

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CABINET
BY THE HON. PRIME MINISTER

Reorganisation of the Malta Land
Force to include a Regular Element
as from 1st October, 1970.

As Hon. Ministers are aware, the British Government have agreed to continue to be responsible for the Royal Malta Artillery and the Royal Engineers, Malta, until October, 1970. Two U.K. infantry battalions will be retained in Malta until September, 1970, and October, 1971, respectively, and it is presumed that R.E.M.E. (the Maltese element of which is all civilian) and the Royal Signals (Malta) will likewise be retained at least until 1970. After the two U.K. infantry battalions are withdrawn in 1970/71, there will be no combatant U.K. forces remaining in Malta. The Royal Navy and R.A.F. elements, except for the Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, will be purely administrative.

2. By 1971, the British rundown is likely to result in there being no trained military force immediately available to undertake a number of specific tasks in peace and in war, as hereunder indicated:-

a. Peace

Internal Security Duties - security of airfield and reception arrangements for fly-in of reinforcements, reinforcement of civil police, security of installations and protection of V.I.Ps.

Maintenance of essential services, public utilities and communications.

Reinforcement of the Civil Defence Organisation in the event of a national disaster.

Emergency Assistance to Government departments and public utilities.

Liaison with friendly forces.

Ceremonial at short notice.

b. War

(a) Security of the airfield for the rapid reinforcement of the Island, and integration with friendly forces in the defence of Malta.

(b) Assistance for the embodiment/mobilization of the Territorial Units.

(c) Internal Security Duties and reinforcement of the Civil Defence Organization.

3. The Malta Land Force as at present constituted would lack a properly constituted and competent headquarters, technical assistance at present provided by U.K. army units and the R.M.A., training facilities such as transport and stores loaned by regular army units in Malta, and would moreover have to depend for permanent staff, i.e. the regular personnel, on United Kingdom sources, since none would be available from the R.M.A.

4. A realistic appraisal of the defence situation in Malta, as an independent country, clearly shows that Malta is never likely to be able to afford to provide for her own defence. The most which can be expected is that it may be possible to maintain a small, well-trained force, which can hold out until reinforcements arrive from outside. Malta will thus either have to continue to rely for her national defence on treaties and understandings with other countries or organizations, as she does at present, or, alternatively, to adopt a policy of absolute neutrality to reduce as far as possible the risks of military involvement.

5. As things stand, the arrangements which at present exist for the defence of Malta by the United Kingdom on the one hand and N.A.T.O. on the other, involve the entry of forces from abroad for that purpose. N.A.T.O. holds no forces in Malta, whilst the British Government is in the process of withdrawing all combatant forces. The installations which are essential if incoming forces are to be able to operate at all in the defence of Malta (a) the airfield, (b) the Master Radar installation, and (c) the underground oil fuel installation. Without the airfield, airborne forces cannot land and fighters cannot operate. Without the Master Radar, fighters are virtually "blind". Without supplies of fuel, military operations would grind to a standstill. The oil fuel storage installation is underground and is relatively safe from attack, but the airfield and the Master Radar are exposed targets which obviously require to be defended.

6. In the light of the above and the British Government's decision not to retain the R.M.A. and other locally-raised army units beyond October, 1970, a study has been carried out of the manner in which the Malta Land Force could be reorganised as from that date, should the Malta Government decide that it is necessary to retain a local military force which includes a regular element. Such a force could be reorganised in a number of ways, as follows:-

- (a) one regular infantry regiment including band and one territorial infantry regiment.
- (b) one regular infantry regiment including band and two territorial infantry regiments (under-implemented in peace).

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- (c) one regular infantry regiment including band and two territorial regiments, one infantry and one light air defence (under-implemented in peace).
- (d) one regular composite (i.e. light air defence and infantry) regiment including band and two territorial regiments, one infantry and one light air defence, (under-implemented in peace).

The regular regiment in each case would contain elements of the Engineers, Signals and E.M.E.

7. Envisaged strengths in respect of each of the above organisational structures are as follows:-

	<u>Regulars</u>	<u>Territorial</u>	<u>Total</u>	
(a) Officers	37	26	63	
O.R.	715	540	1255	
			<u>Under-</u>	<u>Under-</u>
			<u>implemented</u>	<u>implemented</u>
				<u>Total</u>
(b) Officers	40	52	40	80
O.R.	732	1080	828	1560
(c) Officers	40	47	41	81
O.R.	732	1028	758	1511
(d) Officers	37	52	43	80
O.R.	631	1076	833	1464

Note (i). Two territorial units would employ more regular personnel as permanent staff.

