



Australian Government



NATIONAL  
ARCHIVES  
OF AUSTRALIA

# Your story, our history

These copies are provided for research or study purposes. Before making use of the material for other purposes (for example publication) you should familiarise yourself with any copyright obligations.

## NAA: M1003, FIVE POWER TALKS

Series number: M1003

Control symbol: FIVE POWER TALKS

Barcode: 11586256

Number of pages: 9

The Hon Sir Alexander Downer KBE Cablegram - Five Power talks 11 June 1969

11th June, 1969.  
OUTWARD CABLEGRAM

1969

TO: CANBERRA  
NO: 10148  
FROM: HEADLAM AND CRITCHLEY

COPY 1 OF 5

FIVE POWER TALKS

On June 11 Cooper (MOD) and Aiers (FCO) gave New Zealanders (Miller and Thorne) and ourselves a run-down on the British attitude to the Five Power Conference.

2. Ministers yesterday approved Healey's position paper without alteration but not without noisy comments, especially on the scale of British training and exercises after 1971.

British Objectives

3. Cooper said Healey had commented privately that he saw the major objective of the Conference as re-affirming the importance of defence co-operation between Malaysia and Singapore. This is considered the more pressing because of Malaysia's recent internal problems. The British want this co-operation clearly reflected in the communique and will seek to include as much as possible on both the political and practical side of this theme. Otherwise the British will avoid any suggestion of change in the British policy of withdrawal but will emphasise their continuing interest in the stability of the area as indicated by detailed plans for training and exercises of significant forces after 1971.

Agenda Item 1

4. The British statement will reflect the foregoing. British expect that other participants will want them to give an account of the run-down and how it is progressing to date. They hope that Australia and New Zealand will hurry up detailed decisions on such matters as real estate and communications to enable practical military planning to be completed. British foresee the need for these decisions increasing considerably in the second half of the year. Cooper also mentioned the importance of ensuring that the facilities we wanted were available. There was always

the danger of pressure especially from Singapore to take facilities over. He instanced Singapore's interest in Changi and said that if Lee persisted and used strong economic arguments British Ministers might have to agree. If this happened it could create serious problems.

AMDA

5. Consideration of what points could emerge in general discussion under Item 1 gave us the opportunity to point out the danger that, if the British talked informally about AMDA, the Malaysians and Singaporeans would be likely to raise it in the Conference. British are adamant that they will have to discuss AMDA informally but beyond registering that the agreement will need to be reviewed, they have no hard and fast brief of what they will say to the Malaysians or when they will say it. They agreed that they would be influenced by Australian and New Zealand opinions at the pre-conference meetings and would be anxious not to prejudice the Australian and New Zealand positions. They will insist that the subject be on the agenda at the next Five Power Conference and would prefer to broach some ideas with Malaysia and Singapore for further consideration. We made clear our own views on the revision of AMDA, including our preferences for a direct British involvement rather than some association with a Five Power Declaration.

6. Both Cooper and Aiers insisted that any continued bilateral obligation by Britain after 1971 was out of the question and that this would apply irrespective of any change of British Government at the next General Elections. The main content of what Britain would be prepared to do was limited to a general declaration of interest in the region and 3 major considerations:

- (a) no automatic response;
- (b) provision for consultation in the event or threat of external aggression;
- (c) full cover for status of forces and training.

From the British viewpoint the looser these arrangements were the better. But Cooper said the chances of even going this far would be negligible if others sought to sit under the United Kingdom shadow.

**OUTWARD CABLEGRAM**

They will want to know whether there are any problems or any special training considerations to be borne in mind.

They set special store on the jungle warfare training school to which they will need some forward units who will be in the area up to 2 months, plus Gurkha and Gurmukhi forces from Hong Kong, and many other servicemen from U.K. There will be British forces in training in the area every month of the year. In most months there will be 200 or 300 British servicemen with post months when the total will reach about 600. (SEE BRADMAN'S JAN 694 OF 13 MAY). British did not want their programme to be put on a lead to trouble. This programme was one of those outlined by some British Ministers.

On the Service Training Assistance Programme which is being run by the Malaysians and which involves other S.R. States countries, the British will have no views to contribute but will be looking for options to take back and will be especially interested in what the Malaysians think.

Altogether they had just heard from General Wood that the Malaysians would sign a contract, next September, with a value for one £500 million, dollars to be in 18 months and the units to be operating by September 1971. Malaysians had added that they would not want Western Hill as a site. He suggested that they would put one £500 on the island at Dataran.

In answer to our question, Cooper said British would do what they could on the training side. R.A.F. had sent a signal to the East Command for an assessment of the Malaysian intention including a review of how quickly Malaysians would be trained and what should be done. Cooper added that the British would plan to start down Western Hill in 1971 and reserve equipment that would be needed in Britain.

Agenda Item 2

7. NAVY: British will be especially interested to hear from us the latest position in our discussions with the Americans. They will want to know whether there are any problems or any special timing considerations to be borne in mind.

