



SECRET

Belize 22

Amint Rod comment

A.J.C. $\frac{20}{4}$

ka.

PM/82/28
PRIME MINISTER

Belize: British Garrison

1. Following your and John Nott's agreement to defer the withdrawal of the garrison, I have been giving thought to the best way of putting this both to Mr Price and to the US Government, bearing in mind your own desire that we should use this decision as positively as possible with the Americans. I also have in mind the likely reactions here and, in particular, the need to ensure that this issue does not become a point of unnecessary parliamentary controversy.
2. It is impossible to predict now how the Falklands problem will affect our relations with either the US Government or Latin American governments. Moreover we need to have a clearer understanding of the nature of the new Guatemalan regime and their prospects for survival as well as their attitudes towards Belize. The current assessment here suggests that the Guatemalan armed forces are not for the moment planning military action against Belize, but you will have seen a report from Caracas which suggests that at least some Venezuelans do not agree with this assessment.
3. The US are of course crucial in all this. While we have received a number of indications of their concern over our plans for withdrawal, we have not yet embarked on a dialogue with them about those plans in the light of the new circumstances. I believe that our first need is to reassure the Americans that we would not wish to take a precipitate or unilateral decision on the garrison while so many uncertainties beset us. Similarly, we should seek to give a similar reassurance to Mr Price while making clear that our long term aim remains unchanged.

/4.

SECRET



SECRET

4. I therefore propose that in your letter to Mr Price, and in the parallel message which we shall have to send to the US Government, we should not give any indication of a new date. I attach a draft letter from you to Mr Price on these lines.

5. I appreciate that John Nott, in particular, will want to have a firm commitment to a withdrawal date so that his planners may begin to consider what steps need to be taken. But I believe it would be most unwise to make a hard and fast commitment, even internally at this stage, to withdrawal by 21 September. In any event, I take the view that we must use this time to reappraise the relationship between foreign policy and defence effort in this part of the world.

6. I am copying this minute to other members of OD.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'FP', with a horizontal line underneath.

(FRANCIS PYM)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
19 April 1982

SECRET

DSR 1 (Revised)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Reference

Prime Minister

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

The Hon George Price
BELIZE

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

I had not replied before to your letter of 9 February in which you asked us to review the timetable for the withdrawal of the British garrison from Belize because we were waiting to see whether progress could be made towards a settlement with Guatemala in the period following the elections there.

In fact, as you know, the situation has become even more uncertain. We have therefore decided that we should not proceed with plans to withdraw the garrison by the previously agreed date of 21 June. We shall not be making any announcement about this or about a new date for the withdrawal.

Your concerns about the future are fully understood here. We intend to continue to watch developments with Guatemala closely, to remain in touch with the US Government and to consult you as the situation and our ideas develop.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

2 APR 1982

