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End of Empire and the Bomb: Britain, Malaya and Nuclear Weapons, 1956–57

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the repercussions of remarks made by Duncan Sandys, the British Minister of Defence, at a press conference held in Canberra in August 1957 which suggested that British nuclear weapons were going to be deployed to airbases in Malaya. Against the background of the negotiations that had led to the Anglo-Malayan defence agreement, and with Malaya on the cusp of independence, an intense debate took place between Whitehall officials over whether and what form of assurances over consultation should be given to Malaya's new leaders over the deployment of nuclear weapons and the use of Malayan bases. Besides examining why and how such assurances were issued, this article seeks to demonstrate the tensions produced by British defence policy in South East Asia during this period, which was increasingly rooted in alliance obligations to SEATO and the consequent projection of nuclear capabilities, as they began to conflict with the political imperative to bolster the post-independence United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) Alliance government in Malaya. It also brings forward some of the links and connections that can be made between nuclear issues and the dynamics of decolonisation.

KEYWORDS

Nuclear weapons; Sandys; Malaya; Tunku Abdul Rahman; Anglo-Malayan defence agreement

On 20 August 1957, Duncan Sandys, the British Minister of Defence, while in Canberra at the start of a tour of Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and South East Asia, discovered the perils of the unscripted news conference. Sandys had hoped to use the tour to explain some of the recent changes to British defence policy in the region brought by the White Paper he had introduced earlier in the year. Having first made a statement which confirmed that UK forces in the area covered by the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) would soon have 'an element of nuclear power', he took follow-up questions from reporters. When pressed on how nuclear weapons might feature, Sandys said he did not want to go into details but reiterated 'when nuclear weapons came into

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our armoury the Far East will not be left out.’ Asked about the possible role of British Canberra light bombers, which were shortly due to re-equip a squadron of the Far East Air Force (FEAF) based in Malaya, Sandys replied that they would be present, and that ‘all our Canberras are equipped so that they can carry atomic weapons.’ Questioned further on when weapons would be available, the Minister of Defence responded that the UK was building up a stock of atomic weapons, and it was merely a matter of deciding when to send them, adding that when they were brought to the area, ‘I doubt if anything will be said about it.’¹

Over the next few days, as news of Sandys’ comments rippled across the regional press and reactions from Malayan political leaders were registered, and with Malaya on the verge of formal independence from the UK, a flurry of anxious exchanges occurred, involving British officials in London, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, and the Minister of Defence’s touring party, which led to the delivery of assurances to the new Malayan government over the basing and use of British nuclear weapons from its territory. The Sandys episode, the nature of the assurances which were conveyed by British officials, and the context that formed their background, have captured little detailed attention from historians of either decolonisation or nuclear issues.² Besides examining why and how the assurances were issued, this article seeks to demonstrate the tensions produced by British defence policy in South East Asia during this period, which was increasingly rooted in alliance obligations to SEATO and the consequent projection of nuclear capabilities, as they began to conflict with the political imperative to bolster the post-independence United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) Alliance government in Malaya. In more general terms there is a notable lacuna in scholarship which deals with British nuclear policies and their intersection with the end of empire, beyond vague assertions of the connections between the acceleration of British decolonisation in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the determination of Conservative governments to develop an ‘independent’ nuclear force for reasons of international prestige and status.³ This article aims to redress some of this comparative neglect by revealing aspects of the nuclear dynamics in operation during a crucial phase of British decolonisation in South East Asia.

The reporting of Sandys’ comments in Canberra tended to link British decisions over introducing nuclear weapons into Malaya with the still unpublished terms of the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement that had been negotiated over the previous eighteen months and was ready for introduction after 31 August 1957, the day when Malaya was set to gain its formal independence. The briefs for Sandys’ Far East tour had stressed that nuclear issues would be ‘an extremely delicate matter’, which if handled badly ‘could easily spark off controversy in Malaya which might destroy whatever utility we might otherwise expect of the Agreement.’ In his spoken comments Sandys was therefore advised to emphasise the importance of deterrence in the

abstract, and downplay any explicit reference to nuclear weapons, while making clear that Britain could never rule out their possible use.⁴ Evidently, however, the bullish Minister of Defence – Sandys did not have a reputation for diplomacy or tact – had strayed into controversial territory.⁵ The *Utusan Melayu*, the leading Malay-language newspaper, spoke of the ‘great surprise’ felt by the people of Malaya at Sandys’ remarks, as Tunku Abdul Rahman, the Federation’s Chief Minister, had told Malaysians that the defence agreement with Britain which he had negotiated involved no introduction of nuclear weapons to British air bases in Malaya; ‘how can Mr Sandys make such an important decision,’ it was asked, ‘before the terms of the Agreement are made known to the people?’⁶

Most observers took Sandys’ comments to mean that there were British plans to equip with nuclear weapons the Canberra light bombers due to be based at RAF Butterworth, in the northern part of Malaya. In fact, as we shall see, Sandys himself was somewhat muddled in his comments – the one RAF squadron (No 45) then based in Malaya at Butterworth was due to receive its first Canberras only later in the year, and would, in fact, then go on to redeploy to RAF Tengah on Singapore. Moreover, the B2 variant of the aircraft it would receive was not capable of carrying the only UK nuclear weapon which was then in production, the large and heavy 10,000 lb Blue Danube bomb designed for use with the V-bomber force. It would not be until 1960, when the 2,000 lb Red Beard bomb entered RAF service, that the Canberra was able to carry a UK-manufactured nuclear weapon.⁷

In the absence of any immediate corrective, however, the story of imminent deployment continued to spread. The *Straits Times* proclaimed in its headline on 21 August: ‘A-bombs for Malaya – Jets already here can carry them.’⁸ Reuters reported that the idea that British forces in Malaya would be equipped with nuclear weapons had ‘brought protests throughout the country’ from UMNO members, with concerns that Malaya would be ‘open to foreign aggression’.⁹ The Malayan Minister of Education, and Minister of Defence-designate, Abdul Razak Hussein, scrambled to issue a statement to the press saying that Sandys’ comments did not necessarily mean that nuclear weapons would be stationed in Malaya, stressing: ‘We have no intention of making Malaya an atomic base for anyone.’ Moreover, Razak maintained that if the British did want to bring nuclear weapons into Malaya then prior consultation would be required.¹⁰ Tunku Abdul Rahman was on a brief visit to Singapore when news of Sandys’ comments broke. He told reporters there that he had not been consulted about any proposal to bring nuclear weapons into Malaya for use in the ‘anti-bandit’ war (the Malayan Emergency, it should be recalled, though winding down, was still underway), and that Britain would have to consult before they were employed, prompting the *Straits Times* to run another story with the headline, ‘A-Arms: “Britain Must Ask Us First”’¹¹ Returning to Kuala Lumpur, the Tunku also told the local press, ‘We do not want any atomic bombs here.’¹²

Sandys himself was later to maintain that his comments had been misrepresented and misinterpreted, and that at no point had he said that it had been decided to base nuclear weapons in Malaya, his only remark having been that the Canberra bomber was capable of carrying nuclear weapons.¹³ Attempting to dampen the growing controversy, on 23 August, and now in Adelaide, Sandys told reporters he wanted to correct any implication drawn from his previous remarks that Malaya was to become an atomic base; instead he maintained that no decisions had yet been taken over when or where atomic weapons would be kept in the SEATO area.¹⁴

It was, however, too late to contain the damage. *The Manchester Guardian* published a probing editorial on 26 August which referred to the ongoing controversy sparked by Sandys' comments and used it to question the opaque basis of British nuclear planning for South East Asia. 'Here, at the outset of Malaya's independence,' it had opined, 'is an unforeseen friction.' Questioning the effectiveness of tactical nuclear weapons when employed against the light and dispersed Communist forces that might be faced in Burma, Laos or Thailand, and the dangers of escalation in any conflict to widespread nuclear targeting of China itself, which might serve as the trigger for global war, the editorial criticised the reliance on the nuclear means of deterrence as a substitute for adequate ground forces. Moreover, the presence of such weapons could serve to alienate 'good friends' and become a

liability, since there is great emotional revulsion among the Asian countries to any association with nuclear weapons. We cannot force defence of this kind on countries which do not want it, and our own plans for these weapons seem too inchoate for successful explanation.¹⁵

The fact that another series of British atmospheric nuclear tests, *Antler*, was scheduled to take place at the Maralinga site in South Australia during September 1957, and coming on top of the *Grapple* thermonuclear tests that had been staged earlier in the year at Malden Island in the Central Pacific, seemed to confirm the growing picture to many of a British defence policy that was become increasingly nuclearized.¹⁶

To his discomfort, nuclear issues continued to pursue Sandys on the other parts of his Far East tour. In Wellington he attended a meeting of the New Zealand government's Defence Committee, where the New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister, Keith Holyoake, unexpectedly asked Sandys if there was any UK intention to ask his government to store nuclear weapons. An evidently startled Sandys could only reply that he could not see why any such request would be made, and that New Zealand did not seem an appropriate place for nuclear storage from a strategic point of view. Holyoake then left the meeting and made a unilateral press statement that New Zealand would not acquire nuclear weapons or become a base for their storage, prompting Sandys, at his own subsequent press conference, to try to correct any erroneous

impression left by Holyoake's statement, that the UK had asked New Zealand to store nuclear weapons.¹⁷

Britain's nuclear posture in the region was certainly on Sandys' mind just before he embarked on his tour. The results of the Defence White Paper he had presented in April 1957 preaged large reductions in Britain's conventional forces and an increased reliance on nuclear deterrence in overall policy.¹⁸ The intention of Sandys during his visit to Australia was to offer the reassurance that although Britain expected to reduce the size of its conventional forces in Malaya, as a result of both the increasingly benign security situation now that the Emergency was on the wane, and the policies enshrined in the recent White Paper, there would still be plenty of firepower to deter Communist aggression in the region as nuclear capabilities became more readily available.¹⁹ During discussions in London with Sir Robert Menzies, the Australian Prime Minister, in July 1957, Sandys had explained that although the number of RAF squadrons in South East Asia would decrease from ten to seven over the next few years, this would be 'counter-balanced' by the provision of more modern aircraft, including Canberras 'with a nuclear capability.'²⁰ The day before his Canberra press conference he had held meetings with Australian officials, including Menzies once more, where he had tried to assuage concerns about the impact of the force reductions planned for Malaya and Singapore. Here, the Chair of the Chiefs of Staff (COS) Committee, Air Chief Marshal Sir William Dickson, who had accompanied Sandys to Australia, underlined that he 'did not think the Chinese or their satellites in North Vietnam would attempt overt aggression southward provided the Americans and the UK maintained the ability to strike vital enemy targets with atomic weapons.'²¹ It was soon to become apparent that what was assumed would be welcome news to Australian ears was to receive a very different reception from a Malayan audience and complicate a smooth transition to full independence.

