



London SW1A 2AH

3 February 1984

Agree to the action
proposed? FERB

Dear Sir

MS

Indian Request for Advice on Plans for the Removal of Dissident
Sikhs from the Golden Temple

The Indian Intelligence Co-ordinator, _____ has sent an urgent request to _____ for advice on an Indian plan for possible action against the dissident Sikhs currently occupying parts of the Golden Temple in Amritsa. The Foreign Secretary believes that the Prime Minister would wish to be aware of the approach and our proposed response.

Representatives of various extremist Sikh groups have, over the last year or so, taken up residence within the Golden Temple; some of them are believed to be armed. By a convention dating back to the British period in India, representatives of the Indian authorities, including the police and armed forces, do not enter the Temple precincts in uniform; but _____ understand from _____ that a contingency plan for possible action against the extremists is being drawn up by the Indians. The Indians have requested that _____ provide an expert to advise on this contingency plan.

The fact that this request has been made personally by _____ underlines not only its delicacy but the importance attached to it by the Indian Government. Given the nature of the request, and from what is known of the role played _____ it seems likely that Mrs Gandhi would have been informed before the request was made. In putting the request _____ made it clear that it had not been made lightly and that he was looking for help from them on a matter of real importance to the Indians.

The High Commissioner in New Delhi fully supports the proposal. He has commented that the request demonstrates the close relationship between Britain and India. A positive response would earn a good deal of credit; at the same time Mrs Gandhi would find it hard to understand a refusal.

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that it is of some importance that a response should be given quickly, not least because they understand that the latest developments at the Temple, where the rift between the moderates and extremists has now widened, may soon force the Indian Government's hand.

The Foreign Secretary believes that, in the interests of our bilateral relations with India, we should respond positively to the request. He has therefore authorised discuss the request with the and with the MOD and, subject to the agreement of the Prime Minister and (if the visit is to be made by a member of the armed services) of the Secretary of State for Defence, to make arrangements with the Indians for an early visit, either by or by another suitably qualified adviser. would make clear to the Indians that the true origin of the advice must be adequately safeguarded, and that HMG could not contemplate assistance beyond that which might be given by the adviser. The Foreign Secretary would inform the Prime Minister of the outcome of the adviser's visit; and, in view of possible repercussions among the Sikh community in this country, the Home Secretary would be informed if the Indians seemed likely to proceed with their plan.

I am copying this letter to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

Yours truly
B J P

(B J P Fall)
Private Secretary

F E R Butler Esq
 10 Downing Street

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cc FCO
CO

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

6 February 1984

BF | Thank you for your letter of 3 February about the Indian request for advice on plans for the removal of dissident Sikhs from the Golden Temple. The Prime Minister is content that the Foreign Secretary should proceed as he proposes. She will look forward to receiving a report on the adviser's visit and notes that the Home Secretary would be informed if the Indians seemed likely to proceed with their plan.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

F. E. R. BUTLER

Brian Fall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 February 1984

*Dear Robin*Amritsar

You asked for a report on the visit by to India to advise the Indians on their intention to divest the Golden Temple of Sikh extremists. has reported as follows:

- a. The spent eight days with the Indians. He travelled and operated Our speedy response to the Indians' request for assistance was much appreciated by them and they put every facility at the disposal of their visitor. He made a ground reconnaissance of the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar on 10 February, flown there by special helicopter. It was clear to the officer that the Indians had not given much thought to how they should root out the extremists, beyond applying the 'sledgehammer to crack a nut' principle. With his own experience and study of this kind of problem, he was able to advise the Indians of a realistic and workable plan which Mrs Gandhi approved on her return from Moscow on 16 February.
- b. Sir R Wade-Gery, who was most impressed by the officer, made three points to him at the beginning of his visit:
- (i) Our reaction to the Indian request can have done Anglo/Indian relations nothing but good;
 - (ii) it was therefore vital that there should be no leak about the visit. If there were, it would be extremely embarrassing for both sides, and, if the leak sprang from us, the Indians would never forgive us;
 - (iii) if and when the Indians put the plan into operation and if it went wrong, they should not be able to pin any blame on us.

/On this

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On this last point, a difficult one, the draws attention to likely difficulties and various requirements that need to be fulfilled if the plan is to have a reasonable chance of success.

- c. In summary, believe that this was a very useful visit which passed off well and should have left the Indians well satisfied. It remains to be seen whether Mrs Gandhi has the political will to act. The officer had the impression from the Indians that she would proceed.

have seen the telegram from New Delhi reporting the shooting in the Gold Temple last weekend and the deployment of a 'commando squad'. The was not present at the time. do not consider that the shooting arose from an attempt by the Indian authorities to implement their plan, but believe that the arrival of the commandos, if confirmed, could presage an operation.

In view of the possible repercussions among the Sikh community here of any action by the Indian authorities against the extremists in the Temple, I shall be writing separately to the Private Secretary to the Home Secretary (as was agreed in the earlier correspondence).

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

24/4
[Signature]

(B J P Fall)
Private Secretary

F E R Butler Esq
10 Downing Street

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 February 1984

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Dear Mr. Taylor

Sikh Community

The Home Secretary will have seen press reports of communal violence in the Punjab. The Foreign Secretary wishes him to be made aware of some background which could increase the possibility of repercussions among the Sikh communities in this country.

The Indian authorities recently sought British advice over a plan to remove Sikh extremists from the Golden Temple in Amritsar. The Foreign Secretary decided to respond favourably to the Indian request and, with the Prime Minister's agreement, an SAS officer has visited India and drawn up a plan which has been approved by Mrs Gandhi. The Foreign Secretary believes that the Indian Government may put the plan into operation shortly.

An operation by the Indian authorities at the Golden Temple could, in the first instance, exacerbate the communal violence in the Punjab. It might also, therefore, increase tension in the Indian community here, particularly if knowledge of the SAS involvement were to become public. We have impressed upon the Indians the need for security; and knowledge of the SAS officer's visit and of his plan has been tightly held both in India and in London. The Foreign Secretary would be grateful if the contents of this letter could be very strictly limited to those who need to consider the possible domestic implications.

I am copying this letter to Robin Butler (No 10), Richard Mottram (MOD) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Handwritten signature

(B J P Fall)
Private Secretary

Hugh Taylor Esq
Private Secretary to the Home Secretary
HOME OFFICE