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Safe: Lord Halifax

*Hauifax*

PERSONAL AND ~~SECRET~~

BRITISH EMBASSY,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

May 30th, 1941

Dear Mr. President,

I lost no time in reporting to the Prime Minister the suggestions which you had made during our conversation on Wednesday. I have now had a reply from him explaining that he has telegraphed to you direct through the United States Embassy in London giving his views on the different points which you raised. He was obviously immensely pleased with your suggestions.

The Prime Minister has at the same time asked me to inform you that the code names for the operations mentioned in the second paragraph of this telegram sent through the American Embassy are: Puma, Baseball and Thruster in that order. The Prime Minister's telegram goes on to explain that he regards it as most important that these operations and their code names should not figure in any one document and I should therefore be grateful if you would be so kind as to bring this point to the notice of those officers in the Navy or War Departments to whom you pass on the names selected by the Prime Minister.

Just as I was dictating this I got a telegram from Mr. Eden asking me to tell you how delighted everyone in London was to hear of the splendid reception which your speech on Tuesday has had in the United States. Mr. Eden assures me that your speech was as deeply and greatly appreciated in London.

Believe me,  
Dear Mr. President,  
Yours very sincerely,

*Hauifax*

The Honourable  
Franklin D. Roosevelt,  
President.

**REGRADED  
UNCLASSIFIED**

BRITISH EMBASSY,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

May 30th, 1941

Dear Mr. Foster,

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I enclose herein a letter from Lord Halifax to the President. This contains a very confidential message from the Prime Minister and Lord Halifax would be grateful if you would be so good as to arrange for it to be safely delivered to the President as soon as convenient.

Yours sincerely,

*Arthur Koestler*

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Mr. Rudolf Foster,  
White House,  
Washington, D.C.

*Halifax*

BRITISH EMBASSY,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

December 22nd, 1941.

Personal and S ~~██████████~~

Dear Mr. President,

In continuation of my letter of December 17th regarding the naval and military conference at Singapore, I enclose herein two copies of a telegram which I received yesterday from Mr. Duff Cooper summarising the findings of this conference.

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

*Halifax*

The Honourable  
Franklin D. Roosevelt,  
President of the United States  
of America,  
Washington, D. C.

DECLASSIFIED  
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72  
By J. Scheuble Date FEB 8 1972

COPY OF A TELEGRAM, DATED 20TH DECEMBER,  
1941, FROM MR. DUFF COOPER, SINGAPORE.

Part One.

Inter-allied representatives (group undecypherable) Singapore on December 18th. All countries originally suggested were represented with (? exception of) Chungking, from which no reply to (? telegram of) invitation was received. The Prime Minister of New Zealand authorized me to act as their representative with the assistance of Commander St. Aubyn, R.N., who has been working for a long time in New Zealand.

2. General agreement was reached on matters under discussion. In the first place it was felt that importance of Singapore to the war in the Far East and to (? world) war could not be exaggerated. Its loss would clearly be followed by that of Netherlands East Indies, would confer on enemy not only power to isolate Australia and New Zealand from West, to separate British Far Eastern Fleet and American Asiatic (? Fleet) but would also put at his disposal vast oil supplies and practically all the rubber supplies of the world. Hardly less serious would be the loss of Netherlands East Indies which would (? isolate) Singapore and deprive the Allies of (? a) naval base of vital importance.

The Philippines are also of first-rate importance as an advanced and (group omitted) and flanking base for offensive action against Japanese (? aggression)s.

3. Our immediate plan is to dispose of our combined forces now available in (? Siamese) area so as (a) to keep the enemy as far north in Malaya as possible and hold him in the Philippines. (b) to prevent the enemy acquiring (? desirable) territory and particularly aerodromes, which will threaten arrival of reinforcements.

4. Our dispositions to implement this are (a) land forces disposed to hold up (? enemy) advance to maximum degree possible, (b) air reconnaissance established as far north as

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State Dept. Letter, 1-2-72

By J. Schauble Date \_\_\_\_\_

FEB 8 1972

practicable, (c) naval surface forces: United States Tasmanian forces in Apia-Sourabaya area; Dutch West Java Sea; British Singapore-Sunda and defence South Malaya and Jo (sic ? Johore) (? Straits), (d) United States and Dutch submarines operating offensively in South China Seas and off East Coast of Malaya, (e) air striking forces operating from Singapore Lucalan West Borneo and Eastern archipelago.

