



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

22 July 1981

*Bonnie Minister*

*has seen.*

*[Signature]*

*Dear Michael,*

Belize: Defence Arrangements

Mr Ridley discussed future defence arrangements for Belize with Premier Price today. It was agreed that Mr Price should speak on the lines of the attached 'statement on Defence' at a public meeting in Belize after his return on Sunday 26 July. It will be seen that this does not include any reference to the possibility of providing direct assistance as part of a consultative arrangement. At the same time it would be announced that we were planning to grant independence on 21 September this year (as foreshadowed - the Lord Privy Seal's and the Defence Secretary's joint memorandum dated 17 July (OD(81)38). A parallel announcement would be made here; Parliament would be informed on Monday.

There was also discussion of the terms of a secret memorandum (a draft of which was annexed to OD(81)38). Mr Price asked for a Belizean veto on the withdrawal of the British garrison during the first six months after independence, but he was told that this could not be agreed. I enclose a copy of the draft of the secret memorandum after discussion with Premier Price. As you see, the best that Mr Ridley felt able to offer him, subject to Cabinet approval here, was an undertaking in the secret memorandum to the effect that 'HMG would maintain a garrison in Belize for up to nine months; before any reduction or withdrawal of forces, there would be consultation between the two governments'. This is less than the previous OD agreement that the garrison might remain for 'up to a year after independence'. The additional offer of consultations commits us to nothing. The condition about Belize's foreign policy being acceptable in the OD minutes is contained in paragraph 5 of this memorandum.

Mr Price flies tomorrow to Washington where he hopes to persuade the Americans to associate themselves with the training of the Belize Defence Force and possibly to persuade them to agree to consult with the UK and others in the event of an armed attack against Belize. We hope for a favourable response on the former points, but do not rate highly his chances of success on the latter point.

/Mr Price



Mr Price remains confident that the sum of the arrangements we are making for the defence of Belize will prove sufficient for him to satisfy public opinion in his own country that he is leading Belize into a secure independence.

I am sending a copy of this letter (which has not yet been seen by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary) to Jonathan Dawson (MOD)

*yours ever*

*Rodney Lyne*

(R M J Lyne)  
Private Secretary

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BELIZE : STATEMENT ON DEFENCE

Premier Price of Belize and the Hon Nicholas Ridley MP, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, discussed on 22 July the arrangements to be made after independence for the defence of Belize.

Recognising its responsibility to bring Belize to secure independence, Her Majesty's Government has agreed with the Government of Belize appropriate measures to ensure a sound basis for the future security of Belize from <sup>any</sup> external threat. It was agreed that British forces would remain in Belize after independence for an appropriate period, under arrangements to be made in an Exchange of Notes between the two Governments on the attainment of independence by Belize. At the same time the British Government would provide military training, aid and assistance including the provision of training teams and Loan Service Personnel to assist in the development and growth of the Belize Defence Force. The Belize Government for its part would make available training areas for use by British forces as required.

It was further agreed that certain countries in the region would be invited to participate in arrangements with the United Kingdom under which, in the event of armed attack against Belize, externally organised or supported, or the threat of such an attack, they would consult together to consider what measures should be taken in relation to such an attack.

These arrangements should be viewed in the context of Belize's membership of the United Nations and of the Commonwealth, and against the background of the international support already expressed for Belize's independence within its traditional and existing borders.

Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Belize consider that these measures provide a sound basis for the future security and territorial integrity of Belize.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY

In answer to questions if necessary:

The size of the garrison and the length of its stay will be decided by the British Government in the light of the circumstances at the time.

SECRET

SECRET MINUTE PROVIDING FOR BRITISH FORCES IN BELIZE AFTER INDEPENDENCE

1. At the request of the Government of Belize, the United Kingdom Government will maintain a garrison in Belize for the defence of Belize against external threat for up to nine months. Before any withdrawal or reduction of forces, there would be consultations between the two Governments. During this period and thereafter, Her Majesty's Government will be prepared to provide British military personnel in the form of training teams and Loan Service Personnel to assist in the expansion of the Belize Defence Force.
2. The Government of Belize will enter into arrangements satisfactory to both Governments in relation to the status of the British forces which will come into force on independence.
3. Requests for the use of the British garrison in support of the Belize Defence Force will be made to the United Kingdom Government through the British High Commissioner. It is no part of the function of the British garrison to assist in or otherwise take part in operations concerned with internal security or with the enforcement of law and order.
4. The Government of Belize will not without the consent of the United Kingdom Government permit the presence in Belize of any forces of any other State during the period for which British Forces are present in Belize under these arrangements.
5. The Government of Belize while exercising sole sovereign responsibility for Belize's foreign policy recognise the need to avoid any course of action likely to precipitate an external threat to the country and embroil the British Forces stationed there. The United Kingdom Government reserve the right to withdraw their troops if, in their judgement and after due warning, the actions of the Government of Belize seem likely to precipitate such a threat.
6. Any announcement on the subject of retention of British forces should refer to the terms of the public statement agreed between the two governments.

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