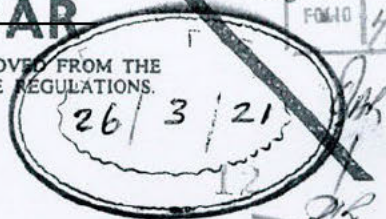


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S.200

JOINT INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE (S/C)

AGENDUM NO. 6/1963

SUPPLEMENT NO.1

JIC(S/C) Agendum No. 6/1963 of 12th August distributed copies of a note from the British High Commission and a minute from the Department of Defence on the above-mentioned subject.

2. The Director, DSB in his minute 26/3/21 of 21st August, has examined various aspects of this problem. Copies of this minute are attached to assist members in their consideration. It will be noted that paragraph 7 of the minute says:-

"To assist forward planning, I would like to see the British Note replied to as soon as practicable, so that - depending on the outcome - urgent action, by whichever authorities are involved, can be recommended or initiated by DSB."

Submission

3. It is hoped to arrange a meeting of the Committee for 10.30 a.m. on Thursday 5th September, when this subject would be listed for discussion.

[Signature]
Joint Secretary
Joint Intelligence Committee

Distribution

List A (S/C)



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26/3/21

Defence Signals Branch,
C/o Defence Registry,
Victoria Barracks,
MELBOURNE.

21st August, 1963.

Joint Secretary,
JIC (S/C)

TACTICAL Y SUPPORT IN BORNEO TERRITORIES.

The request made in the British High Commission Note attached
to JIC(SC) Agendum No. 6/1963 reflects -

- (a) British decisions, over the past 15 years, not to maintain
uniformed SIGINT resources in S.E. Asia; and, in consequence -
- (b) the Australian Services being the only immediate source of
most of the various skills required for the field interception,
processing and reporting of Indonesian communications.

2. The decisions referred to in (a) above are, I believe,
understandable. With commitments for uniformed SIGINT personnel in Europe,
the Middle East, Africa, the British Services have apparently
felt unable to maintain in South East Asia the resources which would be
required to provide a field capability against South East Asian targets.
The British authorities have no doubt been influenced also by the development
of the Australian Services' capability, and, in particular, by the plan for
the Australian Army to provide the SIGINT unit required to support any
Commonwealth Force committed in S.E. Asia under SEATO contingency planning.
They must also have taken into account the fact that a small Australian
Army SIGINT unit was provided for anti-bandit operations during the
"emergency" in Malaya.

3. There has however been no understanding with the British authorities
concerning the use of Australian resources in contingencies other than those
envisaged under SEATO plans. The present proposal has been under discussion
at the technical level for some months, during which time the British
authorities (presumably noting informal advice that they should not depend
on the availability of Australian personnel) have decided to -

- (a) transfer $1\frac{1}{2}$ teams of British Army operators from Germany to
Labuan (as noted in paras. 5 and 6 of the Note);
- (b) set up a small RAF field SIGINT unit in Singapore;
- (c) investigate the provision of a further $1\frac{1}{2}$ War Office teams
from Europe.

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4. DSB has also recommended, as a matter of urgency, that the British authorities should endeavour to obtain linguists and other staff needed for processing and reporting Indonesian tasks, and arrange for their training either at Singapore or at DSB, and should arrange also for the deployment of still further British Service operators from Europe.

5. The British Note points out that the prospective requirement in Borneo can be met "only by the formation of a special British unit for the purpose or by the provision of Australian troops with the necessary qualifications and experience or both" (para. 5), and that the Australian Army is thought likely to find it relatively easier to provide troops with the necessary skills (para. 6).

