

National Archives

Yemen and Aden 1962-5

PREM 11/3877

Prime Minister personal minute, 6 October 1962

“I am worried about the Yemen since I believe it is a most serious situation. If things go wrong, we may be faced with the loss of Aden and therefore of the Gulf. It would seem from newspapers that Nasser might be intervening openly. I should be grateful if you would arrange for the Chiefs of Staff to consider our military resources should we be driven to adopt an overt policy. I think that the Commander-in-Chief should keep closely in touch with the Governor and discuss with him any action it is proposed to take which might be thought to bear some relation to this situation”.

Christopher Gandy, Taiz, to Foreign Office, 6 October 1962

“The rule of Imams Yahya and Ahmad has made the Imanate unpopular with large elements and those in many ways the best. Badr was too powerful under his father to escape this unpopularity altogether... Monopoly of power by the Seyeds... was much resented and the new government has exploited this by appointing to high office, representatives of classes, sects and regions previously neglected in the distribution of power. Badr had not done this. The Royalists can only expect real support from tribes and this will of itself reduce support elsewhere, particularly in towns where the tribes are feared and disliked... I do not see why friendship for us and the West in general should be dismissed out of hand. The new government has come to power on a platform of internal reform and this task will need all their time and energy. They will want money from the West. Public statements so far have paid no more than perfunctory tribute to anti-imperialism. Egyptian influence will not necessarily [*? unclear*] used against us... Finally, can we be sure that restoration [*i.e., of the previous regime*] will in the long term help us in Aden? Surely the advantage to us of the old regime was that it was unpopular and unattractive [*sic*]. But restoration, if it is to survive, will have to make itself popular and will thus in its turn embarrass us in Aden and the Protectorate”.

R.Crawford, Foreign Office to Alec Douglas-Home, Foreign Secretary, 12 October 1962

He has had discussions with Sir Hugh Stephenson and "C". One of the two main tribal confederations is not backing Hassan actively and "he is only receiving support from the tribes in the north-east and east. The Intelligence conclusion is that much the larger and richer part of the country including all main centres of population is likely to remain under Republican control at least for sometime". Hassan has plenty of money and arms, pro-Hassan tribesmen number about 15,000 in the North and 5,000 in the east. "Nasser has sent a message to HMG through Heikal and Sir H Beeley to assure us that he does not intend any damage to the British position in Aden... If Saudi Arabia and Jordan could be persuaded to call off their intervention UAR forces would be withdrawn". Jordanians had been sent to Yemen border. "Whether Nasser will have the ability, or when it comes to the point the will, to restrain the Republicans must be uncertain. But we cannot exclude the possibility that he might try to be helpful".

Foreign Secretary to embassy, Washington, 14 October 1962

"I find it at present very difficult to see how any security for Aden, on which our position in the Gulf depends, can come from a firmly established republican regime in Yemen".

Note for the record, Conversation between Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Defence Minister and Chiefs of Staff, 22 October 1962

"It was suggested that if we were driven out of Aden our loss of prestige would be such as to render it impossible for us to stay in the Gulf under any circumstances".

Foreign Office to embassy, Washington, 22 October 1962

"The latest information about the situation in the Yemen suggests that the Royalist movement in the north of the country has virtually fizzled out". *Tribal opposition in eastern part continues but would be "extremely difficult for them to make any serious inroad into the Republican position in the centre, west and south of the country". This would seem to argue for recognition.* "On the other hand the overturning of the monarchy by the Republican movement has created a serious shock throughout the Arabian peninsula. We are directly and immediately concerned with the impact on the Rulers in the Aden federation but it is equally serious in Saudi Arabia, and the indirect effects may well be felt further afield".

Philip de Zuleta, Private Secretary to Prime Minister, to Prime Minister, 26 October 1962

"I am not quite sure that he [*Foreign Secretary*] is right in drawing the conclusion that we should restrain the Protectorate rulers from intervening in the Yemen; after all our

interest is surely to have the maximum confusion in the tribal areas on the Aden frontier, because the Yemen regime is bound to be more or less hostile to us”.

PREM 11/3878

Sir Charles Johnston, Governor, Aden to Colonial Secretary, 26 October 1962

Contains letter from Lt Col Neil [‘Billy’] McLean who had spent 22/3 October as personal guest of King Saud in Riyadh. Paraphrasing Saud: “HMG should... not recognise the rebel government of Sallal but give all possible support to the Imam who is the head of the recognised legal government of the Yemen”. This support should include “immediate air support; if possible openly, but if this is not possible, then clandestinely”.