I

The controversy sparked by Sandys's comments in Canberra should be seen in the wider context of the development of British thinking over the previous few years regarding the role of nuclear weapons in the defence of South East Asia, and the clash that was developing between this strand of defence policy and the imperative to maintain close relations with key states such as Malaya which were attaining independence. British officials had long recognised the high sensitivity of nuclear issues in Asia, where nuclear weapons had first been used against an Asian adversary in 1945, and where US nuclear testing in the Pacific had triggered outspoken local opposition. In particular, the US *Bravo* thermonuclear test in March 1954, which led to the radiation poisoning of several hundred Marshall islanders in the Central Pacific, and the crew of the Japanese fishing trawler *Lucky Dragon*, had served to generate an upsurge in

Asian protest and concern over nuclear testing in the area, and also the intentions of the Western powers to use nuclear weapons if faced with Chinese Communist aggression.²² The rhetoric of 'massive retaliation' introduced by the nuclear policies of the Eisenhower administration, and the public discussion by officials during the first Taiwan straits crisis in March 1955 that nuclear weapons were now regarded as no different in character from conventional in US military thinking, did much to fuel an already charged atmosphere. Racial factors also played a role in how nuclear issues were regarded – there was a widespread perception, often noted by Western observers, that Asian audiences tended to look upon the atomic bomb as a 'white man's weapon' that was reserved for use against non-white peoples, who were seen as inferior and hence expendable.²³ 'Over and over again while I was India,' Chester Bowles, the former US ambassador in New Delhi recalled in 1955, 'I was confronted with the startling question whether we atom-bombed the Japanese because they were yellow, while we refrained from atom-bombing the Germans because they were white. No explanations ever quite seemed to silence doubts on this question.'²⁴

Despite the capacity for nuclear weapons to alienate and estrange Asian opinion, however, Western defence planners were faced with the dilemma after the end of French Indochina war in 1954 of how to muster a credible defence of the region against the strong conventional military forces of Communist China, or North Vietnam, especially when neither the United States or Britain were prepared to commit substantial ground forces in a repeat of another Korean War-style war of attrition. A framework for collective defence was provided by the Manila Treaty of September 1954 which brought SEATO into existence, but without the clear allocation and commitment of Western forces during 1955 it was increasingly seen as an empty shell by several of its members.²⁵ What could be assumed, however, was that given its pronouncements the United States would meet any overt Communist aggression in the region with an early nuclear response, almost certainly directed against targets in North Vietnam or the southern part of Communist China.²⁶ This kind of thinking was reflected in British appreciations. At the end of December 1955, for example, the Cabinet's Defence Committee had endorsed a COS paper which argued that the only way to counteract the Chinese Communist threat to the region was to use nuclear weapons to 'neutralise' China's superiority in conventional military power.²⁷

There was evidently no British desire or capacity to make major contributions of ground forces to the defence of South East Asia. Now that the Communist threat within Malaya had been reduced to manageable proportions, British defence chiefs hoped to scale back the deployment of British forces in the region. In June 1956, moreover, the Eden Government began a major review of defence spending with the aim of making large cut-backs – the outcome of this protracted process was to be the Sandys Defence White

Paper of April 1957, which signalled a heavy reliance on nuclear deterrence as the foundation of defence policy and heralded the end of national service. While there was no prospect of the UK making any significant conventional force commitments to SEATO military planning, British officials still wanted to maintain the credibility of the alliance, preserve the UK's leading role within it, and reassure Australia and New Zealand that the defence needs of the area were being taken seriously in London (not least as it was Australian and New Zealand forces which would make a key contribution to the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve which was established in Malaya in 1955). Although the UK had only a nascent and very limited nuclear weapons capability by 1956, when its V-bomber force began to enter service, the Chiefs of Staff increasingly saw a British nuclear contribution to SEATO as the best and only way to meet the demands for some tangible addition to the military potential available to the alliance.²⁸

Yet this emerging military requirement had the potential to alienate those segments of Asian opinion which were alarmed by the increasing 'nuclearization' of the Western military presence. British officials had always hoped that once it gained independence Malaya would be ready to join SEATO as a full member of the alliance, and Tunku Abdul Rahman had reassured them that this was his intention.²⁹ However, they were also wary that younger and more radical elements within UMNO could frustrate these ambitions and try to steer Malaya along a more neutralist path in the Asian Cold War. With the SEATO Council due to meet in Karachi in March 1956, where members were expected to endorse a new military strategy for the alliance that involved early use of nuclear weapons, British officials were concerned about the wider repercussions if the news should leak. The subject of the new SEATO strategy was judged of sufficient importance to be discussed by the full Cabinet at the end of February. The Commonwealth Secretary, Lord Home, presented a paper which admitted that acceptance of nuclear use for planning purposes was necessary, but went on warn:

Unless matters are handled with great care, any publicity is likely to have serious repercussions throughout Asia and in India in particular. Very deep emotions may be aroused: Asia had not forgotten that the only atom bombs dropped have been on Asians. There is a danger that the effect may be to drive India, China and Russia into each other's arms and to raise the question of white superiority. (Atomic weapons would not – for the time being at least – be put into the hands of Asian troops but would be retained to be used by the "white" Powers).

Home cautioned that everything possible must be done to mitigate the possible impact of the decision.³⁰ In the Cabinet discussion that followed, Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Secretary, who would lead the UK delegation at the SEATO meeting, was instructed to ensure at least that no explicit reference to nuclear matters be made in the Council's final communique.³¹ The British

Ambassador in Washington was also instructed to deliver a memorandum to the State Department that reflected the Cabinet's conclusions and reminded the Americans:

we have to give special thought to the situation in Malaya and Singapore ... we are hoping, in the course of future rapid progress towards full self-government for these territories, to secure defence agreements which will provide us with the base facilities we must have in order to continue to play an effective part in SEATO. This issue of nuclear weapons is perhaps more likely than any other, if wrongly handled, to prejudice our chances of securing such agreements, particularly as the opponents of the defence treaties will not hesitate to point to the dangers of nuclear retaliation.³²

In the event, no public reference was made to the Council's acceptance of nuclear planning assumptions and adverse publicity was avoided, but the whole episode served to underline how sensitive such nuclear issues could prove to be.

This was illustrated by the contemporaneous negotiations that were taking place over the terms of an Anglo-Malayan defence agreement.³³ When in January 1956 British officials began to sketch their initial requirement for an agreement to cover their continued use of bases in Malaya after independence, it was appreciated that the leadership of UMNO could not be pressed to join SEATO such was the state of domestic feeling toward the military alliance.³⁴ The conference on constitutional advance in Malaya that reached agreement in London in early February 1956 that the colony would be prepared for full self-government, including control over defence and external affairs, by a target date of 31 August 1957 had also agreed the general principles that would underpin a treaty of defence and mutual assistance to accompany independence. These included the proposition that the UK should consult the Federation Government if there was any change in the 'size and character' of British forces deployed in Malaya ('except in circumstances when immediate action would be essential'). The treaty would allow the retention of British forces and facilities 'for the fulfilment of Commonwealth and international obligations'; the British government undertook to assist with the external defence of Malaya; and there would be 'provision made for consultation' with the new Malayan federal authorities 'in regard to the exercise of [UK] rights under the Treaty.'³⁵

The subsequent detailed negotiations over the defence agreement were conducted in an amicable atmosphere, the British delegation being led by Sir Harold Parker, a former permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence, but with a close eye on their progress being kept by Sir Robert Scott, the Commissioner General for South East Asia, who coordinated all British foreign, colonial and defence policy in the region from Singapore. As Chief Minister and the leader of UMNO, Tunku Abdul Rahman had warned Scott in late February that

some of his own supporters strongly disliked the idea of any British bases in Malaya partly because they might be considered to be inconsistent with complete independence and partly because they might attract enemy attention in war. Malaya had had enough of war and did not want to be a target for the new weapons.