Note (ii). A light air defence unit would involve an increase in the number of E.M.E. personnel because of wider maintenance requirements.

Note (iii). In the case of (a) and (b) the Engineer, Signals, and E.M.E. element would number 47, 14 and 20 respectively, in cases (c) and (d) the numbers would be 47, 15 and 39 respectively.

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8. Estimated annual costs would be as follows:-

	<u>Pay and Allowances*</u>	<u>Maintenance Costs</u>	<u>Replacement Costs</u>	<u>Training Costs</u>
(a)	550,000	90,000	38,000	20,000
(b)	600,000	100,000	40,000	29,000
(c)	590,000	100,000	41,000	30,000
(d)	500,000	90,000	45,000	40,000

9. The estimate, which is regarded as the absolute maximum, fluctuates between £675,000 and £769,000. If one subtracts the sum of £150,000 per annum which Government is already providing for the Malta Land Force, an estimated sum of £12,000 recoverable in Income Tax, together with economies which it is anticipated it will be possible to effect in practice, the Government can reasonably expect to have to find an additional sum of between £450,000 and £550,000 in annually recurrent expenditure, if it decides to maintain a force of any of the types shown. This sum includes provision to be made for pension and gratuity payments when this eventually arises.

10. Additional financial considerations arise under three other aspects viz. (a) initial cost of equipment, (b) stockpile, and (c) re-equipment. It cannot be assumed that the equipment at present held by Malta-raised army units will be handed over to the Malta Government as a matter of course. This, however, would be a matter for negotiation with the British Government. The estimated cost of fully equipping a force of the nature under consideration is between £700,000 and £800,000, depending on the type of force actually decided on. Force (a), a two unit infantry force would be the cheapest on all counts. A force containing a light air defence element would be the costliest, because of its heavier and more sophisticated equipment, e.g. guns, radar, generators, etc. However, the guns at present in Malta are regarded as largely obsolescent, although with modifications, they are perfectly efficient and operational, and they are not therefore worth the paper value placed on them. A stockpile consists mainly of stores and ammunition required to keep the Force operational in an emergency on the basis of a three month's supply. The R.A.O.C. will disappear with the British Army units, and there will then have to be a central depot for holding supplies, in addition to what the units actually hold themselves. Again the cost of a stockpile would depend upon the type of Force itself. A stockpile for a force containing light air defence could reach a maximum of

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* Allowances payable in Malta are the Marriage Allowance and the Ration Allowance. These allowances combined make up a substantial part of the total emoluments payable to each officer and man.

£200,000, but a purely infantry force would bring this sum down considerably. As to re-equipment, this might arise between 1975 and 1980, when new weapons 'come on to the market' rendering existing weapons impotent. Again, infantry would be far cheaper to re-equip than light air defence. However, there would be nothing to stop the conversion of the force to a purely infantry role, if circumstances made it too expensive to maintain in any other type of force.

11. However there is no necessity for an immediate decision on the type of force which should be retained, and the Commander, Malta Land Force, submits that a decision should not in fact be taken before the completion of the proposed N.A.T.O. study on Mediterranean defence, agreed in London between the British and Maltese Governments. Nevertheless, it should be said that a logical view is that there must be an effective defence against an attack of those installations essential for incoming forces to operate effectively in the defence of Malta. The fighter defence of Malta exercise, carried out by the British in September, 1966, proved that whilst the fighters coped admirably with high level attacks, low flying bombers got through both the fighters and the radar screen. Only guns could have stopped them.

12. The above sums up as succinctly as possible, an admittedly complicated question, but every endeavour has been made to bring up the salient facts, without the need of quoting a considerable amount of detail to support them. The purpose of the submission of this paper so far in advance of the time when effective action will become necessary, is to seek from Ministers an opinion as to whether they can, on the basis of the information available to them, take a decision in principle whether or not to retain a force, with a regular element, when the British Government relinquishes responsibility for locally-raised units. The reason is that both officers and men are naturally anxious about their uncertain future, in spite of the reprieve which has been obtained for them, and it is likely that unless the Malta Government's intentions are made known, many men will seek other means of securing their future. Particularly, if the British Government announces the terminal benefits which it proposes to pay, this process will gather momentum, with the result that many of the best men will be lost to the Malta Government, if a decision to keep a regular unit is taken later and not earlier. It can be added that, as soon as a decision is taken and made known, the likelihood is that the R.M.A. and other locally-raised units would be able to undertake tasks for the Malta Government in anticipation of the actual take-over date. Such tasks could include ceremonial, beach-cleaning, provision of a labour force in an emergency.

2nd June, 1967.