



FCS/83/101

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE

Prime Minute

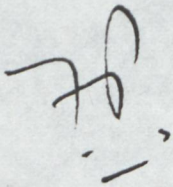
for information.

A.F.C. 4/5.

Policing of Demonstrations: RAF Upper Heyford

1. In his minute of 17 May to you the Home Secretary suggests that we make a high level approach to the Americans on the need for their armed guards to show maximum discretion during the proposed blockade of RAF Upper Heyford by the CND from 31 May to 3 June.
2. The Americans are already conscious of the need to avoid any untoward incidents. I understand that your Second Permanent Secretary recently convened a meeting (at which the Home Office was represented) with senior US servicemen and representatives of the US Embassy to make this point clear and to underline the political sensitivities. I also understand that the US Ambassador and his Deputy, Mr Streater, are well seized of the problem.
3. Nevertheless, to make assurance doubly sure I have asked that Mr Streater be called in to the FCO this week and told of the great importance that I attach to this issue.
4. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, the Paymaster General and Sir Robert Armstrong.

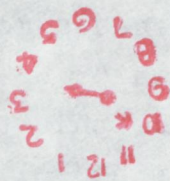
19 May 1983


 (FRANCIS PYM)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Defense. Policing of Military base.
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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

18 May 1983

Dear Tony,

The Prime Minister has now seen the Home Secretary's minute of 17 May to the Secretary of State for Defence about the policing of demonstrations at RAF Upper Heyford.

Subject to the views of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary she agrees that a message should be sent to the Americans along the lines suggested by the Home Secretary.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Brian Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Alex Galloway (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office), Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Timothy Flesher

(Timothy Flesher)

Tony Rawsthorne, Esq.,
Home Office

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RC [redacted] RJ

Prime Minister

The Home Secretary believes that an incident involving U.S. firearms could be a major election problem.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE

POLICING OF DEMONSTRATIONS: RAF UPPER HEYFORD

Agree that the Americans should be approached as at X?

A.T.C. 17/5

Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute of 12 May to the Prime Minister.

I strongly support your judgment that it would be a mistake to make any public reference to the presence of armed guards in the next few weeks. The arming of security personnel in any circumstances is a potentially controversial issue. In this case there is the added complication that they are US personnel outside our control. We must avoid this side issue obscuring the sharp message about defence policy which you and the Prime Minister will be putting across.

On the question of signs warning of the presence of armed guards, I quite see that it would be irresponsible not to put them up but I hope that they can be displayed so that they are only seen by someone who has already breached the security of the perimeter. I understand that some of the most sensitive areas are close to the northern perimeter but perhaps the signs could be screened so that they are not actually visible from outside the perimeter to the naked eye or with the aid of binoculars etc. I think that otherwise there would be an unnecessary risk of this issue coming to public attention.

I see the difficulty of signalling tactfully to the US authorities our expectation that firearms will not be used without good cause during the proposed blockade from 31 May to 3 June. But the timing, which could hardly be more sensitive, and the traditionally different approach to the use of firearms in law enforcement in the United States make me think that the possibility should, at least, be explored. Washington has as much interest as we have in avoiding a shooting which seems to have been unjustifiable or where the facts are in dispute. I have in mind a high level approach to the US Embassy who might be persuaded to emphasise the risks to the military commanders responsible for the base and the need for the armed guards to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary would, no doubt, advise on whether some message might be sent and how it could best be delivered.

Needless to say, I am well aware that the best way to avoid an incident involving firearms is to make sure that perimeter security is not breached and that, if it is, no-one passes the unarmed UK forces. With this in mind, I am keeping in close touch with the Thames Valley Police's arrangements for policing outside the perimeter.

I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Paymaster General and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Handwritten signature

17 May 1983

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Defence: Policing of Demos 2/83

