clip, BBC 0630 clip) ...**Bruce Kent**: Shows UK Govt showing flexibility .. unprecedented someone in high detention can make video .. grp needs something to save face ..think there's something behind scenes .. have always had negns, even with IRA .. Norman not eccentric or risk-taker (GMTV 0640 i/v) ... Anas Al-Tikriti, UK envoy: Dfct to assess, but all appeals have been crucial incl Qatada's...you wldn't believe how many orgs have joined campaign.. these abductors are not pleasing anyone .. we hope for release of all 4 hostages (Tdy 0710 i/v)

- press: Abu Qatada makes personal appeal fr his cell for insurgents in Iraq to save life of UK hostage Norman Kember (Tele p2, Guard, Sun p2, Exp p2, Star) .. offs admit is a unique b'cast, but say they're prepared to take desperate measures ahead of deadline ..UK dips rptd to have enlisted help of more intermediaries that they did during Bigley & Hassan cases (Ti p2 – late splash) .. as **HO** says allowing Abu Qatada to make appeal for Iraq hostages has no bearing on his appeal (Mirr) .. but sources admit he's likely to use fact that mins allowed him to make appeal to bolster his case agst deportation (Ti) .. **FCO** insists Qatada's plea for mercy wld have "no bearing" on proceedings agst him .. but **security sources** sggst that he'd agree to help Govt for purely humanitarian reasons is highly unlikely (Mail)

From: Home Office official
Sent: 08 December 2005 6:43 PM
To: Home Office official
Subject: Kidnapping in Iraq

“ ----- The Abu Qatada video had attracted a lot of attention and was considered a success from a media perspective. Some media had linked his appeal to the extension of the deadline. ----- “