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In PM's OD folder

PRIME MINISTER

OD - 10th June 1980 - New Hebrides

I understand that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary will be raising the question of the New Hebrides at this afternoon's OD on the basis of a minute which he will be sending round today to members of OD this afternoon. It is probable that not all the members of OD will have seen it by the time of the meeting and I will have spare copies available.

2. You may care to suggest that the matter should be raised as Item 3 on the agenda after the discussion on the Brandt Commission's Report. I believe that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary mentioned to you what he had in mind at dinner yesterday evening.

3. The immediate issue is the precautionary dispatch of a company of British troops plus a battalion HQ to be prepared to carry out a joint operation with the French if necessary, because negotiations have failed.

4. I have not yet seen the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute. But after asking him to introduce the item, in discussion you may wish to cover the following points:-

- (a) Are we in full agreement with the French over the next step?
- (b) What is the attitude of the governments of Australia and New Zealand?
- (c) If it is suggested that the troops should be standing by in Fiji, will this cause trouble with the Fijian Government?
- (d) Fiji is about 800 miles from Espiritu Santo. How will they get into action if this were needed?
- (e) Does the provision of this force cause any problems for the Ministry of Defence? Are the troops trained and equipped for action in the climate of the New Hebrides? What medical facilities will go with them?

(Robert Armstrong)

(approved by Sir R Armstrong and signed on his behalf)

10th June 1980

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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTER OF DEFENCE

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(Signature)

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