Christopher Gandy, Taiz to Foreign Office, 31 October 1962

Met Sallal, leader of the new regime. “I was deeply impressed with Sallal’s honesty and goodwill. With him in charge I do not believe we have much to fear from the Yemen”. Calls on the UK government to recognise the new Yemeni regime and says that the UK should be calling on Jordan and others to desist from supporting the Royalists. “This is the best way to prevent an increase in UAR influence which I am sure Sallal and most Yemenis are anxious, but at present hardly able, to resist”.

Foreign Office to embassy, Washington, 14 November 1962

Contains message from the prime Minister to the US president. “I quite realise that the loyalists [sic] will probably not win in Yemen in the end but it would not suit us too badly if the new Yemeni regime were occupied with their own internal affairs during the next few years.”

Record of conversation between President Kennedy and the Prime Minister on 15 November 1962

PM: “What we should like to see would be a weak government in Yemen not able to make trouble”.

Christopher Gandy, Taiz to Foreign Office, 17 November 1962

Says that Sallal’s statements against the UK “are not to be taken seriously”. “The increased Royalist activity... is not such as to given them a chance of overthrowing the Republic. Most of it, I should think, will peter out when the Saudis stop paying for it. The rest is simply the centrifugal tendency natural to a partly tribal country where advantage can be taken of periods when the Central Government is weak or otherwise

engaged. Once the resistance organised from outside ceases the Republic will be able to restore order elsewhere”.

Note by Macmillan, ‘United Kingdom recognition of the Yemen regime’, 12 December 1962

Outlines advantages and disadvantages. One of disadvantages is: “The fact of recognition may make it harder to give countenance still more assistance to royalist attempts to overthrow Sallal” [sic].

Harold Beeley, ambassador, Cairo to Foreign Office, 6 January 1963

Saw Heikal, Nasser’s adviser, yesterday. Heikal noted several suspicions of the UK role in Yemen: “After the outbreak of fighting in Yemen we had supplied fighter aircraft to Jordan; Jordanian fighters had subsequently been sent to Taif. The Air Force Commander who had defected had asserted that his orders, which involved attacking targets in the Yemen, had been given to him personally by King Hussein in the presence of a British Air Advisor; Colonel McLean [sic] was advising the Royalists. He had also been in Riyadh and had seen King Hussein in London...Arms had been carried to Saudi Arabia in British aircraft (in denying this I made use of the material in your telegram No.1309) and were also being sent by Pakistan... Even when the Americans recognised the Republic we had declined to follow suit”.

PREM 11/4357

Alec Douglas Home to Prime Minister, 22 January 1963

This is write up of Home’s meeting with Gandy. “As distinct from the Imam’s, whose rule was an arbitrary autocracy which left little scope for diplomatic contacts, the Republicans act collectively through a government of new men... They are much more open to contact and reasoned argument... All this gives some hope that we could get on to terms of live and let live with the Republicans. Provided they do not continue to think that we are hostile to them there is a reasonable chance of a peaceful relationship”.

PREM 11/4928

Edwin Duncan Sandys, Colonial Secretary to Nigel Fisher, Colonial Office, 5 March 1963

“I understood we were all agreed that prolonged stalemate would best suit British interests... I should like to know from High Commissioner whether withholding of arms for two to three weeks, as proposed in your telegram of 1st March will seriously prejudice military position of Royalists in eastern sector” [sic].

Charles Johnston, Aden to Colonial Secretary, 6 March 1963

“The capture of Marib and the immediate threat to Harib coupled with a desperate shortage of money and ammunition on the Eastern sector, seem to have taken most of the spirit out of the Royalist tribes in the East. It remains to be seen whether Abdullah Bin Hasan can salvage anything from the wreck and whether supplies can still filter through the Egyptian positions. Present Republican domination of the Eastern areas has made it at least temporarily impossible for us to supply arms with any degree of deniability. During a frank discussion, Sherif Husain said that there was no will to fight at Harib, and in view of the capture of Marib he did not think that it would be possible for us to supply any arms which would not fall into Republican hands and which would not be inevitably attributed to British support... Against this background I recommend that we have no alternative but to withhold arms for two to three weeks as already proposed in Fisher’s telegram 447. I cannot help adding with respect that if approval had been given for additional supplies to Royalists made by me on 16th November, 22nd November, and 18th December and 19th February [*sic*]... as well as in discussions in London in January, the Royalists would never have got to their present low ebb”.

