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cc Mr. Sullivan.
Sir A. Parsons

(2)

A.J.C. 25/4.

PRIME MINISTER

ZIMBABWE

I attach a minute by Sir Anthony Parsons about BMATT.

The other day Roger Gibbs, whom you know, asked me to see Sir Humphrey Gibbs' son who farms in Matabeleland and was back in this country briefly. I asked him and his wife, who came with him, how important BMATT was to them. He replied at once: "The day BMATT leaves we leave". He said that their presence provided enormous re-assurance for the white farming community. General Shortis, for example, visited the Gibbs at their farm once a month.

A.J.C.

22 April, 1983

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cc Mr. Jackling

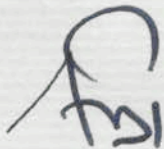
MR. COLES

ZIMBABWE: BRITISH MILITARY ADVISORY AND TRAINING TEAM

I have a lot of sympathy with Roger Jackling's arguments, set out in his minute of 18 April. We must certainly guard against indefinite renewals of BMATT to the point where we are seen to be supporting a deeply politicised army in a repressive one-Party state.

However, my instinct is that we should phase out BMATT over a period, acting as unobtrusively as the Cheshire Cat. To remove it suddenly, or radically to reduce its numbers, would be seen as a major political act, now that the media searchlight is firmly trained on events in Zimbabwe. Our action would be played up in the British media either as evidence of reluctance to be associated with increasing repression in Zimbabwe, or as a foolish act which would open the door to North Korea and possibly the Soviet Union. We would thus precipitate an unnecessary crisis in our relationship with Mugabe, given his extreme sensitivity to British public comment on Zimbabwe's affairs.

Hence, unless the situation in Zimbabwe takes a marked turn for the worse, we should proceed carefully, while bearing in mind the need not to allow ourselves to be stuck with an indefinite and increasingly undesirable commitment.



A.D. PARSONS
20 April 1983

We cannot reduce below
a certain number - then
own security might be
at stake. Therefore there will
be a line when all the remainder
have to leave

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ms.

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cc Mr. Coles (w/a) -

Zimbabwe
AR 17/4. 12

SIR ANTHONY PARSONS

ZIMBABWE: BRITISH MILITARY ADVISORY AND TRAINING TEAM

You should see the attached papers recording the Defence and Foreign Secretaries' proposal, and the Prime Minister's agreement, that BMATT should continue at a strength of around 60 men at least until the end of this year. It will concentrate on two tasks:

- a. follow-up training for, and monitoring the performance of, the Zimbabwean National Army instructors who have been trained by BMATT at Inkomo Camp. This will be undertaken by small teams of BMATT personnel making inspection visits to battalions;
- b. the assessment of all officers, and possibly senior NCOs, of the ZNA in the context of moves to significantly reduce the size of the Army.

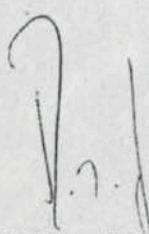
Taken at face value both of these tasks are worthwhile, and suitable for BMATT. If they are carried through objectively and with the full cooperation of the Zimbabwean authorities, then BMATT can have a constructive influence where it matters, and will leave the ZNA a better force than it would otherwise be.

I was closely involved in the formation of BMATT three years ago, and I have consistently been an admirer of its achievements, and a proponent of its continuing role in Zimbabwe. I am, therefore, naturally sympathetic to the arguments for the retention of BMATT, which are set out in para 4 of the note by MOD and FCO officials. Nevertheless, I am uneasy about the continuation of BMATT at the proposed size beyond June of this year, and I share very largely the scepticism about its possible influence in present circumstances, which John Nott developed during his visit to Harare in September of last year. I accept that the white community in Zimbabwe attach importance to BMATT as a symbol of our continuing commitment and involvement, and that the US would strongly prefer that we stay. I tend to doubt, however, whether BMATT continues to be a force for discipline and cohesion in the army, particularly since its operation and personnel are heavily concentrated at Inkomo Camp, and have been since November of last year. Although the excellent Major General Shortis, the Commander BMATT, can have some influence on the develop-

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ment of military policy, and does have occasional access to Prime Minister Mugabe, I suspect that it will become increasingly difficult for him and his successor, to compete against the influence of the Party, and those senior black officers of the ZNA who are beginning to resent the attention and advice of BMATT. Furthermore, I doubt whether our military assistance disposes Prime Minister Mugabe to be more responsive to our concerns and wishes than he would otherwise be. It seems to me that he has boxed us in very successfully, and is likely to keep us there by raising the spectre of military assistance from the Eastern Bloc should we withdraw. (I personally think that his desire to keep out the Russians or their surrogates is as strong as ours.) Finally, I regard it as disingenuous to characterise a withdrawal of BMATT after June this year, which is formally what the Zimbabweans have been led to expect, could be described as "precipitous". We undertook to amalgamate the three former warring factions; we have done so, and we have been at it for three years now.

Through a slip-up in the distribution of papers I did not see the Defence Secretary's minute until after Mr. Coles had recorded the Prime Minister's agreement. There are good reasons why she should not seek to contest the agreed view of the Defence and Foreign Secretaries. Nevertheless, I fear that over the coming months BMATT will find itself exploited to provide a cloak of respectability for activities by and within the ZNA which are at odds with our concept of how that force should develop, and which run counter to British interests.


R.T. JACKLING
18 April 1983