CABINET

THE SITUATION IN MALAYA

Memorandum by Secretary of State for the Colonies

I circulate for the information of my colleagues an account of further steps taken since 1st July, when I circulated a paper (C.P.(48) 171) describing the main features of the situation in Malaya up to the end of June.

2. During the first eleven days of July there was no great improvement or deterioration in the situation. During that period, bandits were responsible for 26 murders, all but one of them non-European, in country districts mainly in the estates of Perak and Johore. There was no large-scale operation by the bandits until 12th July, when there occurred the incident at Batu Arang, the site of the only coal mine in Malaya, in which a band attacked the village and murdered four people. No important incident has occurred in the few days since the Batu Arang raid, though there were three murders on the following day, 13th July.

Measures to meet the situation

3. The authorities in Malaya and Singapore have continued their action to improve the means of protection and counter-attack against terrorists. The following additional measures have now been taken.

Federation of Malaya:

(i) The regular police force is to be expanded by 3,000 local other ranks and 85 officers, most of whom will be looked for from the Palestine Police.

(ii) A considerable additional force of Special Constabulary is being raised consisting of voluntary part-time constables, and paid full-time constables. The present strength of the Special Constabulary is between two and three thousand; the ultimate target will be in the region of six thousand. This plan will require up to 500 Palestine constables for training, inspection, etc.

(iii) A scheme has been drawn up by G.O.C., Malaya District, for the formation of jungle units for offensive operations against guerrillas in the jungle. Four
units are to be raised initially. Each unit ill
be officered by ex-officers of Force 136, where
available and both Malays and Chinese will be
recruited. The force, which is being given the
code name "Ferret", is to be raised under Emergency
Regulations, but will be administered by the Malay
Regiment and trained at the Malay Regiment H.Q.
at Port Dickson. No publicity is being given to
the raising of this force.

(iv) A scheme has also been drawn up by the C.O.C.,
Malay District, for the formation of a mixed
force to operate in the Northern Frontier to
prevent illegal immigration and gun running. This
will probably make necessary the raising of a
third Battalion of the Malay Regiment; this
question is still being studied by the Acting High
Commissioner and his advisers.

(As these additional police and other locally
recruited forces become operational, two Battalions of the
Malay Regiment and one Squadron of the R.A.F. Regiment (Malaya)
now employed on static guard duties, can be released for
operational roles. In addition some 4,000 Gurkha troops now
used as guards at strategic points could be returned for
further training.)

Singapore:

(v) The situation in Singapore has up to now been a
good deal less difficult than in the Federation,
though there is evidence that we must be prepared
for the possibility of trouble. The Governor is
recruiting twenty-five additional commissioned
police officers, of whom one will be a Gurkha-
speaking officer, four will be locally promoted
Asiatic inspectors, and twenty officers selected
from this country. I am endeavouring to obtain
as many as possible from among the ranks of the
former Palestine Police.

(vi) In addition 600 special constables and a considerable
number of unpaid part-time volunteers are being
raised in Singapore.

Equipment of the Police.

4. Measures are being taken here to expedite the despatch
of all the equipment required by the police. The authorities
in Malaya have telegraphed statements of outstanding orders and
new orders which they wish met quickly, and already a
substantial part of their requirements has been despatched by
air and by fast passenger vessel. Three items are causing a
little difficulty which will, I hope, be quickly overcome.
The Malayan authorities asked me for 10,000 carbines. These
are not obtainable in this quantity: I have asked them to
accept Stens or Lancasters instead and am awaiting their reply.
They have just asked me for 200 mobile wireless sets and supply
possibilities are under urgent investigation. (The need for
these, to enable forces to be summoned urgently to points of
attack, is obvious.) They also require five armoured
reconnaissance cars and 70 armoured cars. The War Office have offered instead 100 Lynx armoured cars and a reply from Malaya is awaited. The Lynx cars can be shipped quickly.

Strength of the Garrison

5. My colleagues will wish to have a statement on this subject. In paragraphs 16 to 19 of C.P. (43) I gave a brief summary of the plan of operations proposed by the Commissioner-General after consultation with the civil and military authorities. The plan of operations was drawn up in two phases, phase 1 consisting of the measures required to restore law and order in the settled areas of the territory, to maintain the economic life of the country, and restore morale, and phase 2 - the further measures necessary to liquidate the guerilla bands whose headquarters are in the jungle. In submitting this plan of operations to me the Commissioner-General said that the C.-in-C. Far East Land Forces, considered that the military forces available to him were, for the time being, sufficient, with some additional assistance from the Royal Air Force. The 1st Innishillings are being moved from Hong Kong to Singapore, and the additional air assistance required, which consisted of sufficient O.P. Flights to bring the total up to five Flights, is being provided. The Commissioner-General and the civil and military authorities have recently assured me that they have sufficient forces to ensure that phase 1 is successful.

6. I have now received a telegram dated 21st July from the Acting High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur, reporting representations by the leading Malayan rubber and tin interests, who assert that unless the situation is cleared up in a few months they cannot guarantee to continue production, and demand as an immediate reinforcement two further brigades. The Acting High Commissioner, Sir Alec Newboult, is discussing this matter with the British Defence Co-ordination Committee.

7. The number of troops required for phase 2 depends, as already indicated, upon the success of phase 1, and I was warned by the Commissioner-General that if phase 1 went badly an additional Division of troops would be required for phase 2. I have since seen Ministry of Defence telegram to G.H.Q. (COSSEA 659) of 23rd July warning FARELF that there will be great difficulty in sending reinforcements on a large scale for phase 2, and that there is no prospect of sending a division; one brigade is being earmarked for reinforcement should this be essential, and the possibility of sending another brigade is being considered.

A.C.J.

Colonial Office,
19th July, 1948.