However, the Tunku had taken a 'strong line' with his critical supporters and saw the defence agreement as part of the bargain reached at the London talks with the *quid pro quo* being the swift move towards independence. At the same time, he asked that the British not make 'impossible demands' over the bases and that if London tried to impose a 'hard agreement' then it might be rejected by Malayan opinion or the new post-independence government.³⁶

As far as British officials were concerned, the draft defence agreement which they presented to the Malaysians in April 1956 would give them the freedom to use their bases in an emergency as they saw fit. The agreement's article 7, which dealt with consultation when there were changes 'in prospect' made in the 'size, character or deployment' of the UK forces in Malaya, was carefully worded so as not to imply any right of veto (the Malayan authorities would be given 'an effective opportunity for comment' before any such changes were made).³⁷ By May 1956, Parker and Scott's early optimism about the prospects for a relatively quick and easy agreement with the Malaysians had dissipated, and British officials saw the Tunku as increasingly nervous over the ramifications of signing the defence agreement considering the domestic opposition that was emerging over maintaining any British bases in Malaya after independence. Although stressing that he felt securing a 'reasonably satisfactory' agreement was still possible, Parker noted in May that the Malaysians were 'tough negotiators', and that, 'During [the] last two or three months Malayan Ministers have become more politically conscious to the implications of a defence agreement. They have their eyes, as the Tunku told me, on the next election.' The Malayan Chief Minister, had, however, indicated that he was open to a visit to London where some of the outstanding issues between the two sides might be resolved at a ministerial level.³⁸

II

While negotiations over the defence agreement were in abeyance, the Ministry of Defence began to move ahead with ideas to support SEATO with a UK nuclear capability, and whose ramifications were to culminate a year later in the controversy over the Sandys press conference. Knowing that the Eden Government's defence review would likely lead to cuts in conventional forces deployed in Malaya, and keen to show that Britain wanted to play a leading role in the SEATO Alliance, by June 1956, the Joint Planning Staff had begun to recommend that the UK should make a nuclear contribution to SEATO in any limited war with China alongside that offered by the United States, a

conclusion which was endorsed by the COS Committee the following month.³⁹ As one Air Ministry official later explained,

... the basis of SEATO strategy is the use of nuclear air power against North Vietnam and South China with the aim of neutralising the air threat and reducing the land threat to manageable proportions. This would enable the SEATO Land Forces to hold the residual threat and, defend key areas and clear certain Communist held areas. The Chiefs of Staff admitted that the United States would have to deliver the majority of the nuclear weapons but considered that it would be essential for the United Kingdom to contribute a nuclear capability.⁴⁰

The initial scheme proposed by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) was to fly-out several squadrons of V-bombers to the Far East when a conflict with China looked possible.⁴¹ RAF Bomber Command was first informed of a possible requirement to deploy up to three squadrons of medium bombers to the Far East Air Force in May 1956.⁴² Plans began to be formulated for how to give practical effect to such ideas, but only progressed slowly: by December 1956 new standings were being built at RAF Butterworth in Malaya for up to four V-bombers, but anxious Air Ministry officials were concerned about the financing of further upgrade works to the airfield.⁴³

More urgency began to gather in early 1957, as the likely outcomes of the 1956 defence review became increasingly obvious. Lord Home warned the then Minister of Defence, Antony Head, that Australia and New Zealand might react to substantial reductions by withdrawing their own forces stationed in Malaya:

Their confidence in us will be severely shaken, and they will tend to turn more and more to the United States for defence co-operation. There is a real risk in all this to our political relations with the two countries and especially with Australia.⁴⁴

The provision of some UK nuclear capability, MoD officials believed, might help to counter impressions that Britain was not serious about contributing to the defence of South East Asia or maintaining its place as a leading member of the SEATO alliance.⁴⁵ At the SEATO Council meeting held in Canberra in March 1957, Home accordingly made the statement that the UK's main contribution to SEATO in conditions of limited war with China would be via V-bombers flown out from the UK, and carrier aircraft with a nuclear capability.⁴⁶

Air Ministry officials were by this point already beginning to discuss possible storage facilities for nuclear weapons at RAF Tengah on Singapore and at Butterworth. The need for more substantial redevelopment work at Tengah, including runway lengthening, however, meant that it would take longer to prepare and be made available than Butterworth.⁴⁷ Compared to the airfields in Singapore (at Tengah and Changi), Butterworth shaved about 200 nautical miles from the distance V-bombers would have to fly to their main potential targets in southern China and the northern part of Vietnam. Butterworth's

runway, moreover, was 8,000 feet long, which was enough to accommodate V-bombers with the additional strengthening work that was carried out during 1957 to permit high performance jet aircraft to be based there.⁴⁸

In July 1957, the new head of the FEAF, Air Marshal the Earl of Bandon, was told that his responsibilities included study of employment of V-bomber reinforcements with nuclear weapons in support of SEATO.⁴⁹ The Air Ministry was, however, slow in coming forward with detailed plans for how the deployment was to be accomplished – much work, for example, needed to be done to upgrade the crucial staging post of RAF Gan in the Indian Ocean, while the climatic conditions in South East Asia presented special challenges for the handling of the bombs which would be flown out aboard V-bomber aircraft. The Treasury, for its part, balked at the mounting expense attached to the whole scheme (meaning, for example, that no work on temporary nuclear storage facilities was carried out at Butterworth during 1957).⁵⁰ Until Tengah was ready – which might not be until 1961/62 at the earliest – it was envisaged in April 1958 that the UK nuclear effort, by now dubbed Operation *Mastodon*, would be limited to one squadron of eight aircraft based at Butterworth, while weapon availability was another insuperable issue so few were the numbers of Blue Danube bombs that had been produced by this time.⁵¹

III

As the Air Ministry and FEAF slowly developed nuclear plans for the region, with Butterworth assuming early importance in their thinking, the defence agreement negotiations with Malaya had begun to draw towards a conclusion. By November 1956, after the initial rounds of talks, it was appreciated that a high-level resolution to outstanding differences would be required, not least as an impasse had been reached over the wording of article 6, a key component of the draft agreement. As the Colonial Office acknowledged, the existing UK draft would represent a major infringement of Malayan sovereignty as it gave sanction for British use of its Malayan bases in the event of an attack or ‘threat to the preservation of peace’ in South East Asia (a form of words which British officials had inserted as a pretext for the UK to use its Malayan-based forces for SEATO purposes) without reference to the Federation Government. As one brief prepared for Alan Lennox-Boyd, the Colonial Secretary, put it, if granted this would have given the UK ‘freedom of action which she has sought from no other independent nation or which she has herself granted to none’; if the Americans had asked for similar rights, it was observed, ‘the British Parliament and people could not be expected for one moment to have accepted it.’ In a subsequent meeting with the Australian Minister for External Affairs, Lennox-Boyd brought up the same analogy, pointing out that if the Malaysians had acquiesced over article 6 it would have accorded Britain rights ‘which we had unequivocally denied the Americans when they

set up bases in this country, for these bases cannot be activated without our consultation and agreement.⁵²

The Colonial Secretary was here referring to the Anglo-American understanding that had first been reached in September 1951 over the American airbases located in the UK, and which had made their use 'a matter of joint decision ... in the circumstances prevailing at the time.' Despite the qualification, most observers assumed that this meant there would have to be consultation between the US and British governments if ever an American president decided to launch a nuclear attack involving American airbases in the UK. The same formula of words was repeated for public consumption in the communique issued after Churchill's meeting with President Truman in January 1952 and was hailed by the press as securing Britain's right of veto.⁵³ With this kind of recent parallel, it is not surprising to see British officials make comparisons between the consultation arrangements that were to be offered the Malaysians and their own understandings with the Americans, which were seen as an important manifestation of sovereign independence.⁵⁴

The basic problem in the defence agreement negotiations, according to one CRO official, arose from the obligations that article 6 imposed, with the Tunku said to be 'extremely frightened about nuclear retaliation on the Federation as a result of UK and Commonwealth aircraft operating against a prospective enemy from Malayan bases.'⁵⁵ The scenario that most seemed to worry the Malayan First Minister, moreover, was that of a Chinese attack on Hong Kong which would prompt air strikes against Chinese targets from Malayan bases, and which would invite a counterblow.⁵⁶ The response of the Tunku was summed up with his comment, 'I do not want an atom bomb on Kuala Lumpur.'⁵⁷ His preference was for an agreement with only a vague set of obligations and commitments, on the understanding he would be amenable in a crisis.⁵⁸ The CRO had some sympathy with this approach, arguing with an anxious Australian government, for example,

that it is better to agree now to a somewhat vague formula which will keep the local political situation happy and make it easier for the Federation to join SEATO rather than to tie down Malayan Ministers at this stage to precise obligations which may later upset the Government and bring in an opposition party which would promptly repudiate the Agreement.⁵⁹

The best chance of reaching an agreement, officials felt, was for Lennox-Boyd to have informal meetings with the Tunku while he was in London for a visit in December 1956, where the latter 'could let his hair down about his difficulties feeling himself to be among understanding friends.'⁶⁰ The brief for Lennox-Boyd's talks anticipated the Tunku asking if Britain would use its bases in Malaya in support of SEATO to counter an attack on a country such as Thailand or Vietnam. The Colonial Secretary was advised to reply:

No; this would infringe sovereignty. We will first consult the Malaysans, and are content to rest on their assurance of the fullest cooperation with us in meeting such an attack which would represent a threat to the preservation of peace in the area.

