



MO 5/6

PRIME MINISTER

Agree
 (a) modification of BMATT's role as at
 X ?
 (b) proposal that BMATT should
 train more 5 brigade personnel
 as at Y ?
 A.S.C. 5/7.

ZIMBABWE: BRITISH MILITARY ADVISORY AND TRAINING TEAM

You will recall that you agreed in April that the British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT) should continue in Zimbabwe beyond June at a strength of around 50-60 men, with the aim of assisting the demobilisation of the Zimbabwean National Army (ZNA) and ensuring that its training methods are implemented throughout the ZNA. You also agreed that the future of BMATT should be reviewed again at the end of this year.

X. 2. Since April, Zimbabwean ideas on the role they would like BMATT to perform in the coming months have been slightly modified. They now no longer require help with their demobilisation programme and, in place of the originally proposed deployments of BMATT instructors to units, they now want their battalions to attend a central BMATT-run camp for unit training in rotation. I see no difficulty in our agreeing to these revised requirements. Our impression is that even without BMATT's involvement, the demobilisation process is proceeding fairly on grounds of merit and not factional allegiance, whilst the centralisation of unit training represents an improvement on the previous proposals since it will further reduce the risks - never great - of our people getting caught up in any kind of operational activity.

Y. 3. A separate but related development is a recent Zimbabwean request for the training of an increased number of individual officers and NCOs from 5 Brigade. The proposals would involve holding two additional short courses as a tail-piece to the existing phase of BMATT's activity, before BMATT's new role comes fully into force in August. No new resources would be required. The courses would include individuals from all Brigades but the majority of places would go to 5 Brigade.



As you know, a certain number of officers and NCOs from 5 Brigade already attend BMATT courses so this would be only an extension of existing practice. Yet the Zimbabweans themselves see it as a significant development. In a frank discussion with Commander BMATT, the Commander of 5 Brigade (who is backed in this by the Army Commander and Defence Minister) put his request in the context of a Zimbabwean decision to end the so-called "elite" status of his Brigade, to reintegrate it into the rest of the ZNA and to impose in it a degree of order and discipline which the North Korean instructors had signally failed to do.

4. Clearly, any involvement with 5 Brigade risks controversy. But in my view the risks in the modest extension of existing practice proposed are slight, whilst the benefits in terms of discrediting the North Koreans, promoting stability, lessening the chances of a repeat of 5 Brigade excesses in Matabeleland and bolstering the confidence of the white community are potentially very considerable. Commander BMATT is fully aware of the importance of maintaining the lowest possible profile for these two courses and will ensure that each course includes a reasonable admixture of officers and NCOs from other Brigades. We will, of course, continue to watch the situation closely.

5. I understand that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is content both with the modification to BMATT's role and with the proposals to train members of 5 Brigade. I therefore intend, subject to your views, to authorise these changes.

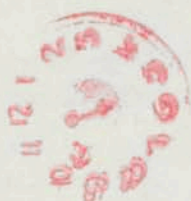
6. I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

[Handwritten signature]
Ministry of Defence
5th July 1983

*And what do we do/say
w- 5-Brigade commits further
excesses?
mt*



JUL 1983



COMMUNICATIONS

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FCF 84

Zimbabwe



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

6 July, 1983

Zimbabwe: British Military Advisory and Training Team

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 5 July in which Mr. Heseltine seeks Mrs. Thatcher's agreement to a modification of BMATT's role and to the proposal that BMATT should train more personnel from 5 Brigade.

The Prime Minister has asked what action we should take and what line we should use in public if, following our agreement to train more people from 5 Brigade, this unit committed further excesses.

She would be grateful for comments from your Secretary of State on this point.

I am copying this letter to Brian Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

SKF

A. J. COLES

Richard Mottram, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence

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