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PRIME MINISTERZIMBABWE

Yesterday in Cabinet we discussed in general terms the situation in Zimbabwe and the sensitivity of the British Military Advisory and Training Team's links with 5 Brigade in view of recent media reports of atrocities in Matabeleland. I thought colleagues might wish to know in more detail how matters stand.

2. It so happens that General Shortis, the Commander of BMATT, was in Matabeleland within the past fortnight. He is now in London and has reported that he saw and heard nothing which would lead him to attach any credibility to the reports. On the contrary, the several white farmers he met indicated that in their opinion 5 Brigade had been behaving much more properly of late. Indeed a ZAPU Minister has reported that the overall level of violence towards the civilian population by the security forces was much lower than it had been. And in fact some 10 days ago 2 Brigade started replacing 5 Brigade in Matabeleland. The redeployment is now completed. General Shortis is therefore of the view that the reported incidents must have taken place at the beginning of the year and not recently.

3. The timing of these allegations is of course unfortunate given that the BMATT courses being run primarily, but not exclusively, for members of 5 Brigade are well underway. The training is now public knowledge and there have been some media enquiries about this today.

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Mr Shortis  
his stage

Prime Minister

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However, given that there is no evidence of recent atrocities, despite the allegations, I see no reason to halt the 5 Brigade training which for the reasons outlined in my minute of 5th July, I consider to be very worthwhile. But of course there is no guarantee that there will be no future incidents and we will continue to watch the situation closely.

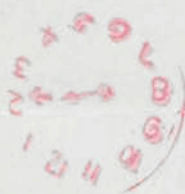
4. I am copying this to Cabinet colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*WJH*

Ministry of Defence  
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