And if the Colonial Secretary was asked if 'consultation' meant 'consent', he was to answer in the affirmative.⁶¹

Before he left for London, the Tunku had seen Selkirk where the latter felt he had secured Malayan consent to his own proposed redraft of articles 6 and 7 of the agreement, though the COS remained concerned about possible constraints on the UK's use of Malayan bases to fulfil its SEATO commitments.⁶² This apparent breakthrough was, however, rescinded almost as soon as it had been reached. After his arrival in London and in their private discussions together before formal negotiations began, the Tunku told Lennox-Boyd that the Malaysans had had second thoughts about acceptance of the latest British redrafts of articles 6 and 7. Indeed he now made clear that he did not want to see Malaya committed in advance to supporting the use of Malayan bases by British forces except in a scenario where Malaya was under direct attack, being particularly anxious over being dragged into a conflict over Hong Kong. Further redrafts were therefore submitted by the Malaysans in London which explicitly omitted Hong Kong from the area covered by the agreement, and defined threats to the preservation of the peace in narrow territorial terms which would have excluded those situations where Britain might need to use the Malayan bases to fulfil its commitments to SEATO; a new draft article 8, moreover, included mention of the need to secure Malayan consent for use of the bases in cases involving wider threats to the peace.⁶³

This can hardly have been regarded as an auspicious start to the talks and was precisely what British military chiefs had feared. During the formal negotiations themselves, which began on 20 December, Lennox-Boyd's fulsome opening remarks included the statement,

Without mutual trust and goodwill, as between equal partners and allies, any arrangement of this sort would be worthless no matter what was set down on paper, but in order that the rest of the world should know what we were agreeing to undertake together it was necessary to have a written agreement. HMG, however, in no way wished to encroach upon the sovereignty of an independent Malaya, or to impose on her any world wide commitment which could embroil her in a war which did not concern her.

However, Lennox-Boyd was blunt in saying that the latest Malayan proposals were unacceptable to the UK side. Hong Kong must be included, and while the UK was prepared to consult the Federation over action in support of SEATO, Malaya had to recognise its 'Commonwealth and international' obligations to preserve peace in the area 'at least to the extent of pledging fullest co-operation with us.' He was also concerned that the Malayan draft of a new article 8 implied that the Federation was likely to withhold its consent in such circumstances.⁶⁴

The Tunku and his fellow Federation ministers were always in a difficult negotiating position over the precise terms of the agreement. Although the internal security situation was under control, the Emergency had yet to be declared over and there was no telling if British assistance might be needed in the future to quell a resurgence of the Communist threat. Moreover, Malaya would soon be an independent country in a volatile regional environment. An Indochina settlement had been reached in 1954, but whether it would hold remained uncertain as long as Vietnam remained divided; a confident and assertive Communist China stood above Vietnam; and to the east of Malaya, the Indonesian Republic's parliamentary system was under strain from regional tensions, and the rising strength of the Communist Party on Java. All these considerations meant that British support and protection would be required, giving significant leverage to British officials in the negotiations. 'We shall have to tell the Tunku,' one British official noted in condescending fashion, 'that one of the penalties of growing up is that one has to accept certain countervailing obligations.'⁶⁵ On the second day of the talks, the Tunku agreed to accept a British redraft of articles 6, 7 and 8 which had been submitted overnight to the Malayan delegation.⁶⁶ Article 6's scope now included any British territories and forces in the Far East, and obliged the UK and the Federation to 'consult together' on action to be taken in the event of a threat or armed attack on them, or other threats to 'the preservation of peace in the Far East.'⁶⁷

There was some satisfaction in London by early 1957, therefore, with the successful outcome of the negotiations, with every expectation that the defence agreement would be introduced from the date that Malaya achieved its independence. Even before the Sandys press conference in Canberra, however, there had already been indications that all would not be plain sailing. For example, in June 1957 Razak was reported to have informed the UMNO General Assembly that during the negotiations the British had been told that no bases for atomic warfare would be established in Malaya under the terms of the defence agreement. In response to this news, the British Commanders-in-Chief in the Far East were confident in the event of hostilities occurring in South East Asia that they could override Malayan attempts to invoke the agreement's terms and prevent aircraft operating from Malayan bases. They were nevertheless anxious that no promises were offered the Federal Government that its bases would never be used for nuclear attacks and that any discussion of the whole subject should be avoided as far as possible.⁶⁸ The effect of Sandys' Canberra press conference in August 1957 was, however, to place nuclear issues and the terms of the (as yet unpublished) defence agreement firmly on the political agenda and a matter for public debate as the date for independence approached.

IV

As the controversy over Malayan nuclear bases gathered pace in the days that followed Sandys' remarks, the Colonial Office was evidently alarmed by their potential to overshadow Malaya's independence celebrations at the end of August, and to disrupt the concurrent signing of the defence agreement.⁶⁹ Initial ideas from the Ministry of Defence to limit the damage by issuing a clarifying statement was immediately opposed by the Colonial Office, which only felt it would make matters worse. Policy regarding how aspects of the agreement were to be interpreted also now had to be settled. Meetings between officials from the Colonial Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office, and the Permanent Secretary at the MoD, Sir Richard Powell, led to agreement that on political grounds alone the Malaysians would have to be consulted before nuclear weapons were stockpiled in the country. The Colonial Office also thought the Malaysians were quite within their rights on the matter. One MoD official reminded Powell of the negotiating history of the defence agreement, where the UK's initial drafts had included clauses which would have given Britain the unfettered right to operate V-bombers armed with nuclear weapons from Malayan bases. However, the Malaysians had objected to the clauses and

specifically raised the question of our being free to take off from Malayan bases and drop bombs on say China if she had attacked Viet Nam. They were quite emphatic that we would have to consult them before any such action could be taken.

The re-drafting of the agreement had led to it only allowing action without consultation to be taken in the event of a direct attack on Malaya itself, or on British territories in the Far East. 'In any other case,' Powell was informed, 'we are bound to consult the Malaysians, and the lawyers have advised us that this means that we must obtain agreement.'⁷⁰

In Sandys's absence from London, the Prime Minister was overseeing the Ministry of Defence, and Macmillan quickly concurred with the Colonial Office view. Senior MoD officials felt there was little choice but to acquiesce, however reluctantly. Writing to explain the evolving position to Air Chief Marshal Dickson, who was still accompanying Sandys, Powell noted dismissively that distorted press reporting of Sandys' comments had 'fluttered the doves in London and Kuala Lumpur.' He could see nothing in the defence agreement that gave the Malaysians any right to 'say whether or not we should have atomic weapons or their carriers in Malaya', yet as a matter of practical politics, Powell and his officials in London felt that the Malaysians would have to be consulted if nuclear weapons were brought into Malaya or V-bombers based in the territory.⁷¹

In Kuala Lumpur, the advice received from London by Sir Donald MacGillivray, the outgoing UK High Commissioner, was to play down the affair as far

as possible, answering press queries with the line that there would be consultation with the Federal government over the steps needed to fulfil the obligations entailed by the defence agreement, but it would be 'irresponsible and wrong' for any government to attempt to define in advance what those steps would be. The Colonial Office could find no grounds to disagree with Razak's view that there would have to be 'consultation and consent' for nuclear weapons to be introduced into Malaya, but its officials were concerned that any hold-up in the process to ratify the defence agreement might lead to the Malaysians to look for further categorical assurances that under no circumstances would Britain hold at, or use nuclear weapons from Malayan bases. It was this last possibility that was to cause continual anxiety over the next few days. The argument advanced by the Colonial Office was that

If we were pressed to give [an] undertaking that we would never use nuclear weapons this would play straight into the hands of the Communists who are conducting [a] worldwide campaign to that very end, which in [the] absence of some complementary agreement on disarmament would at once restore to them [the] initiative through their overriding superiority in conventional weapons. It could be disastrous for [the] Malaysians if we had to agree to tie our hands in this way, since, if the worst came to the worst, it might be that it was only by using nuclear weapons that we could save Malaya for the free world. It is therefore in Malaya's own interests that our enemies and theirs should be left guessing and, while we are very ready to assure [the] Tunku that we will consult [the] Federal Government on any proposal to hold or use nuclear weapons in Malaya, we hope that he will not have to press us beyond that to statements that under no circumstances will they be used.

Therefore, Sir Geofroy Tory, the new UK High Commissioner, who had arrived in Kuala Lumpur to take part in the independence celebrations, was given the leeway to offer the Tunku assurances over consultation and consent, as these were common to independent states who shared in the common defence: 'we have such understandings with [the] Americans, and had always recognised that we should want to have them with [the] Malaysians.'⁷²

However, already emerging were pronounced tensions between the political imperative to remain on good terms with and not destabilise a Malayan government which was known to be firmly anti-Communist and pro-Western in inclination, and the military's desire to have as much freedom of action as possible to implement their plans, which now included a much more sensitive nuclear dimension. The Commanders-in-Chief in the Far East, who enjoyed Scott's backing from his berth in Singapore, were distinctly unhappy with the concessions to Malayan opinion that now looked imminent. It was, Scott argued, of 'extreme importance' that no assurances should be given to the Tunku until all the implications had been fully considered. There were specific objections to any concession which would seem to offer a veto to the Malayan Government on the introduction into Malaya of nuclear weapons, which would completely devalue the worth of the defence agreement.⁷³ When he learned of the plan to

offer assurances to the Tunku, Sandys also indicated he wanted a fuller discussion to take place.⁷⁴ For the moment, these objections were enough to delay Tory from offering any of the Colonial Office's planned concessions to the Tunku.

