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CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

BELIZE/GUATEMALA

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for
Defence and the Lord Privy Seal

Negotiations

1. Nicholas Ridley, accompanied by the Premier of Belize, Mr Price, and other Belizean Ministers, met the Guatemalan Foreign Minister in New York from 6-10 July in a final attempt to secure a Treaty based on the Heads of Agreement signed in London on 11 March. Earlier talks at official level had prepared agreed texts covering about 80% of the ground. A number of points of difficulty remained, principally, the definition of 'use and enjoyment' of the Sapodilla and Ranguana Cays (the two southernmost groups of islands on the Belizean Barrier Reef) and the period of this concession; the definition of maritime boundaries; and Guatemalan access to the high seas.
2. Agreement would probably have been possible on the third of these points; the first two were intractable. The Guatemalans wanted what amounted to virtual sovereignty in perpetuity over the Cays and would not accept that military use should be excluded. Moreover their demand for territorial waters was quite unacceptable to Belize.
3. Nonetheless the atmosphere of the talks was friendly. The Guatemalans accepted that Belize's independence could not be prevented although they would not recognise it formally and would have to register their opposition and reserve their rights. They expressed their desire however to develop friendly and co-operative relations with Belize after independence. Similarly

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they were anxious to maintain good relations with the United Kingdom. It was agreed that existing channels of communications should be kept open and areas of possible co-operation were identified.

4. Failure to achieve a Treaty removes Mr Price's commitment to a referendum and the way will be clear, once the Belize Bill has completed its passage through the UK Parliament (Committee and remaining stages in the Lords will probably take place on 27 July), for Belize to proceed to independence. It has been agreed that Mr Price should come to London for discussions on 22 July with Ministers, in which arrangements for Belize's security after independence will be the issue uppermost in his mind.

Security

5. Colleagues agreed on 21 February (OD(81) 2nd Meeting) that if we failed to secure a Treaty of Settlement, we should base our security package for an independent Belize on three elements. These were:

- (a) enhancement of the Belize Defence Force (BDF);
- (b) retention of British forces in Belize for up to one year provided that we were able to maintain control over Belize's foreign policy; and
- (c) a multi-lateral consultative defence arrangement.

6. As regards 5(a) a team from the Ministry of Defence has recommended improvements to the BDF. Their report is about to be presented to the Belize Government. The necessary funds to finance the capital costs of the improvements are being transferred from the ODA to the FCO. Officials are shortly leaving for Washington and Ottawa to discuss how the US and Canada might help. The MOD will make available Loan Service Personnel and training teams. The major portion of the costs of these will be borne by the United Kingdom Military Training Assistance Scheme.

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7. As regards 5(b) we believe that the garrison should be withdrawn as soon as possible for the reasons given in OD(81)6. But we have recognised that we shall need to leave some forces in Belize for a strictly limited period, preferably no more than a few months. We shall tell Mr Price that the size of British forces needed will be determined by us. The timing and manner of withdrawal will also be for us to decide and in making that decision we shall have regard both to the attitude of Guatemala towards Belize and Belize's own behaviour. We shall make clear that the forces cannot in any case remain in Belize beyond one year at most from independence. The terms on which the forces will stay will be set out in a secret Minute of Understanding, the draft of which is at annex A. Status of forces and other arrangements will be covered in a public exchange of notes.

8. As regards 5(c) officials will discuss in Washington and Ottawa our intention to provide a consultative arrangement for Belize. It seems unlikely that the US would go beyond an agreement to consult in the event of an attack on Belize. The Canadian attitude is likely to be similar. Attached at ~~annex B~~ is a draft of what we propose to put to the US, Canada and other regional states. (The text may need to be modified as in square brackets if the US or others wish to avoid treaty language which might otherwise commit them to consult the legislature). We believe that this is an essential part of our security package. But as it stands it must be doubtful if it is sufficiently convincing to overcome strong Belizean fears of Guatemalan intentions. We believe that it is necessary for the UK to say something more. If colleagues agree, we might say to Belizean Ministers and publicly in amplification that:

'we would consult most urgently all other signatories of the agreement in response to any outright external attack on Belize. For their part, HMG would not exclude the possibility of providing direct assistance appropriate in the circumstances at the time''.

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This formula is not a binding commitment to military intervention. It reserves to HMG the decision of whether and how to respond, but we believe it should be presentationally helpful.

Date of Independence

9. HMG's target for independence has been that set by the UNGA resolution of 11 November 1980 which said in effect that it should be by the end of this year. The Belize Government's target is, however, 21 September which would enable Belize to seek UN admission fairly early in the General Assembly's session and to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Melbourne at the end of September. Colleagues are invited to agree that we should accept their preferred date.

10. In view of the limited time available before Mr Price's visit it will not be possible to consider these proposals in Committee. In the absence of comments from colleagues by 21 July we shall assume concurrence.

JN

IAG

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Ministry of Defence
17 July 1981

SECRET MINUTE PROVIDING FOR BRITISH FORCES IN BELIZE AFTER INDEPENDENCE

1. At the request of the Government of Belize, the United Kingdom Government will continue to station British forces in Belize for a limited period, not exceeding twelve months after independence.
2. The Government of Belize will enter into an Agreement satisfactory to both Governments in relation to the status of the British Forces which will come into force on independence.
3. Requests for the use of British Forces in support of the Belize Defence Force will be made to the United Kingdom Government through the British High Commissioner. It is no part of the function of the British Forces to assist in or otherwise take part in operations concerned with internal security or with the enforcement of law and order.
4. The Government of Belize will not without the consent of the United Kingdom Government permit the presence in Belize of any forces of any other State during the period for which British Forces are present in Belize under these arrangements.
5. The Government of Belize while exercising sole sovereign responsibility for Belize's foreign policy recognise the need to avoid any course of action likely to precipitate an external threat to the country and embroil the British Forces stationed there. The United Kingdom Government reserve the right to withdraw their troops if, in their judgment and after due warning, the actions of the Government of Belize seem likely to precipitate such a threat.
6. Any announcement on the subject of retention of British Forces should say that they are remaining at the request of the Government of Belize to assist in training the Belize Defence Force.
7. Separate arrangements may be concluded between the two Governments for the provision by the United Kingdom Government of Service personnel on loan to the Belize Defence Force.

DRAFT CONSULTATIVE AGREEMENT
[ARRANGEMENT]

The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Government of Belize, the Government of and the Government of

Affirming their continuing determination to work together for peace and stability, their respect for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of all States and their belief in the settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Have agreed as follows:

[Hereby declare that:]

ARTICLE 1

In the event of any form of armed attack against Belize externally organised or supported, or the threat of such attack, they shall [will] immediately consult together for the purpose of considering what measures should be taken in relation to such attack or threat.

ARTICLE 2

1. This Agreement shall enter into force on
[This Arrangement shall take effect on]
2. This Agreement shall remain in force until
[This Arrangement shall continue to have effect]

Done at thisday of1981