Note to Prime Minister by [unclear], 22 November 1963

“All departments appear to be agreed that the present stalemate in the Yemen, with the Republicans and Royalists fighting each other and therefore having no time or energy left over to make trouble for us in Aden, suits our own interests very well... The only point really for discussion at the moment is whether we need to do any more at the moment to keep the situation in the Yemen on the boil”.

Burke Trend, Cabinet Secretary, to Prime Minister, 18 December 1963

“So long as the Royalists have the will and the means to continue to resist, there may be no reason to abandon our policy of non-intervention. But, if they looked like being beaten, should we be able to maintain this policy in the face of the threat to Aden which would then develop and the shift in the balance of power in South Arabia that would result?”

PREM 11/4678

Rab Butler, Foreign Secretary to Prime Minister, 20 March 1964

“JIC appreciation shows that the situation of military stalemate within the Yemen is likely to continue, and that neither side can expect to win outright... The continued stalemate in the Yemen is not in itself dangerous for United Kingdom interests... We must look critically at the argument that the best way of countering UAR-Yemeni

subversion is to provide encouragement and help to the Yemeni royalists". *The Royalists get what they want from Saudi Arabia but they cannot win without further outside help.* "It can, on the other hand, be argued that even the present scale of supply to the Royalists from and through Federal territory, and the involvement in the Yemen of Federal personalities and Saudi-paid mercenaries based on Federal territory, have increased the danger to our position in Aden by provoking the Egyptians to a much more active involvement in the Yemeni subversive effort. Moreover the certainty that we are not doing what we can to prevent the use of our territory for the support of the Royalists, is undoubtedly one factor among others in stimulating UAR attacks upon our position in the Middle East as a whole... The belief that we are not restraining the mercenaries as we should and that this has provoked the Egyptians to make their subversive effort against the Federation, is also shared by the United States government..."

"The UAR-Yemeni assertion that supplies for the Royalists are being introduced from the Beihan area has been mentioned in the latest report to the Security Council by U Thant and we have not been able to give an effective reply since we know that this is in fact true. Nevertheless, we must take steps to counter subversion in the Federation and the High Commissioner, Aden, considers that a selective system of unattributable retaliation in the Yemeni frontier area for sabotage, mine-laying and so on in the Federation, may have value as a deterrent... It is, however, important in my view that we should make a clear distinction between, on the one hand, deterrent action against subversive activities in the Federation across the Yemen border and, on the other, support for the Royalists in Yemen. The former is a course which we should pursue not only by the unattributable deterrent action already referred to but by any steps open to us in our own territory to reduce the impact of hostile propaganda and subversion... The latter course, however, is not only contrary to our declared policy of non-intervention but can, as the JIC show, have no prospect of success; therefore, it is something we should neither pursue ourselves, nor allow the Rulers in the Federation and the mercenaries engaged by the Saudis to pursue from our territory". *Notes later that "pro-Royalist activities continue from our territory"*.

PREM 11/4679

Oliver Wright, Private Secretary to the Prime Minister to Prime Minister, 8 April 1964

"We have really only two interests in the Middle East. The first is access on reasonable terms to Middle East oil. The second is overflying rights across the Middle East barrier so that we may get to the other parts of the world where our presence is necessary".

PREM 11/4929

Record of a meeting between the Foreign Secretary [Butler] and the US Secretary of State [Rusk] at the State Department, 27 April 1964

The UK wants to see a "moderate" government which includes the northern states. "We could not, however, live with a government headed by President Sallal. Mr Butler referred to the recent paper which had been handed to the Americans on UAR subversion in the Federation. This provided a well-documented indication that UAR subversive activities were now very considerable, and these activities would have to be fought by counter-subversion". Egyptian troops now 40,000 in Yemen. There is a military stalemate but Royalist troops are "now apparently only capable of road-cutting". UK is determined to maintain the base in Aden and "determined to stop Nasser".

Oliver Wright, Prime Minister's office to Prime Minister, 18 July 1964

On the forthcoming clash between ministers on policy towards Yemen. "You will be under considerable pressure to agree to a more forward policy in the Yemen". He hopes he will think very carefully about this. HMG have acted consistently on bad advice from Aden. "It is of course more dynamic to go in for gun-running, and support of the Royalist tribes and decisions to do so give an appearance of resolution... Nevertheless I think we should recognise that Nasser has been able to capture most of the dynamic and modern forces in the area while we have been left, by our own choice, backing the forces which are not merely reactionary (that would not matter so much) but shifty, unreliable and treacherous". The only solution is a deal with Nasser. The Foreign Office has consistently advised this but consistently been over-ruled. "I do not know what the recommendations of officials on Monday will be. Provided we make it clear that any support to the Royalists must be done through Saudi Arabia and that nay covert work in the Yemen is limited to the protection of our interests in Aden, no great harm will be done".

