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on
30.12.*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON



December 27, 1940

My dear Mr. Butler:

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I refer to your letters of December 7 and 13, 1940, in regard to the proposed American bases in Trinidad. Your letters and their enclosures have received the careful and sympathetic consideration of the appropriate authorities of the United States Government. Likewise the oral comments which His Excellency, Sir Hubert Young, the Governor of Trinidad, made in the meeting which took place with four officers of the United States Government have been carefully considered.

After a thorough review of the proposed bases in Trinidad in the light of the material presented by the authorities of that Island, we have reached the conclusion that the proposal submitted by His Excellency the Governor cannot be accepted by the Government of the
United

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

United States. As regards the proposed naval base, our experts comment as follows:

"Careful study of the volumes of excavation required to provide adequate drainage of the Caroni area, 9,000,000 cu. yds. as presented by Messrs. Grinnell and Beard, and of the volumes of fill, 98,000,000 cu. yds., estimated by these gentlemen to make the area usable, shows that at least five years would be required before effective construction of military and naval shore installations could be undertaken. Further, this determination of time is based on most optimistic estimates of capacity of all equipment that could possibly be used on the site, even if it were available. Calculations made by the War and Navy Departments of the additional volume of fill material required to raise the proposed level of the reclaimed land to a satisfactory elevation, plus the volumes required to provide minimum surface drainage slopes and an allowance for subsidence of the new fills and the underlying swamp, indicate that the volume estimated by the Trinidad authorities must be greatly increased. Time would be increased correspondingly.

"The time element alone precludes the use of the Caroni area. Further serious objections such as water supply and sanitation, and dredging of an approach channel and harbor are not discussed here.

"The site selected for the naval base is the most suitable for fleet and seaplane requirements. The military advantages of this site are prescribed in Enclosure B of the report of the Board of Experts, Trinidad, dated October 23, 1940. The outstanding advantages, not afforded by any other site on the island are:

(a)

- (a) Its strategic location;
- (b) Its accessibility to deep water;
- (c) The proximity of sheltered areas for seaplane operation; and,
- (d) The possibility of immediate occupancy."

The comments of the American experts concerning the information furnished by His Excellency the Governor in respect to the inland area selected for the United States Army installations may be summarized as follows:

"The indicated rainfall of about 100 inches for the Long Stretch and Cumuto Reserves, selected for the Army installations, though higher than the 80 inches indicated for the Caroni area, is offset by the steeper slopes existing in the area first mentioned. Almost all of the area lies above the 100-foot contour, and ditching will provide adequate drainage. It should be noted that the area described as water-logged in the report by Mr. Brooks is not to be developed for habitation, but is to be used for an airfield, and supply installations are to be built along the railroad. The Piarco Aerodrome, which is built on similar ground at a lower elevation, appears to be satisfactorily drained. The usefulness of this section is indicated by the existing ammunition depot. The area north of the Eastern Road provides excellent sites for housing of the garrison. The water supply catchment, also north of the road, will aid in reducing flood hazards in the low lands."

In these circumstances, we are convinced that the recommendations of the Greenslade Board are sound, and that the facilities proposed represent the most suitable

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ones available in the Island. We believe that the special natural advantages of the site recommended for naval operations greatly outweigh the considerations advanced by the Trinidad authorities against their use for naval purposes. I therefore enclose in triplicate a draft lease covering the facilities which the Government of the United States desires to lease in accordance with the basic exchange of notes of September 3, 1940.

The appropriate American authorities have taken into account the comments of His Excellency, the Governor of Trinidad, in regard to the importance which is attached in that Island to the continued use by the local population of the bathing beaches in the vicinity of the proposed United States naval base, and they are disposed to view sympathetically the possibility of the use of these beaches to such extent as may be found practicable.

I should greatly appreciate receiving the comments of your Government on this draft lease at the earliest possible date.

Sincerely yours,

Enclosure:

Draft lease in
triplicate.

