



NPG Mitchell

Duty Clerk 17/7/81

Ref. A05289

MR ALEXANDER

Belize/Guatemala

(OD(81) 38)

In this memorandum the Secretary of State for Defence and the Lord Privy Seal seek the agreement of OD colleagues to the line to be taken with the Premier of Belize, Mr Price when he comes to London on 22 July, following the failure to achieve a treaty in relation to Belize with Guatemala. OD discussed this problem on 12 February 1981. The present proposals by the Secretary of State for Defence and the Lord Privy Seal are in line with what OD agreed on that occasion although it has not yet been possible to establish a multilateral defence undertaking for Belize after independence.

2. The main elements in this problem are that it is desirable from the United Kingdom's point of view that Belize should be brought to independence as soon as possible, that as soon as possible thereafter the United Kingdom should be able to shed Belize as a defence commitment, and that in the interim period satisfactory control should be maintained over the foreign policy of the Belize Government. In the absence of satisfactory agreement with Guatemala, which is regrettable but seems inevitable in present circumstances, the proposals in OD(81) 38 seem to represent the best deal that can be achieved. As telegram number 313 of 16 July from Guatemala City (attached) makes clear, there must be some doubt about the Guatemalan reaction to them. Subject to points which may be raised by OD colleagues, I would advise the Prime Minister to agree:

- ✓ a. to the terms of the draft SECRET minute at Annex A to OD(81) 38;
- b. to the proposed public statement in paragraph 8 of OD(81) 38 and the text in Annex B in relation to multilateral consultative defence arrangements;
- ✓ c. a target date of 21 September for Belize independence.

Am very unhappy about situation. We could refuse it.

ms

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

17 July 1981

GRS 200

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FM GUATEMALA CITY 16/2025Z JUL 81

TO PRIORITY F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 313 OF 16 JULY

R F I : PRIORITY BELMOPAN (PERSONAL) ROUTINE WASHINGTON UKMIS NEW YORK

MY TELNO 308 : BELIZE/GUATEMALA

1. THERE HAS STILL BEEN NO FORMAL PRESS CONFERENCE BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER BUT THE MORNING PAPERS OF 16 JULY REPORT REMARKS THAT BOTH HE AND THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE HAVE MADE TO JOURNALISTS.

2. THE FOREIGN MINISTER IS REPORTED AS HAVING SAID THAT GUATEMALA WILL NOT STEP BACK IN THE NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE INDEPENDENCE OF BELIZE AND WILL STAND BY THE MARCH HEADS OF AGREEMENT. HOWEVER IF GREAT BRITAIN WERE TO GRANT UNILATERAL INDEPENDENCE TO BELIZE, THEREBY DEPARTING FROM THE HEADS OF AGREEMENT, GUATEMALA WOULD DECLARE SUCH AN ACT ILLEGAL. BELIZE CONTINUED TO BE PART OF THE NATIONAL TERRITORY AS PRESIDENT LUCAS HAD SAID IN HIS SPEECH OF 21 JULY (MY TELNO 289).

3. THE MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, GENERAL GUEVARA, ALSO SAID THAT GUATEMALA STOOD BY THE HEADS OF AGREEMENT AND CONSIDERED THAT ANY TREATIES OR NEGOTIATION SHOULD BE BASED ON THEM. GUATEMALA WAS NOT THINKING OF ATTACKING ANYBODY AND WAS NOT A BELLICOSE COUNTRY. HOWEVER IF BELIZE BECAME INDEPENDENT WITHOUT AN AGREEMENT GUATEMALA WOULD RESERVE HER RIGHT TO TAKE WHATEVER ACTION PRESIDENT LUCAS DECIDED AND THE ARMY WOULD SUPPORT WHATEVER POLICY THE PRESIDENT ADOPTED. UNILATERAL INDEPENDENCE OF THAT TERRITORY, IF NOT REACHED BY AGREEMENT WITH GUATEMALA, WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE CONSIDERED AS AN AGRESSION WHICH WOULD AFFRONT THE GUATEMALAN PEOPLE.

WILMSHURST

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