5. Our urgent and immediate need is for reinforcements. We have taken (? note of) steps being taken to (? provide for) these and are agreed that they must be on a scale not only to meet present scale of attack but also those likely to be put in the field against us. (?We are) also agreed as to necessity to concentrate our available naval strength to ensure safe passage through Far Eastern area.

6. We are agreed that the (?plans) (? must) include unloading convoys at Netherlands East Indies ports (? should) waters further north become unusable, aircraft being flown to destination, troops and stores ferried. It is also agreed that United States convoy at present directed to Brisbane should proceed to Sourabaya for aircraft to be assembled there and flown on to destination decided upon.

7. It is necessary to keep open the following air lines of communication: (a) Australia-Java, Australia-Philippines, (b) Middle East-India-Burma-Sumatra-Philippines or Malaya and Honolulu, New Zealand, Netherlands East Indies, Philippines, Malaya and following sea lines of communication: (a) (group undecypherable) (India)-Netherlands East Indies-Philippines-Malaya, also Red Sea and Persian Gulf (b) Australia, Netherlands East Indies, Philippines, Malaya, via Sunda or Malacca Straits (d) (sic) Australia and New Zealand to North and South America.

8. It is most desirable that Chinese should be asked to maintain maximum pressure upon the Japanese, first in order to contain as many divisions as possible and subsequently to provide bases for long distance bombing attacks on Japanese.

9. Any effort of same (? nature) with (group undecypherable) on the part of (? Russia) would also plainly prove of highest value.

10. Finally it was the view of the conference that situation, although serious, need not give rise to undue pessimism provided necessary reinforcements are supplied in available time.

11. Time is essential factor.

12. A sub-committee of conference has outlined immediate plans and its recommendations follow in Part Two of this message.

Part II.

Begins.

The situation is serious and it is recommended following steps be put into immediate operation:

(a) Pass air reinforcements to Malaya via Burma, Sumatra and Java.

(b) Pass air reinforcements to Philippines via Australia and Netherlands East Indies. Eventually establish a regular air traffic system from Australia to the Philippines.

(c) Maintain the strongest possible striking forces in South China and West Java numbers built up on British and Dutch naval forces now available. Reinforce submarine force now based at Singapore.

(d) Maintain the strongest possible striking force in Celebes Sea and Macassar Straits area, built up on Tasmanian Force 5 and local Dutch naval forces.

(e) Pass American air convoy now proceeding to Brisbane through (? to) Sourabaya with the help of Australian forces and United States Tasmanian Force 5.

(f) Pass land reinforcements for Malaya through Sunda Straits with the help of combined air forces, Dutch and British naval forces, United States Tasmanian Force 5.

(g) Secure aerodromes in Northern Sumatra and West Borneo.

(h) Eventually pass land reinforcements to the Philippines from the South.

2. With the situation as it is today, we consider the minimum reinforcements for Malaya immediately required to stabilize the situation are as follows:

Air. 4 Fighter squadrons  
4 Bomber squadrons  
1 P Escorting flight  
1 Transport flight

Reserves collected 100% for fighters and 50% for bomber aircraft to complete existing squadrons and their reserves, i.e. approximately 50 single-engine fighters and 12 Hudsons.

Land. 1 brigade group  
1 division  
3 light A/A regiments and  
2 heavy A/A regiments

( /? one of/ each type for Dutch aerodromes).

1 anti-tank regiment  
reinforcements for 9th and 11th divisions  
50 light tanks  
350 anti-tank rifles  
Bofors ammunition  
500 Tommy guns with ammunition unit (sic)  
first (sic) transport vehicle (? "S" omitted).

3. The requirements in paragraph 2 are immediate to stabilize the position.

4. We are not in a position to assess the reinforcements required for the Philippines. The Japanese have (? 5) divisions still available for operation against Malaya. To meet this (? threat) further large reinforcements are necessary.