Foreign Office to Jeddah, 24 July 1964

"The prime minister has stated in parliament that our policy is one non-involvement in the Yemeni war. Our action has been confined to purely defensive measures against attempts by the Egyptians and certain Yemenis to cause subversion in the Federation territory for whose defence we are responsible and we have in certain cases given assistance to tribes living on the border in the hope that they would be able to cause difficulties in the neighbouring Yemen areas for those who are attacking Federation territory. This we are continuing to do". Then there is a censored paragraph which refers to "further measures" in support of UK interests. In DEFE 13/570, this paragraph is not censored and reads: "We should now be glad to hear from Prince Feisal himself how we views the future of the Royalist position in the Yemen and what further support he thinks it necessary to give in order that this position could be maintained.

We have heard for instance that the Saudi authorities may have had difficulties in obtaining certain types of ammunition and small arms. If these are due to any difficulty in obtaining export licences for supply from the United Kingdom we shall be glad to give all the necessary facilities”.

DEFE 13/569

Rab Butler, Foreign Secretary to Prime Minister, 20 April 1964

Contains points that Butler will put to US Secretary of State Dean Rusk when he meets him. Aden is an important base for oil. “It is not that we are frightened of oil being cut off by unfriendly local governments, but the profitability of the oil companies operations and the supply of oil to consumer countries including our own on acceptable terms, is most important for our economy and our balance of payments. This depends in part on the diversity of political control of the main sources of oil (eg, if Iraq controlled Kuwait, we might all be held to ransom). This would be especially dangerous for the UK for we draw 60% of our oil requirements from the area”.

Nasser’s encouragement of Yemeni subversion in the Federation. “If this had happened a generation ago, we should have used ‘North-West frontier’ tactics which would probably have been effective. Although we were driven to making the attack on Harib fort the other day we recognise that there are severe limitations on the use of such methods in the world as it is today, and we trust that any repetition can be avoided... We shall wish to undertake limited local counter-subversion operations in the Yemen designed to discourage or frustrate the UAR/Yemeni effort to subvert the Federation, including the sending in of arms and explosives for use against points which are vulnerable... Our aim will be to do this in places and in ways which will not get us involved in the internal Republican-Royalist conflict”.

Duncan Sandys to Prime Minister, 21 April 1964

Contains summary of proposals for approval put forward by Aden “for action within Aden and the Federation”. “The most urgent step required is to proceed at once with the vigorous suppression of the Radfan rebellion. The Commander-in-Chief should be authorised to use whatever methods are necessary to ensure the success of the operation while endeavouring, as far as possible, to minimise adverse international criticism... The High Commissioner should be authorised to pay personal subsidies to key members of the Federal Council [*i.e., the Aden Federation*]... Last January, the High Commissioner was given authority to spend up to £50,000 a year to strengthen the loyalty of the tribes. He has asked for this to be increased to £200,000 in the current financial year... The High Commissioner has been authorised to spend £15,000 to help undermine the position of the People’s Socialist Party in Aden. He has asked to be allowed to spend a further £30,000 in the present financial year. Since the PSP are the main inspirers of anti-British activity, it is essential to take any action which could weaken their influence... The High Commissioner has asked for £239,000 (in addition

to the £34,000 already authorised) to support friendly political elements and secure favourable propaganda in Aden... The High Commissioner has also asked for an additional sum of £44,000 this year in order to build up the information side of our counter-subversion activities. More than half of this would be spent on broadcasting programmes and news services. The results which might be obtained would seem to be well worth this expenditure”.

Rab Butler to Prime Minister, 21 April 1964

Encloses “a list of possibilities open to us as regards both attributable and unattributable action across the Federation of South Arabia/Yemen border”. “I am not saying that I agree with all these ideas” *but is setting them out* “at your request... I should perhaps say that some of the sub-divisions of items listed early in the paper may involve more political risk than some sub-divisions of items listed later: for instance, assassination of Egyptian intelligence officers (2(b)) would not doubt involve a greater chance of discovery and retaliation than supplying the Royalists with money”.

Peter Thorneycroft, Defence Secretary to Prime Minister, 22 April 1964

Contains proposals for action across the Yemeni border. Recommends three actions: “(a) tribal revolts should be covertly organised in those areas immediately adjacent to the Federation from which subversive activities are being launched (viz. Baidha and Qataba). (b) Deniable action should be taken to sabotage intelligence centres and kill personnel engaged in anti-British activities (including the Egyptian Intelligence HQ at Taiz). (c) Covert anti-Egyptian propaganda activities in the Yemen should be intensified... We must give them [*i.e., the Royalists*] further assistance. This could take the form of either money, or arms or both”.

