

MO 5/6

PRIME MINISTERZIMBABWE: COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES

Peter Carrington and I have now discussed separately with the CGS the names of British Generals who might be offered to succeed General Walls.

2. We are agreed that any candidate should possess the stature, qualities and experience, which would make him acceptable in Zimbabwe, and give him a fair chance of success in a very difficult task. Our purpose in offering a candidate is to ensure that the integration of the three armies goes as quickly and successfully as possible, because the political settlement would be at risk if it does not. The job requires a big man.

3. Any British officer who was appointed would have the status of a member of the Zimbabwean Armed Forces, would owe his first obligation to the Zimbabwean Government and would be paid by them. The appointment of a serving officer would be covered by a Memorandum of Understanding between HMG and the Zimbabwean Government which would establish the terms and conditions of his appointment, stipulate the circumstances in which HMG should be consulted about the tasks he is given (eg conduct of operations outside the borders of the country), and reserve our right to withdraw him if his activities became an embarrassment to us. This is the type of arrangement we have for our Loan Service Personnel in Oman and elsewhere. The appointment of a retired officer could be covered by a contract negotiated privately between him and the Zimbabwean Government, and it would be for him to decide when circumstances required him to refuse orders or resign. He could, of course, look to our High Commissioner for informal advice, and if he did break his contract to spare us embarrassment we should have to compensate him for any consequent financial loss.

4. My first thought was that we could more easily limit our involvement if a contract officer were appointed rather than an officer on Loan Service terms. On reflection I doubt if it makes much difference. In either case we will have recommended

1001 agree that
it must be a
retired officer.

Prime Minister.

As Pym does not seek a decision from you now, but his list of candidates does include a serving officer. I still think that is a bad idea. Of the other officers mentioned, Ben King looks for the best - if he will accept the job. Agree to proceed as at

'A' is para 5 for the moment? *[Signature]*

- 24/7



the officer, and persuaded him to take the job in order that our heavy commitment of money and manpower to the training and integration of the Zimbabwean forces should not be wasted. Whether he is contractor or Loan Service will in my judgment make little difference to the way his relationship to HMG is perceived publicly either in Zimbabwe or this country.

A. 5. Against this background I suggest, if you agree, that we should not decide on our candidate now, but we should invite CGS to discuss several possibilities with Mr Mugabe during his visit to Salisbury, and to make a final recommendation in the light of Mr Mugabe's reactions, and his own assessment of the demands and requirements of the job. The names General Bramall has in mind are in no particular order:

General Sir Frank King aged 61 retired
 Lt General Sir Chandos Blair aged 61 retired
 Major General John Strawson aged 59 retired
 Lt General Sir Frank Kitson aged 54 -serving

/ I attach a short statement of the careers of each of these officers. CGS has also considered Major General Fursdon who is recently retired and acquired a wide experience in Africa as the Director Military Assistance Office. He has concluded, however, that General Fursdon does not have quite the stature for the job, and he suffers like General Acland from having been previously involved in Zimbabwe pre and post independence, which the High Commissioner thinks would be a handicap.

6. I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

Ministry of Defence

24th July 1980

APPOINTMENTS IN CONFIDENCE

Major General J M Strawson CB OBE

He commanded his regiment, Queens Royal Irish Hussars, with distinction during the course of 1963/64 in Far East Land Forces. He then moved to serve in the Ministry of Defence in the demanding appointment of the Colonel General Staff in the Military Operations Department which deals with all countries less the Home Base and BAOR. In 1966 he was appointed Commander 39 Infantry Brigade based in Belfast. In the crucible of this demanding appointment he had to deal with the many problems of combined police/military operations as well as the inherent political complications. In 1970 he was appointed Head of the UK Delegation to Live Oak (reinforcement of Berlin) having served as a student at the Imperial Defence College. He ended his career in February 1976 as Chief of Staff, UKLF. He is counted very unlucky not to have achieved the rank of Lieutenant General.

COMMENT

He has an outstanding brain, has excellent judgement, is a good organiser and possesses a flair for administration.

Lieutenant General Sir Frank Kitson KCB CBE MC

As a Captain and Major he successfully led unorthodox intelligence gathering operations in both Kenya and Malaya. These operations were conducted in the closest co-operation with indigenous forces and earned him the rare distinction of being awarded a Military Cross and bar. He commanded the 1st Battalion Royal Green Jackets between 1967 and 1969 with outstanding success. He was then promoted Brigadier and during the majority of 1970 was engaged on a Defence Fellowship, moving on in early 1971 to command 39 Infantry Brigade based in Belfast. In this appointment he gained outstanding reports. In 1972 he was appointed Commandant School of Infantry, Warminster, a post which he held for almost 3 years. He became a student at the Royal College of Defence Studies and subsequently as a Major General was appointed General Officer Commanding 2nd Armoured Division based in BAOR. Again in this command appointment he demonstrated his imagination and powers of command. In 1978 he was appointed the Commandant of the Staff College and is now serving as Deputy Commander-in-Chief, UKLF.

COMMENT

A most effective, intelligent and broadly based officer who has a good understanding of the African scene. He has acquired an undeserved and misleading public image. He has considerable depth of character and much drive and energy.

APPOINTMENTS IN CONFIDENCE

General Sir Frank King GCB MBE

Commanded the 2nd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment, 1960-1962, in both Middle East Land Forces and UK with distinction. Having commanded an infantry brigade group in BAOR he moved first to the Defence Overseas Sales Department and then, on promotion to Major General, was appointed Director Land Air Warfare. Between 1968 and 1969 he was the Director Military Assistance Office, a post which required him to travel widely. In mid 1969 he was appointed Commandant, The Royal Military College of Science, Shrivenham, and held the appointment until 1971 when he moved to command The Army Strategic Command and subsequently, in 1972, became Deputy Commander-in-Chief United Kingdom Land Forces. His appointment in 1973, as General Officer Commanding and Director of Operations Northern Ireland, required of him the utmost resolution and tact. He retired in December 1978 having served as Commander-in-Chief BAOR.

COMMENT

He is an experienced and resolute soldier as his career profile shows. His warm personality and obvious personal qualities make him an inspiring leader of men. He has, in addition, had the experience of working in highly charged political situations.

Lieutenant General Sir Chandos Blair KCVO OBE MC

Commanded the 4th Battalion Kings African Rifles in Uganda between 1959 and 1961. He was later appointed to command 39 Infantry Brigade, serving in both Radfan and Belfast following stints at the Joint Services Staff College and Ministry of Defence. He was appointed General Officer Commanding 2nd Armoured Division in BAOR in 1968 for a period of 2 years, following which he was Defence Services Secretary in the Ministry of Defence. He retired in February 1976 after serving as General Officer Commanding Scotland.

COMMENT

He is a charming man endowed with a great deal of personality and leadership qualities but is perhaps limited intellectually. His considerable knowledge of Africa would stand him in good stead but he may now lack some of his former fire and drive, however his warm personality would win him many devoted friends. He has some experience in dealing with international affairs.