

Ref: B06645

cf. Belize: Dispute with
Guatemala: Pt 2PRIME MINISTER

c Sir Robert Armstrong

Briefing on Gibraltar and Belize

The Ministry of Defence are giving you, together with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Defence Secretary, a briefing in 10 Downing Street at 3.30 pm on Monday, 6th December, on the problems of defending Gibraltar and Belize.

2. The Ministry of Defence team will consist of

Lieutenant General Sir James Glover, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Intelligence), who will open each of the two presentations and cover the threat;

Air Vice Marshal John Sutton, Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Commitments), who will describe our military plans; and

General Sir Maurice Johnston, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, who will sum up.

The Chief of Defence Staff and the Secretary, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Captain Raymond, will also be present.

3. The presentation on Gibraltar is likely to last for half an hour and it is suggested that there should be a period for questions and discussion before moving on to the Belize presentation, which will be somewhat shorter.

4. The problems posed by Gibraltar and Belize are, of course, very different, both politically and militarily. Gibraltar is a colony, Belize an independent Commonwealth country. While both are claimed by their larger neighbours, the Joint Intelligence Committee do not believe that the Spanish Government would order military action against Gibraltar: the threat is of possible unauthorised military action. The main purpose of our reinforcement plan is to deter hostilities, as the Defence Secretary pointed out in his minute to you of 3rd November, because the vulnerability of the airfield means that we could not reinforce by air once hostilities had started. While the garrison in Belize serves as a deterrent against a Guatemalan attack, its role would be to hold the airfield so that reinforcements could be flown in.



5. The Spanish Prime Minister has just announced his intention of seeking his Cabinet's approval to reopening the frontier with Gibraltar to pedestrians only. This suggests that he may well wish to tread cautiously on the full implementation of the 1980 Lisbon Agreement, under which the United Kingdom agreed to open negotiations with Spain "in order to resolve all the differences over Gibraltar", and the Spanish Government agreed to the removal of all restrictions on communications between Spain and Gibraltar. The United Kingdom Government has made it clear that a definitive solution to the dispute depends on the wishes (not just the interests) of the people of Gibraltar.

6. Negotiations to settle the dispute between Belize and Guatemala have virtually stalled. The Guatemalan Government almost certainly regard an agreed settlement as too difficult politically. Nor has much progress been made towards securing some form of Commonwealth defence guarantee. We have asked the Americans to take the opportunity provided by President Reagan's Latin American tour to put some pressure on President Rios Montt of Guatemala, but the American response was not particularly forthcoming. It remains a strong British interest to withdraw the garrison and end the defence commitment to Belize as soon as possible: Premier Price was told that we intend to withdraw during 1983, but this has not been made public.

A D S Goodall

3rd December 1982

A D S GOODALL

Gibraltar

Yes.

A.S.C. $\frac{29}{11}$



~~John~~

10 DOWNING STREET

(RFA's office)

Lyndsey L has asked, about the meeting on 6 Dec 3.30pm on Gibraltar, whether it is acceptable for the following to attend.

Mr Goodall

Mr Facer

Mr O'Neil

Can I confirm?

Mal He
Duty Clerk
26/11/82