Kennedy Trevaskis, High Commissioner, Aden to Colonial Secretary, 11 May 1964

Air action against rebels in Radfan to secure their support for the Federation should start as soon as possible. This will include the dropping of warning leaflets. “For international reasons it seemed [*sic*] to me desirable to avoid including in the leaflets any threat about the consequences of non-compliance. However, we would propose to send in the area a number of Radfani soldiers from the Federal Army, whose mission would be to persuade their fellow tribesmen to comply with the demand for submission. With some careful unofficial briefing, these messengers could be relied upon to put the fear of death into the villages [*sic*] they visited... It is possible that this might be enough to secure submission. If not, it would be necessary to deliver some gun attacks on livestock or men outside the villages. Since tribesmen have been regularly firing at our aircraft and have hit several of them, we might be able to claim that our aircraft were shooting back of [*sic*] men who had fired at us from the ground”.

Ministry of Defence to CINC Mideast, 15 May 1964

Message from the Chief of Defence Staff for the Commander in Chief. Ministers have authorised air power in Radfan for six purposes: to protect forces; "to eliminate concentrations of armed tribesmen who are supporting the rebels"; to retaliate against anyone who fires on aircraft; "to harass the means of livelihood in areas in which leaflets have been dropped calling upon the tribes to make submission"; to prevent the reinforcement of the rebels; "to prevent the re-occupation of villages or other positions which have been vacated as a result of our operations".

Ministry of Defence to CINC Mideast, 20 May 1964

Context is that CINC Mideast asked if there were any limitations on the use of 20lb anti-personnel bombs. This note states: "There is ...no, repeat no, embargo on the use of bombs for military operations should you consider their use to be essential... The public relations aspect of even 20lb anti-personnel bombs will want very careful handling".

Defence Secretary to Acting Chief of Defence Staff, 21 May 1964

Radfan. Says that 20lb anti-personnel bombs can be used "providing every care is taken to prevent casualties to women and children. At the same time, the Secretary of State asked the Chief of the Air Staff to take certain action to ensure the secrecy of the operation".

Air Ministry to Defence Secretary, 22 May 1964

Radfan. "At your meeting on Wednesday you asked me to consult AOC AFME about the possibility of concealing bombing -up at Khormaksar. I have now exchanged signals with the AOC... he has already arranged that that at Khormaksar Shackletons should be bombed-up as far away as possible from public view, and that bomb doors should remain closed at all times... He has eliminated all use of the word 'bombing' from his orders and instructions and the joint public relations staff have been briefed accordingly... In his opinion the greatest danger of journalists finding out about bombing lies in the ease with which they have access to the operational area, the assumptions they make when they see Shackletons operating and their conversations with our troops".

DEFE 7/1304

Contains Hansard parliamentary answers, 14 May 1964, Vol.685, No.110, Col.605

Prime Minister: "Our policy towards the Yemen is one of non-intervention in the affairs of that country. It is not therefore our policy to supply arms to the Royalists in the Yemen and the Yemen government have not requested these or other forms of aid".

DEFE 13/570

Lt-Gen Sir Charles Harington, Commander in Chief, Middle East Command to Admiral The Earl Mountbatten, Chief of Defence Staff, 11 June 1964

"Our major military effort in Radfan is nearing an end". *Radfanis have received arms and aid from Egypt/Yemen.* "Radfan is a wild and isolated area of rugged grandeur... The tribesmen have been eking out a poor and primitive existence for hundreds of years in a region into which no European had even penetrated.... Although they form part of the emirate of Dhala, they pay no allegiance to the emir... Although Radfan is highly cultivated with the most amazing terracing on the mountain sides, the lack of ways and means of raising and distributing water has meant that there is barely sufficient substance to support the population; families seldom making more than £50 a year profit. Therefore the temptation and indeed the necessity to look elsewhere for aid is understandable. The only ready aid so far has been from the Yemen in the forms of arms and money for subversion, and this appears to have been sufficient to make them risk losing the meagre livelihood they get from their primitive agricultural system... You may agree that if the Federation had been given more financial help in the past the temptation to the Radfanis to go elsewhere for the price of subversion might have been avoided. The money thus paid out would have been the insurance premium I know so many governors in the past have asked for".

