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WOLLO 37A

26/3/21

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SIGINT IN BORNEO

24th May, 1963

FAS(B),
Department of Defence

My minute 26/3/21 of 20th February described a proposal to send a small party of British civilian intercept operators to N. Borneo to improve Sigint collection from Borneo targets, and referred also to the possibility that the U.S. might seek ADF help in meeting any requirement for field Sigint or "Y" in Borneo. These matters were subsequently discussed here and in Canberra during the visit of Mr. Hooper (Deputy Director, GCHQ) in March, when it was noted that :-

- (a) arrangements had been made for placing a one-team intercept party (totalling six personnel) in Labuan, composed of British civilians [REDACTED]
- (b) the War Office had decided to form a British Army "Y" troop, consisting of one team of Morse operators plus Traffic-analysis staff and one officer qualified in Malay but requiring training in the Indonesian language. This Troop would be despatched to the Far East when requested by PARAFS
- (c) the question of whether the U.K., would approach the Australian Government on the possible provision of an ADF "Y" unit to support COMBINTOR Borneo would be decided later; such an approach, if made, would probably be through the GPO and the British High Commissioner in Canberra.

2. The civilian party (1(a) above) was established in Labuan early in April, and is making a very useful contribution by the collection of Sigint from targets in East Kalimantan which are partly or wholly inaudible [REDACTED]. The administrative and domestic conditions are however unsuitable for continued operation on a civilian basis and it is envisaged that the party will be relieved, as soon as practicable, by the British Army Troop (1(b) above), which has meantime been despatched to Singapore and is under training at the main intercept station there.

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3. The capability of the British Troop will be limited primarily to collection, on the relatively small scale of one intercept team; the British Army has no personnel experienced in the linguistic and other specialised processing skills required to produce Sigint from Indonesian intercept.

4. We have now been informed that the GSO has been asked to forward to the Australian Government a request for ANF help in the provision of "Y" support in Borneo. We understand that the present U.K. draft mentions an "ideal" requirement for a self-contained ANF "Y" unit of up to 4 teams with its own vehicles and equipment, to which the British Army unit could be attached, but goes on to say that, should that be found impossible,

5. I will be glad to provide any additional information which may be required in connection with this matter; for the moment, however, it would seem that any further action should await the formal approach being made through the British High Commissioner.

L
(R. N. THOMPSON)

Director,
DEFENCE SIGNALS BRANCH

Copy to :- Chairman, JIC(SG)
Director of Signals, ANF
Director of Military Intelligence

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