6. Disregarding possible political aspects connected with the presence of Australian troops in Borneo, the significant points for and against the proposed use of Australians, as I see them, are -

For

- (a) Due to their long experience of Indonesian tasks, the Australians - at least in the short term - would be more competent than their British counterparts. This would apply more particularly to processing duties, especially linguistic. (There are at present no British Indonesian linguists with SIGINT experience. Even if suitable linguists could be obtained, several months training would probably be required before they could be as efficient as Australian members. The training of British staff for non-linguistic processing duties could probably be managed within two months, and of operators within a few weeks, if members with established SIGINT skills were selected from British units in the U.K. and Europe).
- (b) The AMF 201 Sqn. in Singapore has been equipped and trained for field-level SIGINT operation. It could readily provide the self-contained party envisaged; clearly, the War Office would face much greater difficulty in assembling and training such a party.
- (c) Service in Borneo would give the AMF valuable operational experience which it is unlikely to gain elsewhere in S.E. Asia.
- (d) The additional Australian contribution to collection of SIGINT on Indonesia would further improve Australian standing with British and U.S. SIGINT authorities. This could possibly have wider benefits.

Against

- (e) The commitment of Australian SIGINT resources to Borneo would limit Australian ability to meet possible future requirements elsewhere. The field capability of 201 Sqn. is being maintained in Singapore primarily against a possible SEATO commitment.

The requirement in Borneo

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* (e) Contd.

seems likely to continue for at least (say) two years; allowing for reliefs, casualties, etc., it seems likely that a major part of the existing 201 Sqn. tactical capability would have to be committed to maintain and support an effective field-level organisation in Borneo, even allowing for the inclusion of the existing 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ British Army teams now at Labuan. In time, and given sufficient priority, this reduction in AMF capability could no doubt be made good by the diversion of additional Army personnel to SIGINT duties in the AMF, and by the purchase of additional equipment. However, I see no reason to suppose that it would be any easier, overall, for the AMF to expand its capacity, in this way, than it would be for the War Office to form a special British unit.

- (f) If it is accepted by the U.K. that the Far East is rising in global intelligence priorities, it would seem appropriate for the resources needed for these new SIGINT requirements in Borneo to be provided by the deployment of additional British personnel from the West.

6. Political aspects will no doubt need parallel consideration, and may have a major bearing. In this connection, I think it must be accepted that there could be no assurance that the movement to or presence in Borneo of an AMF unit of even as few as six or eight members could be concealed. On the other hand, the presence of two or three AMF specialists in a British unit would be much less likely to be noted. The significance of this and related aspects will of course depend on the political framework in which the British request is considered, and, in offering the following preliminary views, I have felt it necessary to make various (stated) assumptions about the political framework:-

- (a) There is no serious political objection now to the presence of Australian troops in Borneo; moreover, there is an intention (or a strong possibility) of committing Australian forces to the defence of Malaysia. In this case there would be considerable advantage to Australia in having the AMF accept a major responsibility for such field SIGINT as may be needed in Borneo, and in setting up an initial AMF party, probably in Kuching, as soon as practicable.
- (b) There is no serious political objection now to the presence of Australian troops in Borneo, but no present intention of an Australian force commitment to the defence of Malaysia and no other factors making it especially desirable that Australian assistance, of the type now sought, should be provided in Borneo. Here, I would recommend that Australia should not accept any continuing commitment, but should agree (conditional upon the British authorities deciding to establish a special unit) to provide any specialist personnel needed, at the time, to meet requirements which the British authorities had not yet had time to provide for (e.g., linguists).

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- (c) There are serious political objections now to the placing of any body of Australian troops in Borneo, but the attachment of two or three Australians to a British unit could be accepted.

My recommendation would be as for (b) above, with the additional limitation that the Australian assistance should be limited to the smallest number of specialists (not exceeding (say) three) essential to the operation at the time.

7. To assist forward planning, I would like to see the British Note replied to as soon as practicable, so that -- depending on the outcome -- urgent action, by whichever authorities are involved, can be recommended or initiated by DSB.

R.N. Thompson

(R.N. THOMPSON),

Director,
DEFENCE SIGNALS BRANCH.

Copy to -

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