Memorandum by Defence Secretary, 'Maintaining our position in South Arabia', 13 July 1964

Retention of the Aden base is "our one vital interest in the area... Control must be maintained throughout the Protectorate since abandonment of any part of it would encourage dissident activity and the erosion of our authority in the part which we sought to hold". Recommends that "we should now examine with Prince Feisal [*sic*] the feasibility of sustaining the Royalists during the coming months, and the most effective means of doing so". *Such support* "will not enable the Royalists to win the campaign in the Yemen or destroy Nasser... The time may come when we should

negotiate with Nasser – but it is not yet. Our aim in the meantime should be to strengthen our position and to weaken his”. *Recommends*: “a sharp increase in ‘deniable’ support in terms both of arms and money for the Royalist tribes and other tribes capable of interfering with Egyptian plans in the Yemen...”

Nigel Fisher, Colonial Office to Duncan Sandys, Colonial Secretary, ‘Aid to Royalists’, 14 July 1964

Recommends providing covert aid to the Royalists. “I have recently talked to the Friends and (separately) to Mclean; and the consensus of opinion (shared by the Department) is that events in the Yemen are now moving to a crisis for the royalists”. *Looks like Yemen victory might be sight. HMG aid or lack of it* “could tip the scales either way”. “The plan approved by your colleagues for the instigation of a revolt in the Beidha area [*just inside Yemen*] has not got off the ground partly owing to Egyptian counter-action and partly owing to the decline in the Royalist fortunes in the North. (The £300,000 authorised for this purpose has not therefore been used)... Owing to the possibility of Saudi Arabian aid ceasing, the mercenaries have had to make preliminary preparations to pull out; this would precipitate the complete collapse of Royalist resistance”.

Feisal has asked HMG for £2m over one year, half in money, and a quarter each in arms/ammunition and food/maintenance for the tribes. HMG also has to decide “whether we should accede to another proposal to supply rifles to the Murad and Qayfa tribes for an attack on Harib and in Khaulan which would serve to draw pressure off the Royalists in the North West”. *The Foreign Secretary is likely to say HMG should not give aid to* “the Royalists as such’ and to argue that aid to the Murad and Qayfa would be aid to the Royalists”. *Recommends covert aid.*

Unsigned memo, Ministry of Defence, ‘Yemen: Memorandum for consideration by Ministers’, undated [July 64]

“It was agreed at the meeting of Ministers on July 20 that a paper should be written setting out the two kinds of action which could be taken with regard to the Yemen, and that this should be further considered by Ministers at 3.45 pm on July 21”. *First is* “defensive action designed to cause difficulties for the Egyptians and their friends in the areas from and through which arms, money and dissidents are brought into the Federation for subversive purposes. This action is already being undertaken at Baidha with some success. A preliminary attempt to organise it at Qataba has not been successful but a further attempt is being made. Action of this kind is carried out under the control of British officers within the Federation who can hand out arms and money in instalments according to the local situation and in proportion to successes achieved. British responsibility for these actions is thus likely to become known but can be explained on grounds of self-defence against Egyptian and Yemeni subversion. These operations are undertaken as acts of subversion in Yemeni territory against individual targets. They are not done in the name of the Royalists or to promote the

secession of towns or areas from the Yemeni republic to the Royalists". *In the next three months the following is likely to be required: £100,000, 3,000 rifles, 2 million rounds of ammunition, guns, bazookas, mines and grenades. Second is "aid to the Royalists in order to enable them to carry out offensive action against Republican held areas"*.

Kennedy Trevaskis, Aden to Colonial Secretary, 18 July 1964

He has given repeated warnings to the Colonial Secretary which the latter has failed to act on. "In November 1962 my predecessor forwarded the WAP Security Committee's proposals with his endorsement that they should be implemented on a crash basis. In October 1963 I warned you that, unless the WAP Security Committee's proposals were implemented forthwith or counter action were taken to prevent a Republican victory in the Yemen, it might become impossible to maintain our position in Aden". Now he says that the Royalist opposition is "likely to collapse by the end of the year... It is now too late to take effective covert action against the UAR/YAR. Our proposals were so seriously whittled down and hedged about with restrictions that those whose cooperation we have sought to execute these plans have had no confidence in our firmness of purpose. In short we are now in no position to [? face] up to an open confrontation with the UAR/YAR". The best safeguard position now is recognising the YAR in return for cessation of UAR/YAR subversive activities against us and to "provide the rulers with the means of regaining the confidence of their tribes...by providing them with an additional £500,000 as political grants... providing them with arms and ammunition for distribution to their tribes... making £500,000 available for distribution to Rulers, as and when necessary, to enable them to deal with emergencies... Examples of such commitments are that friendly tribes have to be compensated for loss or injury at the hands of the enemy if they are to remain friendly, that tribal cooperation against the enemy has to be purchased and that defecting tribes have to be weaned back by 'douceurs'".