The underlying concern of Scott and the British military chiefs in the region was that public discussion of the issue of nuclear basing and deployment would spillover into Singapore itself, which was home to the UK's principal regional airbase for high performance aircraft, RAF Tengah. Under the Rendel Constitution introduced in 1955 the UK still controlled all aspects of external affairs, defence and internal security within Singapore, and the Labour Front government, led since June 1956 by its Chief Minister, Lim Yew Hock, which controlled the legislature, had proved amenable to British interests. Nevertheless, further constitutional changes were still on the cards – during 1957 Lim negotiated new arrangements involving the introduction of full internal self-government and a wholly-elected legislature in 1959 – and there was significant left-wing agitation and opposition in the colony, notably within its Chinese middle schools, while the People's Action Party was starting to gain electoral traction. Lim could be expected to engage in active suppression of Communist-related activity in the colony, but the British wanted to do nothing which would weaken or undermine his position considering the changing political landscape that would be encountered over the next few years.⁷⁵

Meanwhile, the anxieties of British officials were increased when it emerged that the Tunku was unwilling to sign the defence agreement until after it had been debated in the new Malayan Federal Assembly (as the Legislative Council was to be renamed after independence). It had been expected that the Chief Minister would sign the agreement on or shortly after 31 August, but on 24 August he informed MacGillivray that he had overlooked a promise he had made to the UMNO General Assembly that it would be debated by the Federal Assembly before formal ratification. The Tunku had been 'adamant' he must fulfil his promise, and MacGillivray felt there was no alternative to accepting this; the Chief Minister had 'apologised handsomely' and said that whatever happened in the debate, the agreement would stand and he would still sign it.⁷⁶

This unexpected development meant that there might be an uncomfortable lacuna from Malaya's independence on 31 August until early October, when the debate could be staged, during which no ratified legal document underpinned the presence, rights and obligations of the British and Commonwealth forces then based in the country. Nervous officials in London considered whether they should press the Tunku for some interim agreement that could be made public (to supplement a pre-arranged private exchange of letters between the Tunku and Lennox-Boyd, timed for 28 August, where the latter affirmed that the Malayan Government accepted the defence agreement).⁷⁷ However, Tory,

now installed as High Commissioner, successfully pushed back against his instructions, arguing that the Tunku would regard such a request as a

slap in the face. His deep and genuine friendship and trust are our main assets and without them no piece of paper will really be valid. It would be the greatest mistake to prejudice these in order to guard against risk which I believe to be negligible.⁷⁸

In private, to British officials, the Tunku dismissed any need for any interim arrangements – indeed, he gave his word to operate as if the defence agreement was in effect from independence day until its formal signature (though British concerns were aroused when soon after 31 August he had let it be known that the Malayan Cabinet would review the working of the agreement after a year).⁷⁹

Despite the tremors caused by the delay in signing the agreement, the High Commission in Kuala Lumpur was still confident in the Tunku's sincerity. Tory saw the Tunku on 27 August, and it was clear to him that the Chief Minister was 'firmly on our side' but nervous of the political backlash resulting from Sandys' comments; whatever the outcome of the debate in the Federal Assembly, he assured Tory that he would sign the defence agreement.⁸⁰ Moreover, Tory did not believe he or Razak would press for prior assurances that under no circumstances would nuclear weapons be introduced into Malaya. Recognising the strength of feeling amongst officials in Singapore, the High Commission in Kuala Lumpur now said,

We see force of point that we must not entirely surrender freedom of action, and that we cannot therefore undertake not to hold nuclear weapons in Malaya without consent of Malayan Government. It seems to us however that in practice it would probably be very difficult and certainly contrary to the spirit of the Agreement for us to bring atomic weapons into Malaya without informing Malayan authorities and without them having [an] opportunity to comment. We think this would in practice virtually amount to consultation.

In an effort to bridge the divide that was opening with the British military chiefs and Scott in Singapore, Tory and MacGillivray now hoped to offer 'prior notice and discussion' but to avoid any commitment to securing Malayan consent.⁸¹

Nonetheless, in London, the Colonial Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office, which by now had secured the Prime Minister's renewed backing for their positions, argued that Tory and MacGillivray should adhere to the original plan, and offer not just consultation, but the right of veto. 'As things are moving fast,' Sandys was told,

and as declarations of Malayan intentions unsupported by us might not allay public criticism and so could make Legislature's endorsement of Defence Agreement more difficult to obtain, [the] Prime Minister ... has decided that [the] Tunku must know where we stand ...⁸²

The CRO had argued that,

Public concern in Malaya about the use of nuclear weapons ... is not so much concern about [the] circumstances in which they may be used but about their being used at all, and Malaysians have much force on their side, not only by reference to their rights as independent and equal partners with us but also from proper solicitude for their own people, in insisting that they should be able to say that they have not surrendered to us unconditionally the right to expose them to the risks of nuclear retaliation. We should be deluding ourselves if we imagined that once public opinion had been roused we could get away with less than [a] pledge to consult – and hope to carry [the] Malaysians with us at the time. What we have to remember is that from 31st August Malaya will be a fully independent country and that, whether we like it or not, we cannot force her to adopt a line of conduct in relation to nuclear weapons or anything else that is not politically acceptable to her.⁸³

The Tunku himself, meanwhile, was already boxing in the British position. At a press conference held on 28 August he stated that Britain would not be allowed to use Malaya as a base for nuclear weapons, and that there was no provision in the defence agreement to cover such a contingency. Moreover, if nuclear weapons were to be used by SEATO in defence of the treaty area, then they should be based on the territory of a SEATO member.⁸⁴

The independence celebrations at the end of August prevented Tory from immediately offering the agreed assurances to the Tunku, giving another opportunity for the sceptics to register their objections, once again citing the possible ramifications in Singapore. Scott believed that similar assurances would eventually have to be offered to Singapore ministers, perhaps within as little as five years, and even wondered whether the planned work to upgrade RAF Butterworth should continue as the 'veto now being given to [the] Malayan Government largely nullifies value of [the] Defence Agreement for war purposes because of the strong risk that [the] veto would be exercised.'⁸⁵ The British Cs-in-C in the Far East felt similarly, and were anxious that Tory's assurances meant that the Malaysians were being given a veto on the introduction of nuclear weapons in any circumstances (including an attack on any other UK territory in the area, such as Hong Kong). The Chiefs of Staff could only confirm that this was indeed the case, but this was simply the 'recognition of [the] political consequences implicit in an agreement with a Sovereign Independent State.'⁸⁶ Sandys was keen to stress that while agreeing that some assurances would need to be offered to the Malaysians, the UK should not concede its 'unfettered right' to use the Singapore bases.⁸⁷

The reservations coming from senior officials and military officers based in Singapore were not enough, however, to deter the CRO from seeking and receiving sanction to go ahead and make explicit the Malayan right of veto.⁸⁸ Moreover, the CRO was also prepared to concede a further point, by allowing the Tunku if necessary to make the assurances public to meet further domestic political criticism of the defence agreement.⁸⁹ On 11 September, Tory saw Razak, now installed as Malaya's first Minister of Defence, and handed over a written memorandum which confirmed the terms of the assurances. This

committed the UK Government to consult with and seek Malayan agreement 'before adopting any proposal to stockpile nuclear weapons in Malaya or to deliver them from Malayan bases.' Moreover, although the UK Government wanted to avoid any unnecessary mention of the subject, it consented to the Tunku making public reference to the assurances should he find it politically desirable. At the same time, the Malayan Government was asked not to press the British for an assurance that nuclear weapons would never be used from Malayan bases.⁹⁰

V

Both Scott and Sandys soon made their feelings clear that the assurances offered to the Tunku had been made in haste, were more generous than required, and that the repercussions in Singapore could be serious. After his arrival in Singapore on 10 September during the return leg of his tour, Sandys had joined a meeting of the British Defence Coordination Committee (Far East) to discuss the issue. Here, the Minister of Defence professed to be 'particularly concerned' that the assurances were 'more extensive than he had expected' and had in effect given a 'complete veto' to the Federation Government over the use of nuclear weapons from Malaya. Asked by Sandys how important were the Malayan bases for nuclear operations, Air Marshal Bandon, the C-in-C Far East Air Force, noted that while stockpiling nuclear weapons in Malaya would not be necessary, the use of airfields able to deliver nuclear air strikes in support of SEATO was important. Targets in northern Thailand were 'critical' for which Butterworth would be 'essential'.⁹¹

Following the meeting, Sandys let Lennox-Boyd and Home know in no uncertain terms that he believed there had been 'undue alarm' in London over recent events, and that the latest assurances went beyond what was 'necessary or desirable'. While allowing that prior notice and discussion of any plans to hold or use nuclear weapons in Malaya might have been conceded, Sandys saw no specific need for Malayan consent to such action. The latest promise to seek Malayan concurrence had, the Cs-in-C Far East thought, 'appreciably impaired the value' of the defence agreement. Nevertheless, Sandys did not feel the assurances would 'seriously inconvenience' the UK for two reasons: firstly, Malaya was unlikely to be the place in South East Asia chosen to stockpile any nuclear weapons, and secondly, as he candidly observed,

if the situation were so grave as to necessitate the use of nuclear weapons we should doubtless not allow legal niceties to stand in the way of our taking whatever action was necessary to defend the interests of the free world including Malaya in this area.

