



Prime Minister

MO 5/16

To note that the regular U.K.-based Blowpipe troop will leave Gibraltar in mid-April and that the Gibraltar Regiment, now trained as Blowpipe, will then resume responsibility for air defence.

A.S.C. $\frac{14}{3}$ PRIME MINISTERGIBRALTAR AIR DEFENCE

When you were briefed in December on our arrangements for defending Gibraltar you were told that, as one of the permanent enhancements to the garrison, we were replacing the four Bofors guns which the artillery battery of the Gibraltar Regiment have used hitherto with eight Blowpipe air defence missile systems. You were also told that, as one of our temporary reinforcements to cover the period during and after the Spanish general election, a regular UK-based BLOWPIPE troop had been sent to Gibraltar until the Gibraltar Regiment had been trained to use its new equipment. It was mentioned that for planning purposes we were assuming that all the temporary reinforcements would remain there until 1st June but that this would be regularly reviewed.

2. We have carried out such a review in the case of the air defence troop. The Gibraltar Regiment air defence troop will have completed its training on BLOWPIPE in the UK - which includes firing live missiles - and will have returned to Gibraltar by the end of March. The Chiefs of Staff consider that the threat of air attack does not justify retaining the regular troop beyond that time. When the Gibraltar Regiment resumes responsibility for air defence it will be at up to three hours readiness - as it has been in the past, before the temporary reinforcements were made - compared with the regular troop's formal readiness of one hour. This is considered sufficient. The current JIC assessment does not link air attack with any of the maverick forms of action which are envisaged as being at all likely.

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Meanwhile UK-based BLOWPIPE troops are in heavy demand for the Falklands and Belize, with only short intervals between unaccompanied tours.

3. The Chiefs of Staff have therefore proposed, and I have accepted, that the regular BLOWPIPE troop in Gibraltar should return to the UK as soon as possible after the return of the Gibraltar Regiment troop with its new equipment. In practice this will mean that the regular troop will leave by mid-April.

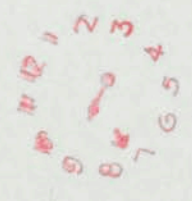
4. I am sending copies of this minute to the other members of OD(EM) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Handwritten signature

Ministry of Defence
10th March 1983



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

15 March, 1983

Gibraltar Air Defence

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 11 March and has noted that the regular Blowpipe troop will leave Gibraltar by mid-April and that the Gibraltar Regiment air defence troop, having completed its training on Blowpipe in the UK, will then resume responsibility for air defence.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other members of OD(EM) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

R.J. COLE

Richard Mottram, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence

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