Unsigned Ministry of Defence memo, 'Aid to the Royalists', 19 July 1964

"We are asked to consider, in the event of HMG's agreeing to give direct aid to the Royalists, the methods by which such assistance, both material and financial, could be provided". *Refers to "experience in connection with Operation Rancour" by which there is an asterisk and handwritten note at bottom of page saying: "code word for current covert operations to exploit [sic] dissident tribes up to 20 miles into Yemen to neutralise Egyptian subversive action against Aden". Feisal has asked for £2m. "Sherif Hussein last week submitted a detailed plan worked out with Prince Muhammad bin Hussein, the Royalist commander in Jauf, and Salah al Misri, the Royalist Minister of Defence, and other Royalist leaders now in Aden". The plan calls for the capture of key towns which requires UK support to the extent of 11,000 rifles as well as £600,000. "This figure would supersede the £300,000 already approved for operation Rancour in the same area"*.

Section entitled "Deniability". "Delivery by RAF aircraft to landing grounds in Beihan is to be preferred... Direct parachute drops to the Royalists inside Yemeni territory are the most effective but least deniable method of delivery. If Ministers are willing to relax the need for deniability to this extent, the operationally the optimum method of delivery would be a combination of air supply to Beihan and parachute drops into the Yemen".

Ministry of Defence [illegible signature] to Defence Secretary, 'South Arabia and Yemen', 20 July 1964

"Meanwhile, and without closing the door to a possible deal with Nasser, make life intolerable for him with money and (?arms) – deniably as far as possible, but if activity becomes undeniable it is no more than we are already accused of. Note - On 8th May the DOPC deferred a decision on whether we should supply arms, and we cannot trace that any such decision was taken in committee, but on 29th May the Colonial Secretary authorised the supply of certain quantities of both money and arms".

Colonial Secretary to High Commission, Aden, 24 July 1964

Ministers have now approved a "reserve fund of £500,000 to be used by High Commissioner to distribute to rulers where this would help to prevent tribal revolts".

Rab Butler, Foreign Secretary to Prime Minister, 'Supply of arms to dissident group in Taiz', 11 September 1964

*"I have seen Sir Burke Trend's minute to you of September 9 recommending the supply of a small quantity of bazookas and ammunition to the Sharif of Baihan [*sic*] for use by a dissident group in Taiz. I agree with the recommendation of the Joint Action Committee... and with the proviso that it should be made clear to the Sharif that this is a once-for-all exercise".*

DEFE 13/710

Chiefs of Staff Committee, 'Report by the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East Operations in the Radfan - April to July 1964', 27 November 1964

"Public relations proved to be one of the more difficult problems because local facilities tended to be swamped by the sheer number of press, television and radio correspondents... The greatest need is for an early and clear PR policy for such operations to be established in London. On the Commander-in-Chief's recommendation, Ministers had in fact laid down that the operation should receive minimal publicity and should be represented as a policing operation to keep open the Dhala road...it was not possible to maintain this policy".

PREM 13/1923

Minutes of a meeting held on 5 February 1963

Present: Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, Foreign Secretary Douglas Home, Defence Minister Thorneycroft, Colonial Secretary Duncan Sandys, and Christopher Tandy, British Minister in Taiz. "Mr Gandy said... his day-to-day dealings with the republican authorities had been easier than with the previous regime, and his impression was that republican ministers and officials were sensible and well-intentioned people drawn from the better educated and professional class... The republicans were anxious to maintain and preserve good relations with the United Kingdom." *But they needed recognition. The military situation is a stalemate. Egypt could not leave "unless they could certain that they were leaving behind them a stable country under republican control. This could not be achieved so long as the Saudi Arabians continued their active support of the tribes". Gandy calls for recognition but others oppose this since "our paramount interest was the maintenance of our position in Aden. The republicans in the Yemen were supported by those in Aden who were hostile to our interests; our recognition of the republicans could not but encourage our opponents and upset our friends".*

Summing up, the Prime Minister said there was a clear conflict between short- and long-term interests. "In the short term the interests of Aden must prevail... It could not, however, be denied that in the longer term a republican victory was inevitable; the tide of history was with them. To the extent that we permanently poisoned our relations with the republicans our interests would suffer in the end. It was also repugnant to political equity and prudence alike that we should so often appear to be supporting out-of-date and despotic regimes and to be opposing the growth of modern and more democratic forms of government".

