

1-1/2 p.m.
See also: 2074/40
No. 884.



FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

(A 4988/3742/45).

11th December, 1940.

SECRET.



My Lord Marquess,

I transmit herewith a copy of a note of the 4th October by the Civil Aviation Department of the Air Ministry, drawing attention to the importance of excluding the sites at present in use or in contemplation for commercial air transport services from the scope of the negotiations for the lease of bases in British territories to the United States Government, and expressing the opinion that the use of these bases should be limited to defence purposes. As at present advised, His Majesty's Government accept the standpoint adopted in this paper as a basis for discussion when the experts meet in London to determine the text of the final leases. In particular it is felt that if the bases were to be made available for civil aviation purposes, such a concession would inevitably give rise to demands for similar facilities in other non-military respects. It appears probable that the United States authorities themselves do not intend that the leased areas should be made available for civil aircraft, having regard to the fact that Pan-American Airways applied on the 14th October to the Government of Trinidad for a 99 year lease at the present Piarco aerodrome, which they presumably would not have done if they were awaiting the grant of facilities themselves in the area to be leased to the United States Government in that island. It is also to be noted that no specific reference to the use of the bases by commercial aircraft is contained in the original draft lease put forward by the United States authorities, which Your Lordship rejected when it was submitted to you by Colonel Knox (vide the enclosure to Mr. Butler's despatch No. 937 of the 29th October).

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2. It is at the same time appreciated that, acting upon instructions which related to the earlier decision of the War Cabinet on the 29th July to grant facilities to Pan-American Airways in certain British West Indian Islands, you stipulated, both in a letter to Mr. Sumner Welles of the 8th August and subsequently in your note to the State Department No. 459 of the 26th September, that the unconditional use of air facilities should be available to any British air transport undertaking engaged in the operation of services between the West Indies and North and South America. In this connexion I enclose copies of a

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departmental/

His Excellency
The Most Honourable
The Marquess of Lothian, K.T., C.H.,
etc., etc., etc.,
Washington.

Separate minute

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departmental minute describing the developments which rendered the above-mentioned instructions no longer applicable to the situation, as also of a minute by the Foreign Office Legal Adviser commenting upon what has occurred.

3. I should be grateful if, after considering the position, you would take whatever action you may deem appropriate to reserve the position of His Majesty's Government with regard to civil aviation. You should in any case not agree to any United States suggestion that the bases should be used for commercial aircraft without further reference to me for instructions.

I am, with great truth and respect,
My Lord Marquess,
Your Excellency's obedient Servant,
(For the Secretary of State)

J. V. Brown