Underscoring his real worry, Sandys stressed that his comments regarding Malaya did not apply to Singapore. If similar assurances were given there, 'our whole defensive position in this area would be completely and utterly

undermined.’ Above all, he saw freedom to stockpile nuclear weapons in Singapore as something which could not under any circumstances be conceded.⁹²

The sensitivities over the position in Singapore were also reflected in differences of opinion between Sandys, Scott and the Colonial Office over what the Minister of Defence should say while he was in the colony. He had been primed for his visit with a number of talking points supplied by the CO and CRO. ‘Public opinion in Singapore,’ one official explained, ‘is as much engaged in this as in the Federation, and assurances that we will consult the Federation Government because they are independent, whatever calming effect they may have in Kuala Lumpur, may open up apprehensions in Singapore that as they are not independent and we remain completely responsible for defence in the island we do not recognise similar obligations to them.’ There were ‘considerable risks’ present, not least as unlike in Malaya the Singapore government did not have solid electoral support and was faced with strong opposition in the colony’s legislative assembly. Moreover, it was important to remember that Malayan public opinion could be ‘made’ in Singapore, and

if the controversy is kept alive then our assurances to the Federation may lose some of their virtue, as people in Malaya are likely to see little difference in the danger to which they may conceive themselves exposed if nuclear weapons are stored at Changi or Tengah rather than Butterworth.

The basic problem was that Singapore was likely to resent any evidence of inferior treatment to Malaya on such a critical matter.⁹³ The Colonial Office had been warming to the idea of Sandys making public reference while on his visit to taking Singapore’s views into account when making decisions over defence in order to meet potential criticisms of unequal treatment. However, this whole idea was opposed by both Scott and the Governor, Sir Robert Black. Both saw this as the start of a slippery slope that would lead to demands from the opposition parties for similar assurances to be given as those just offered to the Malaysians and they wanted to stand on Britain’s existing rights.⁹⁴

Sandys’ presence in Singapore also raised other problems. Given all the warnings recently issued, as well as the obvious repercussions of his remarks in Australia, CO and CRO officials were dismayed when the MoD showed them the draft of a proposed radio talk that Sandys had planned to deliver while in Singapore. With its outspoken stress on the role of nuclear deterrence in British defence policy it was regarded as entirely unsuitable:

Rejoicing in the possession of the deterrent and referring to its immediate availability is not likely to bring great comfort to the peoples of Malaya and Singapore, who probably look on these weapons with what one might call the “Hiroshima” mentality.

The reference in the Minister of Defence’s draft text to the ‘obliteration of a potential aggressor if he dared to use such weapons’ was felt unwise as it

'might prove a boomerang. We have to bear in mind that a considerable number of the inhabitants of Singapore are more friendly towards the potential aggressor than they are to us.'⁹⁵

While the CO and CRO preferred that no broadcast at all be delivered, a compromise was finally reached whereby all references to nuclear weapons were removed from Sandys' script. Reporters continued to probe Sandys while in Singapore, and in press interviews he now stressed that Britain's main contribution to the defence of South East Asia would still be with conventional forces, with no decisions yet made on 'how or where' nuclear weapons might be stockpiled in the region. Trying to deflect direct queries, Sandys attempted to generalise about the role of nuclear deterrence in defence policy but made a point of denying he had ever said it was the UK's intention to base nuclear weapons in Malaya.⁹⁶ The day after Sandys's departure Lim Yew Hock also tried to avoid the issue when questioned by the Singapore press; while admitting that the UK had exclusive powers over defence under the new constitutional arrangements, he said he felt sure that Britain would not want to consider making Singapore a base for nuclear weapons without giving notice and consulting with the Singapore government, whose views would certainly have to be taken into account in any such decision.⁹⁷

With Sandys at last on his way home, the CRO was robust in defence of its actions over the assurances given to Malaya. Both the Tunku and Razak were reported to be very satisfied with the British commitment to consult, and it had been useful in reassuring their Cabinet colleagues. 'Essential point was to bring home to Malaysians over-riding necessity to avoid statement that Malayan Government would in no circumstances agree to allow introduction or use of nuclear weapons,' Tory explained. 'In order to nail this point it was necessary to come clean about consultation and agreement.'⁹⁸

On 18 September 1957 the terms of the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement were finally published in a White Paper.⁹⁹ In its coverage, *The Times* fastened onto a cryptic reference in its article IX about the need to consult the Federation when 'major changes in the character or deployment' of the UK forces were contemplated and saw this as being connected with Malayan unwillingness to have nuclear weapons deployed in their country.¹⁰⁰ The result of the ratification debate held in the Federal Assembly at the beginning of October gave some cause for satisfaction to British officials as the defence agreement was endorsed without opposition – the UMNO Alliance, after all, had held 51 out of 52 elected seats in the chamber since the elections of 1955. At the same time there was no room for complacency: Tory, the High Commissioner, warned Macmillan soon after that there was an 'irreducible hard core of neutralism amongst the younger members of UMNO which may develop into something later.' Amongst some of its regional branches, UMNO's Malay members had expressed their doubts over the close alignment with British policy entailed by the agreement, but the Tunku had reportedly threatened to resign if these

concerns were ventilated in the Assembly debate (and he was even reported to be ready to die for the agreement). In the debate itself, the Tunku reiterated that no provision was made in the agreement for nuclear bases in Malaya, or for facilities for nuclear experiments, while other speakers distanced Malayan adherence to the agreement from any future commitment to SEATO membership. After the ratification vote, the defence agreement was finally signed by the Tunku and Tory on 12 October. While this was clearly a positive development, for Tory recent events had served to highlight the point that the Tunku had gone as far as he could with his colleagues in UMNO. Britain, he advised, could not expect Malaya to join SEATO in the immediate future, and perhaps not until after the next federal elections which were due in 1959.¹⁰¹

VI

This article has shown the disruptive effects that Britain's nuclear policies could have on the process of decolonisation in South East Asia. During the mid-1950s, Britain had become a leading member of two key Cold War regional alliances, the Baghdad Pact and SEATO. Under pressure to make a tangible military commitment to both, yet intent on reducing the burden of maintaining expensive conventional forces, British defence planners instead turned to the UK's fledgling nuclear capabilities to make their contribution to alliance military planning. In the Asian context, the irony of this position was that nuclear planning – including the provision of facilities for nuclear-capable aircraft – occurred in a region where sensitivity to nuclear weapons issues was high. The Western powers could be accused by local nationalist critics of racial callousness in planning to use nuclear weapons against a non-white enemy, a charge which developed from the way the atomic bomb had been used against Japanese cities in August 1945. The Cabinet's discussions in early 1956 about the dangers of adopting nuclear planning assumptions in SEATO if given wide publicity showed that British officials could see connections between such issues and the negotiations soon to take place over the Anglo-Malayan defence agreement.

That agreement was to assume such importance, moreover, because perhaps the most significant marker of the transfer of power to a former colony making it an independent state was control over its own defence and external affairs. Negotiating defence agreements which gave special rights and privileges to the former colonial power, including the use of military bases to fulfil that state's wider international and Cold War obligations, could have the effect of undermining the position of friendly post-colonial elites and prejudice the chances of longer-term political stability on which the continuing presence of those very bases would rely. For Tunku Abdul Rahman, along with other senior UMNO leaders, it was essential that Malayan independence involved some tangible control over foreign policy and defence matters, meaning that

an assertive public line would have to be taken on nuclear matters and the right of veto.

To Sir Robert Scott, the episode over the issuing of assurances after the Sandys press conference in Canberra underlined the difficulties of maintaining overseas bases in the face of critical or even hostile local opinion, where the nuclear dimension to the British presence was likely to inflame the situation even further. 'In the long run,' he had noted in early September 1957, 'it must be recognised that there are two operational bases in this area where we need not fear any political restrictions. One is Australia and the other is a royal naval carrier at sea.'¹⁰² However, in the circumstances faced in 1956/57, the immediate requirements of British defence policy, in the context of SEATO commitments and the enhanced reliance on nuclear weapons represented by the Sandys Defence White Paper, and the constraints on the means available, necessitated dependence on bases in areas where anti-colonial sensibilities were likely to be aroused. Sandys' remarks in Canberra were therefore to hit a particularly raw nerve given the background of the defence agreement negotiations, where the use of Malayan bases had already proved an important point of contention. Into this mix was also thrown the general sensitivities in Asia surrounding nuclear issues noted above, particularly in the aftermath of the Bravo nuclear test of 1954, and given the rhetoric associated with the Eisenhower administration's policy of 'massive retaliation' where nuclear weapons were to be treated as 'conventional' for military planning purposes. In May/June 1957 Britain had also conducted the first three shots in the high-profile *Grapple* thermonuclear test series in the Central Pacific, adding further to the impression that British defence policy was becoming increasingly nuclearized.¹⁰³

A result of this confluence was a clash of priorities between the MoD on the one side, and the Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Offices on the other. Within the CRO and Colonial Office there was a belief that treating the Malayan position with due regard was the best way of securing Malaya's cooperation and friendship after independence. With that in mind, officials in both departments favoured making genuine concessions over the issue of assurances regarding consultation and the principle of consent. However, the position of the Cs-in-C Far East, along with the Chiefs of Staff in London, and backed by Sandys as Minister of Defence, and Scott in Singapore, was that such concessions were unnecessary and unwise. They were also very concerned by the precedent that might be set when it came to the operation of the British bases in Singapore, particularly with the island set to gain a greater measure of self-government in the years ahead. Showing no sense of contrition, a belligerent Sandys had even been ready to pronounce further on Britain's reliance on nuclear deterrence in the region when he visited Singapore. Nevertheless, British CRO officials pushed back, and a planned stopover by Sandys in Malaya on the return leg from Australia was even cancelled. Ultimately it was

Macmillan who had to intervene to settle the inter-bureaucratic disputes that had developed, with the Prime Minister siding with the CO and CRO against the MoD on the issues. In the rush of events that accompanied independence in August/September 1957, and with British officials troubled by signs that the Tunku and his senior colleagues would continue to make categorical statements about use of the bases, the assurances over consultation were given to the Malaysians.