Minutes of a meeting held on 2 December 1963

Present: Macmillan, Douglas Home, Butler, Thorneycroft, Duncan Sandys and others. "The Foreign Secretary said ... From the point of view of the United Kingdom the present stalemate between the Royalist and the Republican forces in the Yemen was not without certain advantages, since it reduced Yemeni pressure on Aden... A combined Yemeni-Egyptian subversive effort against Aden must be avoided, if at all possible". *In discussion.* "The Government of Saudi Arabia were reported to have stockpiled considerable quantities of arms on the frontier and to be covertly supplying the Royalist forces; the latter... were successfully maintaining their resistance. There was therefore no reason at this stage for the United Kingdom to abandon its policy of non-intervention. On the other hand it might improve our relationship with the rulers in the Aden Federation if we ceased trying to prevent them from supplying arms to the Royalists... The government of Saudi Arabia were not greatly concerned about the form of government to be established in the Yemen, provided that it was not under the

control of the United Arab Republic. There was little likelihood of establishing a coalition government which would not be under President Nasser's control... Equally, any proposal that the United Nations should be invited to find a solution for the problem should be resisted, since it would be detrimental to our position in Aden if we were forced to side with the Republican Party in the Yemen in an attempt by the United Nations to restore order."

The Colonial Secretary said that a group of Ministers from Aden were shortly to visit the UK which would "provide an opportunity to raise the question of granting the Crown Colony the status of independence within the Federation of South Arabia. This would mean that Aden would cease to be a colony and would acquire the same status as the other members of the Federation. It would be essential, however, to make it clear that we intended to retain our rights in the Federation for as long as could be foreseen and that no withdrawal of our garrison from Aden was contemplated... Moreover, unless some arrangement of this sort was made, an unfriendly Aden government might seek to assert the complete independence of the Colony outside the Federation and might obtain support in the United Nations for this venture".

Record of a conversation between the Foreign Secretary [Michael Stewart] and His Imperial Majesty the Shahanshah [sic] of Iran at the Iranian embassy, 5 March 1965

"The Shah said that he had decided to intervene in the Yemen against Nasser. He was working through the Saudi Arabian government and had hoped to keep the matter secret... Mr Thomson [*Foreign Minister*] said that, while he understood and sympathised with the Shah's motives, this touched on a problem which we both faced: the problem of judging the extent to which measures taken with the intention of resisting Nasser's influence were counter-productive. One moral was of course the importance of maintaining secrecy. Mr Stewart added that the more the Arabs resisted Nasser of their own volition the more successful they were likely to be; the more their resistance could be attributed to British or Iranian action, the more it was likely to turn against us".

David [unclear?], Foreign Office to Michael Palliser, 12 May 1967

Contains a brief for talks with Saudi King Feisal. "As regards the British pilots whom Airwork recruited to fly the five Lightnings and five Hunters the Saudis already have (under the 'Magic Carpet' contract) we have raised no objection to their being employed in operations, though we made it clear to the Saudis that we could not publicly acquiesce in any such arrangements. Airwork have told us that the pilots have in fact formally left their employ for this purpose."

DEFE 13/571

Denis Greenhill, Foreign Office to Sir Burke Trend, 31 March 1967

“Mr Thomson [*Foreign Minister*] has seen your minute of 22 March to the prime minister attaching a submission from the Joint Action Committee about covert operations in South Arabia. Mr Thomson has taken note that the prime minister has approved the proposals in the Joint Action Committee’s report.”

DEFE 13/572

‘South Arabia: Paper by Lord Shackleton’, undated [June 67], top secret

“Rancour operations in the Yemen have been extremely successful. They have been effective both in driving the Egyptians back from parts of the South Arabian frontier and in causing the Egyptians considerable inconvenience by tying down a disproportionate number of Egyptian forces... The present plan is that Rancour should end by independence. I think this would be a mistake. We have a commitment to the continuing independence of South Arabia and to the prevention of external aggression. One effective means of doing this is to make it more difficult to mount such aggression by disrupting the base area in the Yemen”.

Notes two problems in continuing operations: “lack of willingness to take part on the part of the Arabs who we would use for fear that they would be on the losing side” and “lack of a firm base from which to organise the operation”. The first problem would be overcome by the High Commission’s and my “proposals relating to defence aid” in which case “there should be no difficulty in recruiting Arabs for Rancour operations. The second problem could be overcome by using as a cover the military mission which the High Commissioner and I have recommended... Alternatively the new Embassy could provide the cover”.