Note from the Colonial Office on the use of British forces after Malayan independence (10 January 1956)

**Caption:** In a note dated 10 January 1956, the Colonial Office provides details about the ongoing talks with the Federation of Malaya on the use of British forces in Malaya after the country’s independence. The United Kingdom is keen to maintain military bases in the region.

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Use of British forces after Malayan Independence

1. Herewith for information a copy of a note which was handed to the Malayan Chief Minister during the recent talks on "Short term building requirements".

2. The Chief Minister is understood to have agreed to this note although his written assent is still awaited.

[Signature]
Lt Col S
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II Jan 57
The Government of the Federation of Malaya will be aware that until United Kingdom forces can be concentrated in the long-term locations provided under the Defence Agreement, it will be necessary for Her Majesty’s Government to construct, on sites now occupied by the United Kingdom Service authorities, a number of temporary camps for these forces. Unless this is done, these forces will possess no accommodation in which they can be stationed as and when they are withdrawn from anti-terrorist operations in the Jungle.

2. The Government of the Federation of Malaya have recently informed the United Kingdom Service authorities in the Far East that they agree in principle that Her Majesty’s Government should secure leases on these sites of five years in the first instance, renewable thereafter for five years at the discretion of the Federation Government.

3. Her Majesty’s Government recognise that the Government of the Federation will not wish to commit themselves to this stage to the continued occupation of these sites by the forces for a definite period of five years, and, for their part, they have no wish to remain in occupation of them any longer than is necessary. They intend to prosecute their long-term military building programme in the Federation with all possible speed, but they can give no assurance that in five years time that programme will still have been so far advanced that it will not be necessary to continue occupation of some of these temporary sites.

4. Her Majesty’s Government are therefore ready to accept the proposal made by the Government of the Federation, which is set out in paragraph 2 above, but, in so doing, they would wish to be assured that upon the expiry of the initial five-year leases they can look to the good offices and co-operation of the Government of the Federation in obtaining any necessary extensions.

5. At the present time, and in order that the temporary building programme may be set in hand at the earliest opportunity, it is necessary for the Service authorities to negotiate leases with the State or Settlement Governments or with private owners. Her Majesty’s Government would, however, be most appreciative if the Government of the Federation were able to use their good offices in any individual cases of difficulty which may arise. Her Majesty’s Government understand also that the Government of the Federation are intending to secure for themselves power to acquire lands required for defence purposes, and they would wish to ensure that the Government of the Federation will have acquired these sites and that the extension should be conducted directly with the Government of the Federation or, as at present, with the State or Settlement Governments or private owners.

6. On the particular question of individual sites, agreement has not yet been secured with the United Kingdom’s providing after independence a campus for two sites at Ipoh and one at Perak. It is understood that at least the land at Ipoh for the construction of a hospital, while the Government of the Federation wishes to extend mining operations on part of the site at Perak. It is essential if the efficient prosecution of the campaign against the terrorists is not to be impeded and if the redeployment of UK forces in their long-term locations is to be carried out with the greatest expedition that Her Majesty’s Government should be permitted to continue in occupation of these sites after independence. If continued occupation of these sites could be assured for five years, Her Majesty’s Government would wish to secure the Government of the Federation that they would be ready within that period to discuss the phased release of all or parts of them to the Civil authorities for other purposes, and would also undertake that these sites would be the first to be released as the progress made on the long-term building programme made available accommodation to which their forces could be moved. If, however, these sites are to be the first which will be evacuated, the surrender of certain of the other sites will be inevitable consequences be delayed, and Her Majesty’s Government therefore trust that the Government of the Federation will be able to give them the assurance for which they ask in paragraph 4 above.
7. The Government of the Federation will be aware that detachments of Australian troops are stationed at Ipoh. Her Majesty's Government cannot at the stage commit the Australian Government, but they will do all they can to carry that Government with them.