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CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

Military Assistance to Zimbabwe

1. A key element in achieving a successful outcome in Rhodesia has been the role of the Monitoring Force in supervising joint military training between the Patriotic Front and Rhodesian forces as the first step towards integration of these forces. Mr Mugabe has pressed us hard to continue this assistance and provide other military training after independence. We have agreed in principle to this. It is much better that Britain should provide such assistance rather than see Mugabe turn to the Soviet Union or some other unacceptable source of help in this field. The Ministry of Defence are establishing exactly what is needed and will produce costed proposals. A programme for one to two years is likely to be necessary.

2. The first strain of such a programme should obviously be taken on our budget for military assistance overseas. Thanks to Francis Pym's agreement to help, we are able to make an allocation of £400,000 for Zimbabwe for next year and may be able to find some more from the UKMTAS reserve. But the indications are that the sort of assistance which Christopher Soames considers essential in the first year will require a substantial sum, possibly £3-4 million. There is no prospect of accommodating expenditure on this scale within our budget.

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3. The expenditure of £31 million to cover the costs of a settlement in Rhodesia has been approved. The current costs of those elements of the Monitoring Force which remain in Rhodesia are at present being drawn from that sum. However, in part because we shall now be able to return some of the Monitoring Force's equipment by sea rather than by USAF aircraft, we hope to make savings within the allocated total of some £3-4 million. I should like to use some of these savings to make a pre-payment of £2 million from our 1979/80 funds to the MOD before the end of this financial year, to cover the cost in the next financial year of a military training mission in Rhodesia and of courses for Rhodesian Officers and NCOs in this country. The principle of pre-payment for agreed courses is, I understand, an established one; and I believe that what I propose is consistent with the purposes for which Parliament originally voted the sum (ie to achieve and consolidate a settlement in Rhodesia) and represents only a continuation and expansion of what we have done up to now. I should be grateful if you could look at this proposal as soon as possible. If you can agree, we shall need to take action before the end of the financial year.

4. I am sending a copy of this minute to the Prime Minister and to Francis Pym.

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(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

26 March 1980



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