



FCS/83/280

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE

Prime Minister

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Content with the proposal at X,
 assuming that Mr Heseltine maintains
 his preference for extending the notice
 of the Guardship straightaway, rather
 than after the election?

X - Agreed

GibraltarDMS
30/12

1. In your minute of 20 December you sought my agreement to relax the period of notice for the Gibraltar Guardship from 8 to 96 hours. I note that you propose to make no alteration at present to the arrangement for stationing two Jaguars and a helicopter at Gibraltar.

2. I have no reason to contest the judgement that there is no longer a military justification for retaining the temporary enhancements to the garrison which were sent at a time of uncertainty owing to the Spanish elections in autumn 1982. But, as you note in your minute, there is also the political factor of the Gibraltar elections to be considered.

3. Sir Joshua Hassan has now decided to go for elections in January and the Governor has announced that they will be held on 26 January. One of the key issues will be the future of the Naval dockyard. It would be most unfortunate if those opposing the plans for commercialisation were able to make capital with an argument that British defence interest in Gibraltar is being reduced by referring to the removal of the Guardship from its present station in Gibraltar. Consequently, if it is operationally possible without imposing severe handicaps elsewhere, I would prefer the change in notice for the Guardship to take place after the elections. If, however, this is impossible, I agree that your proposal for maintaining a Naval presence for at least two to three days per week until after the elections goes a long way to meet the political problems I have mentioned.

X

/4. In



4. In addition I hope that even after the elections it will still be possible to ensure that there is no sudden break in the pattern of Naval visits to Gibraltar. This would help to reassure Gibraltarian opinion during a period which will still be politically difficult because of the run-up to closure of the Naval dockyard at the end of the year. In the Spanish context it would also help to make the point that Naval visits are part of the normal pattern of life in Gibraltar.

5. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
29 December 1983

Erkta erhaltw: Policy Pt 4



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 January, 1984

Gibraltar

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 22 December and Sir Geoffrey Howe's reply of 29 December about the enhancements made to the Gibraltar garrison last autumn.

On the assumption that Mr. Heseltine retains his preference for extending the notice for the Guardship, the Prime Minister would be content with the proposal for maintaining a naval presence in Gibraltar for at least 2-3 days a week until after the Gibraltar elections.

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

A. J. COLES

Ry

Richard Mottram, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence



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MO 5/16

9th January 1984

N. B. P. R.

A. J. C. $\frac{10}{1}$

p.a.

GIBRALTAR - TEMPORARY ENHANCEMENTS

Thank you for your minute of 29th December which I have considered in conjunction with the Prime Minister's comments in her minute of 3rd January.

In your minute you said that you would prefer that the notice arrangements for the Guardship should not be relaxed until after the Gibraltar elections unless there were very strong operational reasons for an earlier change. As I indicated in my earlier minute reversion to 96 hours notice would offer the Navy badly needed flexibility and operational ship time for duties elsewhere during the month of January. I have therefore directed that the Guardship should revert to 96 hours notice forthwith on the understanding that there will be a Naval presence in Gibraltar for at least 2-3 days per week until after the Elections. You indicated that this would go a long way to meet the political problems which you foresee and the Prime Minister was also content. On your final point I entirely agree that it is important both for Gibraltar and Spanish opinion that the normal pattern of regular ships visits to Gibraltar should continue.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Michael Heseltine

The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP

Orbitation : Pomy

Px4

9 JAN 1984





CF : to await FCS reply.
DWS
23/12

MO 5/16

Prime Minister
We will show you Sir G. Howe's
reply.
DWS
23/12

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY

This was referred to
during our 'Gulf' talks last week

GIBRALTAR - TEMPORARY ENHANCEMENTS

returned to JIC

We have been reviewing the force levels in Gibraltar in the light of JIC(83)(N)199 of 17th November. That assessment reduces the threat to Gibraltar to the possibility of action by some local commander. We do not consider that the JIC affords any military justification for the retention of the temporary enhancements to the garrison made last autumn. These consist of 2 Jaguar aircraft, 1 RN Lynx helicopter and a Guardship permanently stationed in the Gibraltar area.

2. On this basis, it would be appropriate to proceed with the recovery of the aircraft and the revision to normal notice for the Guardship. I accept, however, that the present uncertainty over dockyard confrontation precludes the immediate withdrawal of the aircraft, though I would hope that this could be achieved at an early date.

3. I do consider, however, that there are cogent operational reasons for extending the notice of the Guardship from 8 hours to 96 hours now. The continuing deployment to the Eastern Mediterranean of HMS FEARLESS has necessitated the programming of 3 frigates to undertake her training tasks. This requirement, coupled with the continuing demands of the South Atlantic commitment for our destroyer and frigate force, has placed severe strain on the Fleet. These burdens would be eased considerably were we to exploit the additional flexibility that would result from 96 hours notice for the Guardship since that would allow her to meet a variety of tasks, not simply that of presence in Gibraltar waters.



4. I understand that it is probable that an election will be called shortly and held before the end of January and that your Department would prefer the present arrangements to stand until that time. I appreciate the wish to avoid any risk that the question of the notice period might become an issue during the election campaign. I would hope, however, that we could minimise any such risk by planning for a frigate to be in Gibraltar harbour for 2 to 3 days a week over the election period, but otherwise ease the Navy's operational problem by relaxing to 96 hours notice.

5. I hope you will be able to agree.

6. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister and Sir Robert Armstrong.

pres. & secy, private secretary

[seen and approved by Mr. Henshaw]

Ministry of Defence
22nd December 1983

12 DEC 1983

GOVERNMENT : Policy Pt 4



23 DEC 1983