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c/c

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

15 December 1986

NEW ZEALAND: FIVE POWER DEFENCE ARRANGEMENTS

I enclose a copy of a message to the Prime Minister from Mr. Lange, giving notice of New Zealand's intention to withdraw its battalion stationed in Singapore by the end of 1989. We are asked to treat this information as confidential for the time being.

BF // I should be grateful for a draft reply.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to John Howe (Ministry of Defence) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

C.D. POWELL

R.N. Culshaw, Esq., MVO,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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JB

cell (2)

SUBJECT
CC OPS
MASTER



PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T241/86

New Zealand High Commission

London

ms

12 December 1986

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher FRS MP
Prime Minister and First Lord of
the Treasury
No 10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

Prime Minister
Mr. Lange wants
you of New Zealand;
intention to withdraw
its battalion from
Singapore by 1989.

Dear Mrs Thatcher

I have just been asked to pass on to you the following message from our Prime Minister:

CDP
15/12

"Dear Prime Minister

As I am sure you are aware we are currently in the process of reviewing our defence policy. The future of the battalion based in Singapore is an important part of this review. The review has reached the stage where we are now in a position to let Five Power Defence Arrangements partners know the review's basic conclusions.

I know it will come as no surprise to you that the overall emphasis of our thinking is to concentrate our defence focus and capability increasingly on our immediate environment, and in particular the South Pacific region. This, as you know, was foreshadowed as long ago as the 1978 New Zealand Defence Review. Developments in our area in recent years give greater cause for concern than before and our own knowledge and capability to act in the region, should it be required, could stand improvement.

Conversely, while the situation in parts of South East Asia still presents challenges from a security point of view, progress towards political stability and economic development has been quite remarkable in the last two decades. Certainly, the transformation from the conditions prevailing since the New Zealand battalion and support units

/were

were first stationed in the region 30 years ago has been little short of astonishing. The progress I refer to does not, however, lessen our deep interest and concern for the continued peace and stability in the South East Asian region.

Weighing these various considerations, my Government is of the view that the indefinite continuation of the New Zealand infantry battalion's presence in Singapore is no longer appropriate from our national perspective. We consider also that it is not necessarily the only valid contribution we could make to the Five Power Defence Arrangements. Yet we would not want a decision to withdraw the battalion to upset, in however small a way, the atmosphere of confidence about existing security arrangements in the area. We are therefore considering a timetable that would have the New Zealand force return to New Zealand by the end of 1989. That will allow a three year period for making the necessary adjustments including, I hope, finding acceptable and beneficial ways in which we can strengthen further our bilateral, mutual assistance programmes to Malaysia and Singapore as a visible demonstration of New Zealand's continuing concern for the security of the South East Asian region.

I can give you unqualified assurance that New Zealand wishes to remain an active member of the Five Power Defence Arrangements. For that reason it is certainly our intention to avoid any precipitate adjustment of our contribution. At the same time an alteration in the form of that contribution has become desirable with the changing situation. I hope our planned course of action strikes the balance between these considerations in a way which causes you no problems.

I should be grateful if you would keep the contents of this letter confidential for the time being.

Yours sincerely

David Lange".

with best wishes

*Yours
Bryce Harland*

(Bryce Harland)
High Commissioner