

Belize)

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FROM UKMIS NEW YORK 140009Z FEB 81
TO IMMEDIATE F C O
TELEGRAM NUMBER 128 DATED 13 FEBRUARY 81
INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, BELMOPAN (PERSONAL), GUATEMALA CITY.

MYTELNO 123: BELIZE/GUATEMALA.

FOLLOWING FROM DAY.

1. GUATEMALAN REJECTION OF THE BELIZEAN TERRITORIAL OFFER WAS NOT UNEXPECTED. THE VIOLENCE OF THEIR REACTION WAS. WHY WAS THIS?
2. THE GUATEMALANS PROBABLY REALISED THAT CESSION OF ANY CAYS WAS UNOBTAINABLE AND WERE EXPECTING THAT WE WOULD OFFER A STRAIGHTFORWARD LONG LEASE ON A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF CAYS (I.E. ALL OF THE SAPODILLAS IF NOT THE RANGUANAS AS WELL). THEY TOOK THE RESTRICTED NATURE OF THE OFFER - PRESENTED INITIALLY AS OF LIME CAY ONLY - AND THE CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO THE LEASE AS WHOLLY OUT OF KEEPING WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS HITHERTO. IT APPEARED TO THEM AS AN INSULT, AND THUS AN INDICATION THAT WE AND THE BELIZEANS WERE NOT SERIOUS. PRIDE WAS BADLY HURT.
3. THE GUATEMALANS WILL ALSO HAVE SEEN THE HAND OF MR SHOMAN BEHIND WHAT THEY SEE AS A DERISORY OFFER. THIS WILL HAVE MADE IT EVEN MORE UNACCEPTABLE TO THEM.
4. IT MAY ALSO HAVE APPEARED TO THEM THAT H.M.G. WERE UNABLE, OR UNWILLING, TO CONTROL THE BELIZEANS AND, IF THIS WERE SO, THERE WOULD BE NO PROFIT IN CONTINUING THE TALKS, SINCE GUATEMALA COULD NEVER COME TO AN AGREEMENT WITH SHOMAN AND CO.
5. WERE DO WE GO NOW? THE GUATEMALAN REACTION IS NOT, IN MY JUDGEMENT, A MERE NEGOTIATING PLOY. IT WILL TAKE A LOT TO GET THEM BACK TO THE TABLE. THEY HAVE NOW AGREED, TO A FURTHER MINISTERIAL ROUND BEFORE CONCLUDING THAT THE TALKS HAVE FAILED. BUT THEY WILL BE LOOKING FOR SOME FAIRLY CLEAR ASSURANCE FROM US THAT MINISTERIAL DISCUSSIONS WILL HOLD OUT A REASONABLE PROSPECT OF AGREEMENT, I.E. THAT THERE WILL BE SIGNIFICANT MOVEMENT FROM OUR PRESENT POSITION ON THE CAYS AND RELATED TERRITORIAL WATERS.

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6. THE KEY TO PROGRESS THEREFORE RESTS WITH PRICE. IF HE IS PREPARED TO GIVE US A REASONABLE NEGOTIATING HAND (WHICH IN PRACTICE MEANS AT LEAST A GENUINE LONG LEASE, WITHOUT STRINGS ON THE SAPODILLA GROUP, AND ASSOCIATED TERRITORIAL SEA.) THERE IS STILL A CHANCE, THOUGH FAINT, OF KEEPING THE NEGOTIATIONS ALIVE. FAILING THIS, WE HAVE PROBABLY COME TO THE END OF THE ROAD. WE NEED THEREFORE TO FIX AN EARLY MEETING WITH PRICE, WHO WILL FIRST NEED TO HAVE A REPORT FROM HIS NEGOTIATING TEAM AND CONSULT HIS COLLEAGUES. I HAVE ASKED THE GOVERNOR TO IMPRESS UPON PRICE THE CRITICAL STAGE NOW REACHED IN THE NEGOTIATIONS AND THE NEED FOR HIM AND HIS GOVERNMENT TO TAKE BOLD DECISIONS. I HAVE MADE THE SAME POINT TO THE BELIZEAN TEAM HERE.

7. IT COULD HELP TO KEEP THE GUATEMALANS STEADY IF MR RIDLEY WERE TO SEND A PERSONAL MESSAGE TO THE GUATEMALAN FOREIGN MINISTER ON THE LINES OF THE TEXT IN M.I.F.T.

PARSONS

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