

Lops 7B

cc Sir Anthony Parsons

MR. COLES

This minute has seen.

AL 4/3.

THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG: CONTINGENCY PLANNING

The note circulated behind the Defence Secretary's minute of 16 February, conveys a broad brush, but nevertheless realistic, assessment of the scope for military counter-measures to Chinese threats. It does not, however, do full justice to the amount of work which the MoD are doing on this.

A number of ideas are being developed for the military steps which HMG might take in response to Chinese military pressure on the border, in the seaward approaches to Hong Kong, or on the airfield at Kaitak. This work is being done by a very small circle of military and civilian planners. Work is also being done in consultation with the FCO and one or two key members of the Governor's staff in Hong Kong, on the ways in which we might counter or respond to Chinese interference with the water supply, food supply etc.

I have taken up one or two points on the paper with those concerned in the MoD:

a. Warning Time: Major General John Chapple, who was until recently CBF Hong Kong, assures me that we could expect a good deal of warning of any intention by the Chinese to ferment an internal security crisis in Hong Kong. The Communist Cardres of the city are well infiltrated by Special Branch. It seems certain that they could give sufficient warning to permit all the preparations and reinforcements necessary to deal with a major internal security situation. By the same token, we could expect plenty of warning of any move by the Chinese to mount a military confrontation on the border. The movement of units of the PLA around China would be a slow, cumbersome and observable business, as it was during preparations for the Chinese intervention in Vietnam.

b. Loyalty of the Hong Kong Police: This is currently assessed as good, and equal to the demands of a "normal" internal security crisis. Nevertheless, it is difficult

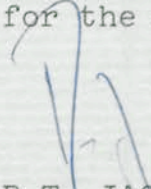
/to predict

to predict how morale would endure in circumstances when several disturbances on a large scale were evidently stimulated by the Chinese, and accompanied by ringing political statements about Hong Kong's future as a part of the People's Republic of China. In these circumstances the ethnic Chinese members of the police force would inevitably be concerned about their future under a different regime.

c. Air Reinforcements: The scope for operations from Kaitak by RAF aircraft is severely limited by the proximity of any number of airfields on the Chinese mainland from which offensive sorties could be flown by the Chinese. Even with Airborne Early Warning, which could be provided by RAF Canberras, aircraft on the ground at Kaitak would be extremely vulnerable. The situation could, of course, be improved by the deployment of a significant number of Rapier Fire Units and Blowpipe. The topography of Hong Kong is favourable to the deployment and operation of those systems.

d. Acclimatisation of Reinforcements: In the middle of the Hong Kong summer it would take some time for reinforcements from the United Kingdom to acclimatise and be fully effective. They would initially be confined to static duties. The plans for integrating reinforcements into the garrison's deployments are well developed, and frequently practised.

I have the impression that within the limits imposed by the needs of very strict security, the MoD are thinking through all the possibilities very thoroughly. They have not, since August of last year, given any further thought to the possible role of British forces in Hong Kong after 1997, or when different administrative arrangements may be introduced as part of the settlement with China. Nor need they do so for the present, I suggest.


R.T. JACKLING
25 February 1983