As for the basing of UK nuclear weapons in Malaya, this never seems to have occurred, with the British authorities focusing instead their attention on Singapore, where control over the colony's defence and external affairs was due to remain in British hands even after the planned introduction of internal self-government in 1959. In February 1958, the Cabinet's Defence Committee gave approval for the development of RAF Tengah, including runway lengthening and the provision of permanent nuclear storage facilities.¹⁰⁴ The intention was for this facility eventually to allow a stock of up to 48 Red Beards to be accommodated at the airbase, which could be used either by V-bombers flown out to Singapore in an emergency, or by a Canberra squadron at Tengah when it was re-equipped with a nuclear-capable variant. The facilities still planned at RAF Butterworth in Malaya to support Operation *Mastodon* were designed not for long-term storage but for the temporary housing of weapons which would be flown out aboard V-bombers before Tengah was available, and there is no evidence that such nuclear deployments ever took place, although V-bombers with conventional weapons on training flights did pass through Butterworth on later occasions. In fact, arguments between the Air Ministry and the Treasury were still holding up financial approval for the temporary storage works in September 1959. Ironically, and to the frustration of the Air Ministry, the Treasury used the political sensitivity in Malaya of the issue of nuclear storage and basing as an argument against any such expenditure at Butterworth, as it could prove nugatory.¹⁰⁵

Over plans for the development of RAF Tengah on Singapore, further disagreements occurred in March 1958 concerning whether to inform the Tunku of the extension of the runway to allow modern jet aircraft, including V-bombers, to operate with maximum effectiveness from the base. The CRO felt that in view of Malayan sensitivities over nuclear issues he should be told (and that he might come to learn about the works from other sources, including from Lim Yew Hock, the Chief Minister in Singapore), but faced strong opposition to the proposal from Scott, the local Cs-in-C, and the new Governor of Singapore, Sir William Goode. Eventually it was decided to say nothing to the Tunku, officials in Singapore pointing out that Lim himself had not been informed in specific terms about the development of Tengah, and that Lim had even made clear that he preferred that any such defence matters should be reserved for the British authorities, not least so that he could answer press queries without any need for evasiveness.¹⁰⁶ With several subsequent delays

and hold-ups, it would not be until August 1962 that Macmillan was finally in a position to authorise the deployment of the first Red Beard weapons to the newly-built storage facilities at Tengah. One of the reasons advanced for why the decision was best taken at that point was that delay might complicate the whole process as the new Malaysian federation, incorporating Singapore, was due to come into existence in 1963, and that the assurances on consultation delivered to the Tunku in 1957 over nuclear basing arrangements might then have to be invoked.¹⁰⁷

The analogies made between the question of assurances for Malaya and those negotiated between Britain and the United States in 1951 over the use of American bases in the UK were a feature of the Whitehall debates seen in 1956/57. During the talks over the terms of the defence agreement, British officials, including the Colonial Secretary, Lennox-Boyd, recognised the parallels that existed between their own insistence on a 'joint decision' – and so a UK veto – when it came to the use of US airbases in Britain, and the right of the new Malayan Government, enjoying full independence, to exercise a similar veto power over the British use of airbases on its territory. The pursuit of such a veto derived from very similar considerations – in the British case, from the concern that precipitate (perhaps pre-emptive) US action, taken without the sanction of the UK government, would draw nuclear retaliation from the Soviet Union against the vulnerable population centres of the British Isles, and in the Malayan case, from anxieties that British use of the Federation's airbases in a regional war involving China could trigger reprisals against Malaya. Conservative governments in Britain during the 1950s were certainly supportive of the US military presence in the UK and a close alliance with Washington but also wanted to retain at least some measure of control over how their sovereign territory was utilised, especially when the consequences could be so catastrophic; they also had domestic political critics on the left who would be alert to any abdication of the crucial power of decision to the Americans.¹⁰⁸ The same could be said for the UMNO leadership, which was acutely conscious of its dependence on Britain for its security from both internal and external threats, but keen to stand by its newly won sovereign rights, and wary of the internal dissent that could be generated by appearing to grant the UK licence to operate as it desired.

On one level the chain of events triggered by Sandys' remarks in August 1957, and the issuing of the assurances, was highly revealing of the new balance in the relationship between the Malayan authorities in Kuala Lumpur and a colonial power which was relinquishing authority but wanted to retain as many rights as possible, not least to meet its defence obligations in the Asian Cold War. Moreover, the controversy brought home to British officials that any attempt to push Malaya into early or premature membership of SEATO would face major domestic political opposition, and place UMNO's leaders in an untenable position. Yet as Sandys himself made perfectly clear in

his private comments, the assurances delivered in 1957 ('legal niceties' in his words) would be unlikely to present any practical impediment to the UK taking matters into its own hands if faced with a regional limited war, and to employ its Malayan based forces, including V-bombers operating from Butterworth, according to military expediency. The assurances given to Malaya, as with those offered by the Americans to Britain in 1951, were therefore largely symbolic in nature, providing a screen behind which host governments could protect themselves from some of the domestic political backlash that could accompany alignment with their more powerful ally, making both sets only 'assurances of a kind', always subject to the circumstances prevailing at the time.

Notes

1. See Canberra telegram No 44 to Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), 23 Aug 1957, FCO 141/14707, The National Archives (TNA); all documentary sources are drawn from the TNA unless otherwise indicated. Various accounts of what Sandys actually said at his press conference circulated at the time but the quotations here are taken from an official transcript and accord with other sources. See also "Nuclear Arms for Defence of South-East Asia: Mr Sandys Surveys Vital Area," *The Times*, 21 Aug 1957; "SEATO to get Arms: Sandys Says Nuclear Weapons Will be Supplied to Units," *New York Times*, 21 Aug 1957. That Sandys had also said that he hoped nuclear weapons would never have to be used in South East Asia was understandably lost in the furore that was to greet his remarks, and the chain of events which they triggered.
2. There is a bare summary of the episode provided in *British Documents on the End of Empire: Malaya, Part III*, 409, footnote 4. Reference to the controversy is made in Darby, *British Defence Policy East of Suez*, 121; also in Chin, *Defence of Malaysia and Singapore*, 33. The fullest account of the repercussions of Sandys' remarks thus far is given in Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia*, 226–32; this article broadens and deepens the scope of Hack's treatment.
3. For early hints at the possible connections see Holland, "The Imperial Factor in British Strategies from Attlee to Macmillan, 1945–63," 179–80. Two more recent and suggestive articles which start to address this agenda are Butler, "The Central African Federation and Britain's Post-War Nuclear Programme: Reconsidering the Connections," and Hill, "Britain, West Africa and 'The New Nuclear Imperialism': Decolonisation and Development during French Tests."
4. J. D. Hennings letter to J. F. Hosie, FED 621/1/01, and attached note, 20 Sept 1957, DEFE 7/688.
5. Sandys lacks a substantive biography, though see Betts, *Duncan Sandys and British Nuclear Policy-Making*; contemporaries were said to consider him 'an abrasive and forthright hatchet man,' see Ludlow, "Sandys, (Edwin) Duncan, Baron Duncan-Sandys."
6. Kuala Lumpur telegram No 117 to CRO, 24 Aug 1957, DO 35/9785.
7. See Wynn, *RAF Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Forces*, 126–7; on Read Beard see Moore, *Nuclear Illusion, Nuclear Reality*, 112–16.
8. Reported in Kuala Lumpur telegram No 107 to CRO, 22 Aug 1957, PREM 11/1767.