ARMY: British will outline their plans for training. They set special store on the Jungle Warfare Training School to which they will send some formed units who will be in the area up to 2 months, plus Gurkha and Garrison forces from Hong Kong, and many other servicemen from U.K. There will be British forces in training in the area every month of the year. In most months there will be 200 or 300 British servicemen with peak months when the total will reach about 800. (SEE HEADLAM'S LAC 894 of 13 MAY). British did not want their programme to be praised or highlighted in any way as any such emphasis would be bound to lead to trouble. This programme was one of those criticized by some British Ministers.

8. On the Service Training Assistance Programme which is being run by the Malaysians and which involves other S.E. Asian countries, the British will have no views to contribute but will be looking for opinions to take back and will be especially interested in what the Malaysians think.

9. AIR: Cooper said they had just heard from Samad Noor that the Malaysians would sign a contract, next Saturday, with Marconi for two L 600 radars, delivery to be in 18 months and the units to be operating by September 1971. Malaysians had added that they would not want Western Hill as a gift. He assumed that they would put one L 600 on the airfield at Butterworth.

10. In answer to our question, Cooper said British would do what they could on the training side. R.A.F. had sent a signal to Far East Command for an assessment of the Malaysian intentions including a review of how quickly Malaysians could be trained and what should be done. Cooper added that the British would plan to shut-down Western Hill in 1971 and remove equipment that would be needed in Britain.

**OUTWARD CABLEGRAM**

11. The British Government will need to be reviewed in Canberra next week with Australia and New Zealand as well as in a wider context. Some of the practical questions will include whether the time schedule is practicable and how it could be co-ordinated with White Paper. In the meantime Britain would like to express our reaction to the Malaysian intention.

Paragraph Item 1

12. On exercises and training, Britain is not forced any problems with the 1970 exercises but will want to press home of the Malaya and Singapore the need for full and effective co-operation. They are putting a big effort into the 1970 exercises and expect other countries to give full and active support. Major joint exercises could be held frequently with the British forces which would be in the area. They will talk about and give details of minor exercises after 1971. But here also the stress will be placed on the importance of Malaya and Singapore not only providing facilities but also making facilities available.

Paragraph Item 2

13. Britain see the Joint Services Working Group not as a replacement for the Staffs Working Group but a useful means of dealing with problems affecting more than one service, handling home-training issues between the services and other practical problems. Another argument is that such a group might help to pull Malaya and Singapore closer together on defence matters. They therefore see merit in setting it up on a low visibility basis. Nevertheless Cooper stressed that they did not want to press the proposal too hard or embarrass anyone with it.

14. Britain hope that other participants will also give details of their programs for exercises and training in the area. They will be looking especially to New Zealand and ourselves.

MOVEMENT OF DELEGATION

15. Nixon and Cooper will arrive Sydney by London in June (1970) and proceed immediately to Canberra. They will be available for talks in IV and in June. C.S.S. will arrive

11. British accepted that the Malaysian intentions will need to be reviewed in Canberra next week with Australia and New Zealand as well as in a wider context. Some of the practical questions will include whether the time schedule is practicable and how it could be co-ordinated with Bukit Gombak. In the meantime British would like urgently our reaction to the Malaysian intentions.

Agenda Item 3

12. On exercises and training, British do not foresee any problems with the 1970 exercise but will want to press home on the Malaysians and Singaporeans the need for full and effective co-operation. They are putting a big effort into the 1970 exercise and expect other countries to give full and active support. Minor joint exercises could be held frequently with the British forces which would be in the area. They will talk about and give details of minor exercises after 1971. But here also the stress will be placed on the importance of Malaysia and Singapore not only providing stability but also making facilities available.

Agenda Item 4

13. British see the Joint Service Working Group not as a replacement for the Single Service Groups but a useful means of dealing with problems affecting more than one service, handling horse-trading issues between the services and other practical problems. Another argument is that such a group might help to pull Malaysia and Singapore closer together on defence matters. They therefore see merit in setting it up on a low visibility basis. Nevertheless Cooper stressed that they did not want to press the proposal too hard or embarrass anyone with it.

14. British hope that other participants will also give details of their programme for exercises and training in the area. They will be looking especially to New Zealand and ourselves.

MOVEMENT OF DELEGATION

15. Aiers and Cooper will arrive Sydney by Qantas 16 June (ETA 0610) and proceed immediately to Canberra. They will be available for talks 16, 17 and 18 June. C.D.S. will arrive

OUTWARD CABLEGRAM

in the pro-conference meeting on Wednesday, Monday and Tuesday still  
... (faded text) ...

12. On extension and extension, Britain has not proposed any  
High Commissioner ...  
... (faded text) ...

13. Britain has proposed a Working Group ...  
... (faded text) ...

14. Britain hopes that other participants will also give  
... (faded text) ...

15. ... (faded text) ...



Canberra 2215 on 17 June. He and CINCFE would like to participate in the pre-conference meeting on Wednesday. Healey and Moreton will arrive Canberra Wednesday morning (18 June). Delegation plan to leave Saturday morning 0900.

DISTRIBUTION

High Commissioner

Acting Deputy High Commissioner:

Acting Official Secretary

*Peru* A.V.M. Headlam

Mr. Critchley

OUTWARD CABLEGRAM

DISPATCH

High Commissioner

Acting Secretary High Commissioner

Acting Secretary High Commissioner

Mr. A. V. M. Leslie

Mr. G. G. G. G.