

LOOSE MINUTE

Personal for:
AUS(D SATFF)

Through:
DMO

Supported 7/6 5/2

INDIAN REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

AIM

1. This submission seeks MOD approval for a visit to India to provide advice to the Indian authorities.

BACKGROUND

2. Representatives of various extremist Sikh groups have, over the last year or so, taken up residence within the Golden Temple at Amritsar; some of them are believed to be armed. By a convention dating back to the British period in India, representatives of the Indian authorities, including the police and armed forces, do not enter the Temple precincts in uniform. A recent widening of the rift between the moderates and extremists may soon force the Indians into some sort of action. They are now therefore preparing a contingency plan for action against the extremists.

3. It is this plan on which the Indians have sought expert advice. The request was by the Indian Intelligence Co-ordinator. It was clear this approach had been made after very careful consideration and that the matter was of considerable importance to the Indian Government. believe that Mrs Gandhi would be aware of this request. The High Commissioner in New Delhi fully supports the proposal. He has commented that the request demonstrates the close relationship between Britain and India. A positive response would earn a good deal of credit; at the same time Mrs Gandhi would find it hard to understand a refusal.

4. has been consulted and confirms that he can provide a suitably qualified and experienced officer at short notice to provide the advice sought.

PROPOSAL

5. would arrange for the visit to be carried out. They would make it clear /to. ...

to the Indians that the identity of the adviser should be adequately safeguarded and that HMG could not contemplate any assistance beyond that which might be given by the adviser.

ASSESSMENT OF RISK

6. Knowledge of this request has been tightly controlled by the Indians; and it is very much in their interests that the visit should not come to public notice. In these circumstances assess that the risk of any embarrassment to HMG is slight.

FURTHER CLEARANCE

7. The Foreign Secretary believes that, in the interests of our bilateral relations with India, we should respond positively to the request. Subject to the concurrence of the Prime Minister and if necessary the Secretary of State for Defence, he has therefore authorised make arrangements with the Indians for an early visit by a suitably qualified adviser. The Foreign Secretary would inform the Prime Minister of the outcome of the adviser's visit; and, in view of possible repercussions among the Sikh community in this country, the Home Secretary would be informed if the Indians seemed likely to proceed with their plan.

RECOMMENDATION

8. I recommend MOD approval is given for an early visit to India by a in order to meet this request.

3 February 1984