

**CONFIDENTIAL**

H(W)882/65

27 January 1966

I am sorry that I failed to talk to you about British Guiana before your departure from UK. Although I expect that you know the set-up already, I am writing a short brief for you in lieu of the talk I should have had with you.

We have been trying for years to agree with the Dutch on a border treaty between B.G. and Surinam. This was largely bedevilled by arguments over the division of land near the upper reaches of the Corentyn. Two draft treaties were prepared some years ago, one British and one Dutch, which provide for a division of the territorial sea and continental shelf, but differ in their approaches to that problem depending on the manner in which they dispose of the upper reaches.

The British proposal assigned all the river to Surinam, with the boundary running  $010^{\circ}$  from the boundary pillar for a distance of 6 miles and thence on a median line across the continental shelf. The Dutch proposal had the boundary running down the deepest part of the river and thence by a median line across the shelf. Nothing further could be done on either idea because it was decided that the charts were too out of date to proceed; this was largely remedied by my survey of last year.

It is now earnestly hoped that agreement will be reached before B.G. becomes independent this year. The Dutch are anxious to conclude an agreement with us rather than have to negotiate with B.C., but even so no-one has yet come to the conference table. Meanwhile, in the absence of agreement, Surinam is claiming that she has a right to all the continental shelf up to a line  $010^{\circ}$  from the boundary pillar (extended indefinitely) whilst we consider that the line outlined in our draft treaty is more justifiable. The Surinam claim is based on the original border agreement of last century before anyone had thought of continental shelves. For purposes of simplicity in dividing survey areas our proposed median line has been described as  $033^{\circ}$  from the termination of the  $010^{\circ}$  line (6 miles from the Boundary pillar), although in fact that is a conservative version of the line actually proposed.

/Both

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Both UK and Netherlands subscribe to the view that ordinary hydrographic surveying is a legitimate activity anywhere outside territorial waters, but if we were to wash our hands of the commitment to survey eastwards of the Surinam claim we might appear to endorse that claim. The same situation exists so far as the Dutch and the B.G. claim is concerned. Hence the joint survey. A strong reason for not allowing the B.G. claim to go by default is that both countries appear to have granted exploration licences in the disputed area of continental shelf.

It is probable in fact that if agreement is reached the line will run even further east than our proposed median line, but of course we cannot be sure of that.

Hoping that all goes well and that you are happy to be moving hourly into warmer climes.

Will keep you in touch with the Washington visit arrangements.

(Sd.) G. S. RITCHIE

Captain A. H. Cooper, RAN

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