5. It will be realized that in order to comply with the wishes of the President of the United States this telegram had to be prepared in haste.

BRITISH EMBASSY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

PERSONAL AND ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

December 31st, 1941

Dear Mr. President,

I enclose herein a copy of a telegram which I have just received from our Ambassador in Cairo. This telegram is headed "Following from Mr. Bullitt and Captain Lyttleton".

I am having a copy sent to the Prime Minister.

Believe me,

Dear Mr. President,

Yours very sincerely,

*Halifax*

The Honourable

Franklin D. Roosevelt,

President of the United States.

DECLASSIFIED  
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72  
FEB 8 1972  
By J. Schauble Date \_\_\_\_\_

Telegram from Cairo, dated December 31st, 1941.

~~TOP SECRET~~

Following from Mr. Bullitt and Captain Lyttleton.

Please convey simultaneously to President Roosevelt and the Prime Minister personally.

Begins.

This telegram represents the agreed views of Mr. Bullitt and myself on the subject of possible invasion of Tunisia if and when all Tripolitania should be occupied by His Majesty's Forces. We have had the advantage of a general discussion with Catroux, particularly upon the French officers in Tunisia, but we could not carry on the discussion very far for obvious reasons.

2. We assume the following premise applies to-day:

(A) That some resistance by the French in Tunisia is certain and that French blood would be shed.

(B) That the strain on shipping and Naval escorts would preclude the immediate supply of substantial forces in Tunisia from Alexandria and that, therefore, the bulk of any supplies for these forces must come through the Western Mediterranean.

(C) That it would be impossible to supply forces through the Western Mediterranean if the French in Algeria and Morocco should be engaged in hostilities against us. We must count on the probability that German Air reinforcements would cross to Algeria and Morocco and operate against our shipping from those bases. We must also count on the probability that the Vichy French fleet would operate against us.

3. The/

3. The Commanders in Chief have not yet completed their study of the problem and the above premises may consequently be qualified, but we do not think they can be materially changed.

4. Catroux put the minimum force necessary to invade Tunisia from the South at six Divisions. We think this should be accepted with reserve but taking into account the possibility of large reinforcements being brought from Algeria and Morocco we consider the force must be substantial.

5. We consider that in view of 2 (C) above operation would not be sound unless simultaneous with the invasion of Tunisia United States Forces should seize Casablanca or possibly Agadir. Such an operation would seem to involve preliminary seizure or control of Canaries, the Azores and Maderia; we think invasion of Tunisia must not be considered in isolation from the problem or of reactions of all French North African Colonies. We believe there would be French resistance to landing of American forces unless careful preparations should have been made within French North African Colonies. We think it may be possible to have American forces welcomed in French North African Colonies provided certain French leaders can be approached and informed that an American landing in force at either Casablanca or possibly Agadir is to be expected.

6. Above opinions are based on the present situation remaining unaltered. We believe the Germans may take action which would bring the majority of the French in North Africa over to our side if we should be in a position to give them effective and

immediate/

immediate aid.

7. We therefore recommend that if resources permit (A) British forces in Middle East which are already estimated to be considerably short of minimum required for defence of two fronts, should be reinforced; (B) U.S.A. should immediately start preparations for Casablanca expedition; (C) propaganda and subversive activities in all French North African Colonies should be immediately concerted between the United States and Great Britain.

8. With regard to 7 (A) considerable supply problems will be involved in employing forces in Tripolitania and if premise 2 (B) is correct we must look to supplies and reinforcements for Tunisia after its occupation being shipped through Western Mediterranean.

9. With regard to 7 (C) the nature of the propaganda is one of nice judgement and Bullitt and I propose to sketch tentative plan for submission to you.

10. We would emphasize that this is a preliminary telegram which is sent by us to reach you while the Prime Minister is still in Washington and that it is sent without full consultation between Commanders in Chief. It appears however to us that if resources are available in the near future the planning must start at once in order that we may either be ready to undertake invasion by force at a later date or reach the highest possible state of preparations to take advantage of any favourable opportunity produced by German action against France.