

SUBJECT

Zimbabwe



cc MASTER

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

BF

16 December 1982

Zimbabwe: Sale of Hunter Aircraft

The Prime Minister discussed this question today with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence (Richard Mottram's letter of 24 November to Brian Fall, your letter of 2 December and the minute of 15 December to the Prime Minister by the Secretary of State for Trade, refer).

Mr. Nott said that, from the point of view of relations with Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Air Force, all the arguments pointed to proceeding with the sale of Hunter aircraft. But if these aircraft were supplied in present circumstances, particularly those surrounding the allegations of torture of the Air Force detainees, there could be considerable political repercussions.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary emphasised that it was necessary to bear in mind the strategic considerations. If we did not make this sale to Zimbabwe, the latter would probably resort to the Soviet Union or some other country for military supplies. We must also bear in mind that the morale of the white community could be badly affected by a decision not to supply.

After a brief discussion, the Prime Minister said that it might be possible to take the line with the Zimbabwe Government that we should like to supply the aircraft but would see considerable difficulty in doing so before the Air Force detainees had been brought to trial. We could enquire whether there was any prospect of their trial being brought forward. Before a final decision was taken on this matter, details of the likely timetable for delivery of the aircraft should be supplied and the FCO should reflect on who could most effectively deliver the suggested message.

It would be helpful if I could have further details on these points as soon as possible.

The Secretary of State for Defence said that we also needed to decide what should happen to BMATT after July. He thought it was generally agreed that the training team should continue its work in Zimbabwe beyond that date but with reduced numbers. This decision would be regarded as positive by the Zimbabwe Government.

/ On another matter,

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On another matter, the Prime Minister expressed concern at the recent report that North Koreans were now to train Mugabe's bodyguard.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and John Rhodes (Department of Trade).

A. J. COLES

Roger Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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