

subject n. 2074/127/40

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Department of State
Washington

December 13, 1940.

My dear Mr. Chargé d'Affaires:

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The receipt is acknowledged of your letter of November 22, 1940, enclosing a schedule describing the areas and facilities proposed to be granted to the United States for bases in Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Antigua, St. Lucia, and British Guiana. Your letter commented as regards this schedule that the question of the grant of certain other facilities in Bermuda and St. Lucia is still under consideration and that the whole question of the area to be leased and the facilities to be granted in Trinidad is still under examination by the British authorities.

Your letter continued that in the majority of cases the exact boundaries of the areas to be leased have yet to be defined, and that it will of course eventually be necessary for formal leases to be concluded in terms still to be agreed upon, leasing the areas in question to the United States for the period of ninety-nine years; you added that before such leases can be concluded it will be necessary for various questions concerning inter alia matters of jurisdiction to be discussed between our two Governments.

Your letter further pointed out that His Britannic Majesty's Government has no desire to suggest that work on the various bases should be postponed pending the completion of the formal leases, and that you were authorized to inform me that as far as the British Government are concerned the British authorities are entirely agreeable that work should be begun by the American authorities without further delay on all the sites the location of which have already been agreed upon and which were set forth in the schedule enclosed with your letter.

I have the following comments to make concerning the schedule which was enclosed with your letter of November 22nd:

Mr. N.M. Butler, C.V.O.,
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of
Great Britain

Bermuda/

Bermuda

It is noted that the schedule, in sub-paragraph (e), reads as follows:

"The question of the grant of minor facilities affecting an island or islands in the Great Sound is still under consideration."

It is believed that the following would be a clearer statement of the present status :

"The question of the grant of facilities affecting an island or islands in the Great Sound for the operation of seaplanes is still under consideration."

I am unable to agree that the proposed seaplane base of the United States in Bermuda can be described as the grant of "minor facilities".

In sub-paragraph (a) presumably the reference to "Rofe's Bay" should be changed to "Richardson's Bay", and in sub-paragraph (b) "Rigg's Bay" should be changed to "Higg's Bay".

The Bahamas

The schedule fails to mention an area of one and one-half square miles which we desire to include in the lease for the acquisition of landing fields. It is therefore suggested that the following statement be added to the schedule:

"An area of about one and one-half square miles for use as a landing field, to be located after an engineering reconnaissance."

Jamaica

The word "of" in sub-paragraph (b) should be changed to "and". The sentence would then read as follows:

"Land area to include Goat Island and the adjacent Cays, and approximately thirty-three square miles in and east of Galleon Harbor."

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In sub-paragraph (c) the word "Bight" should be changed to "Ridge", and "Portland Island" should be changed to "Pigeon Island".

In sub-paragraph (d) it is suggested that the figure "100 acres" be changed to "225 acres" to conform to the larger area desired and included in the draft letters.

British Guiana

It is suggested that sub-paragraph (a) be changed to read as follows:

"An aerodrome on the Bank of the River Demerara twenty-five miles up with emergency patrol plane facilities."

The reason for the suggested change is that the present wording gives the impression that this installation is primarily a seaplane base, whereas actually it will be a land plane base with emergency patrol plane facilities.

I am happy to note your assurance that the authorities of your Government are agreeable that work should be begun by the American authorities without delay on all the sites the locations of which have already been agreed upon and which are set forth in the schedule enclosed with your letter under reference. It is my understanding that this statement in this regard is a formal assurance that work can be commenced immediately on the above-mentioned sites without waiting for the signature of a lease for the property involved, and that this statement further constitutes a formal assurance that the British authorities concerned will acquire the properties on which the construction is started and will subsequently lease them to the Government of the United States in accordance with the provisions of the basic exchange of notes of September 2, 1940.

It is further my understanding that if condemnation proceedings are required in any of the areas designated the appropriate British authorities immediately will institute such proceedings. It is understood that meanwhile the United States authorities

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shall be free to proceed with construction without delay.

I have noted the statement that it is the wish of your Government that, if possible, any major construction work in connection with the proposed base in Antigua should be postponed until June, 1941. In your letter of November 28th, you add that a further communication from London makes it clear that in the meantime the Governor has no objection whatever to any preliminary operations on the proposed air base being begun forthwith. It is believed that the minor facilities now planned for immediate installation will not fall in the category of major work and will not upset the local labor market. In any event it is considered that the employment of local and imported labour on all work can be handled to the complete satisfaction of the Governor.

As you know, the President is keenly desirous that all of the negotiations in respect to sites and leases for these bases should be carried to a successful conclusion as soon as possible. With that in view I have designated an informal committee to handle these negotiations consisting of the following: Mr. James Clement Dunn, Mr. Green H. Hackworth, and Mr. John Hickerson, of the Department of State; Captain R. E. Schuirmann of the United States Navy, and Lieutenant Colonel R. W. Crawford of the United States Army. It occurs to me that it might facilitate the conduct of the negotiations if you designated officials of your Embassy to confer with this informal committee.

I am, my dear Mr. Butler,

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) CORDELL HILL