9. "Arming U.K. Troops with A-Weapons in Malaya: Move Will Be Opposed." *The Times of India*, Aug 24, 1957, p7.
10. See "No Atomic Bases in Malaya: Reply to Mr Sandys." *The Manchester Guardian*, Aug 23, 1957, p1.
11. "A-Arms: "Britain Must Ask Us First" – Tengku." *The Straits Times*, Aug 24, 1957, p1, accessed at <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19570824-1.2.6>.
12. Reuter's report, Kuala Lumpur, Aug 23, 1957, DEFE 7/688; and see also "Arming U.K. Troops with A-Weapons in Malaya: Move Will Be Opposed." *The Times of India*, Aug 24, 1957, p7.
13. See Sandys to Powell, FOS 38, 1 Sept 1957, PREM 11/1767.
14. See "Mr Sandys Explains." *The Times*, Aug 24, 1957, p6.
15. "Tactical Bombs." *The Manchester Guardian*, Aug 26, 1957, p4.
16. See, for example, "More A-Tests By Britain Soon," *The Straits Times*, Aug 30, 1957, p1, accessed at <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19570830-1.2.6>. For the *Antler* trials see, Arnold and Smith, *Britain, Australia and the Bomb*, 189–205; and on the first *Grapple* shots in May 1957, Arnold, *Britain and the H-Bomb*, 142–50. See also Crawford, "A Political H-Bomb: New Zealand and the British Thermonuclear Weapon Tests of 1957–58."
17. Wellington telegram No 362 to CRO, 5 Sept 1957, DEFE 7/688.
18. On this general subject see Rees, "The 1957 Sandys White Paper: New Priorities in British Defence Policy?"; and Navias, "'Vested Interests and Vanished Dreams': Duncan Sandys, the Chiefs of Staff and the 1957 White Paper".
19. See Darby, *British Defence Policy East of Suez*, 118–9.
20. GEN 606/1st meeting, 9 July 1957, CAB 21/131.
21. Notes on a meeting in the Cabinet Room at Parliament House at 2.30pm on Monday, 19th Aug 1957, D1197/32G, FO 371/129359.
22. For the repercussions of the Bravo test, see Dingman, "Alliance in Crisis: The Lucky Dragon Incident and Japanese-American Relations,"; Smith-Norris, "'Only as Dust in the Face of the Wind': An Analysis of the BRAVO Nuclear Incident in the Pacific, 1954," Jones, *After Hiroshima: The United States, Race and Nuclear Weapons in Asia, 1945–1965*, 181–239.
23. For extensive treatment of this theme see Jones, *After Hiroshima*.
24. Bowles, *The New Dimensions of Peace*, 239.
25. See Fenton, *To Cage the Red Dragon: SEATO and the Defence of Southeast Asia, 1955–1965*.
26. See, for example, "Report on 2nd conference of SEATO Military Staff Planners," Annex to COS(55)349, 23 Dec 1955, DEFE 5/63. And in general, Jones, "The Radford Bombshell: Anglo-American-Australian relations, nuclear weapons and the defence of South East Asia, 1954–57."
27. See DC(55)54, 25 Nov 1955, CAB 131/16; also COS(57)264, "Provision of a Nuclear Capability in the Far East," note by the Chief of the Air Staff, 5 Dec 1957, DEFE 7/688.
28. Early nuclear counter-action in response to a Chinese Communist offensive was endorsed by the SEATO Military Advisers in early 1956; see COS(56)87, 25 Feb 1956, DEFE 5/65; and Singapore (from Scott) telegram No 9 Saving to FO, 18 Feb 1956, D1071/147G, FO 371/123221.
29. See, e.g., GEN 606/1st meeting, 9 July 1957, CAB 21/131.
30. CP(56)57, "SEATO: Nuclear Weapons," 27 Feb 1956, CAB 129/80. Home had earlier alerted the Prime Minister to this problem in a similarly phrased minute which noted the possibility of 'violent repercussions' and repeated that the decision raised the

- whole issue of 'white superiority in its acutest form', see Home minute for Eden, 27/56, 25 Feb 1956, DEFE 13/228, and in D1071/165G, FO 371/123221.
31. CM(56)17th Conclusions, item 1, 28 Feb 1956, CAB 128/30.
 32. FO telegram No 1125 to Washington, 29 Feb 1956, D1071/165G, FO 371/123221; and see also FO brief for Lloyd discussions with Dulles, n.d. (but c. late Feb 1956), D10345/4, FO 371/123208.
 33. For general coverage of the defence agreement negotiations see Chin, *Defence of Malaya and Singapore*, 23–37.
 34. See minutes of an interdepartmental meeting of 9 Jan 1956, NDMS/M(56)1, 16 Jan 1956, DEFE 7/493, as reproduced in *Malaya, III*, 249–51.
 35. See MCC(DS)(56) 2nd Meeting, Federation of Malaya Constitutional Conference: Defence and Internal Security Committee, 20 Jan 1956; MCC(DS)(56)5, Federation of Malaya Constitutional Conference: Defence and Internal Security Committee: draft memorandum, 28 Jan 1956; MCC(56) 4th Meeting, Federation of Malaya Constitutional Conference: Summary Record of Fourth Plenary session, 31 Jan 1956, CAB 133/142. For the Colonial Secretary's summary, see CP(56)47, "Federation of Malaya," memorandum by Lennox-Boyd, Annex C, "Notes on the main conclusions and recommendations of the conference," 21 Feb 1956, CAB 129/79, as reproduced in Stockwell, *Malaya, III*, 264.
 36. Record of interview between Scott and Tunku Abdul Rahman, 28 Feb 1956, DEFE 7/494; see *Malaya, III*, 267, note 3.
 37. Parker minute for Monckton, "Negotiation of a defence agreement with Malaya," 28 March 1956, and Appendix A, Draft defence agreement with Malaya, DEFE 7/494, as reproduced in Stockwell, *Malaya, III*, 268–71.
 38. Parker to Powell, HP 132, 23 May 1956; and see also Singapore (from Scott) telegram No 53 to Lennox-Boyd, 24 May 1956, DEFE 7/495.
 39. JP(56)115(Final), "Limited War," memorandum by the Joint Planning Staff, 26 June 1956, DEFE 6/36; and DC(56)18, "Limited War," note by the Chiefs of Staff, 4 July 1956, CAB 131/17. The COS were described by one Foreign Office minute as being 'firmly of the opinion that a nuclear effort would have to be made and that we should have to contribute to it,' G. L. McDermott minute for Selwyn Lloyd, 9 July 1956, ZP5/48G, FO 371/123187.
 40. Cole minute for Way, 11/107/57, 22 Nov 1957, DEFE 7/688.
 41. See Appendix B to Annex I, "Limited War with China," attached to PR(56)33, "Forces for Purposes Other Than Preventing War in Europe," MoD memorandum, 25 July 1956, CAB 134/1315.
 42. See Air Vice Marshal H. D. Jackman minute for ACAS(P), "Medium Bomber Force – Overseas Deployment," 22 Aug 1956, AIR 2/14579.
 43. Air Commodore E. S. Butler minute for ACAS(P), "Deployment of Medium Bomber Force," 10 Dec 1956, AIR 2/14579.
 44. Home letter to Head, 14 Dec 1956, DEFE 13/228.
 45. See COS(57)45, note by the Secretary, "Brief for the UK Military Adviser to SEATO," 22 Feb 1957, DEFE 5/74. See also Secretary COS Committee minute for Chief of the Air Staff, "Statements to Australian and New Zealand Chiefs of Staff and to other SEATO Powers on United Kingdom Policy," 28 Feb 1957, AIR 20/9461.
 46. See telegram from US delegation at the SEATO Council meeting to the State Department, 12 March 1957, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Volume XXII*, 309.
 47. Burnett letter to Maguire, Prickett and Cooper, "FEAF Airfields – Storage for Nuclear Weapons," 8 March 1957; Melvin letter to Maguire, "FEAF Airfields – Storage for Nuclear Weapons," 3 July 1957, AIR 2/13781.

48. Whittuck to Serpell, 6 Nov 1957, DEFE 7/688.
49. Command directive from Boyle to Bandon, 19 July 1957, AIR 23/8701.
50. See, for example, Bandon to Hudleston, FE/TS 66/21/Air Plans, 20 Dec 1957, AIR 20/9462.
51. Hudleston to Bandon, 25 April 1958, AIR 20/9462. In fact, the Air Ministry estimated that the earliest period when nuclear-armed V-bombers might realistically be deployed to South East Asia as part of *Mastodon* would not be until April/May 1960. For more on this whole topic, see Jones, "Up the Garden Path? Britain's Nuclear History in the Far East, 1954–1962."
52. Colonial Office brief, c. 1 Nov 1956; record of a meeting held at the Colonial Office, 2 Nov 1956, DO 35/6264.
53. See Gowing, *Independence and Deterrence: Britain and Atomic Energy, 1945–1952, Volume I*, 316–8; Young, "No Blank Cheque: Anglo-American (Mis)understandings and the Use of the English Airbases"; Jones, "Great Britain, the United States, and Consultation over Use of the Atomic Bomb, 1950–1954."
54. See, e.g., CO unnumbered telegram to Minister of Defence party on tour (from Profumo for Sandys), 30 Aug 1957, DO 35/9785.
55. Chadwick minute for Snelling, "Malayan Defence Agreement and the Future of Commonwealth troops in Malaya," 28 Nov 1956, DO 35/6264.
56. See, for example, MISC/M(56)176: Minutes of a meeting held in the Ministry of Defence, 28 Nov 1956, DO 35/6264.
57. J. B. Johnston minute, 29 Nov 1956, CO 1030/829.
58. See Singapore (from Scott) telegram No 139 to Lennox-Boyd, 8 Dec 1956, DO 35/6264.
59. Chadwick minute for Bishop, 11 Dec 1956, DO 35/6264.
60. J. B. Johnston minute, 29 Nov 1956, CO 1030/829.
61. J. D. Hennings brief, "Malayan Defence Agreement Negotiations," 10 Dec 1956, DO 35/6264.
62. See Singapore (from Scott) telegram No 139 to Lennox-Boyd, 8 Dec 1956, DO 35/6264; COS(56)133rd meeting, item 2, 18 Dec 1956, DEFE 4/93; BDCC(Far East) to COS, SEACOS 116, 18 Dec 1956, DO 35/6264.
63. These points are summarised in Lennox-Boyd telegram No 260 to Singapore (for Scott), 24 Dec 1956, CO 1030/829.
64. Note of a meeting held in the Colonial Office on 20th Dec 1956, CO 1030/829.
65. Chadwick minute, 10 Dec 1956, DO 35/6264.
66. Note of a meeting held in the Colonial Office on 21st Dec 1956, CO 1030/829.
67. See Lennox-Boyd telegram No 260 to Singapore (for Scott), 24 Dec 1956; and COS (57)3, "Malayan Defence Agreement," note by the Colonial Office and Ministry of Defence, 2 Jan 1957, CO 1030/829.
68. British Defence Coordination Committee (Far East) to COS, SEACOS 137, 17 July 1957, DO 35/9785.
69. See, e.g., COS(57)67th meeting, item 7, 22 Aug 1957, DO 35/9785.
70. J. F. Hosie minute for Powell, 23 Aug 1957, DO 35/9785.
71. Powell to Dickson, DW31, 23 Aug 1957, DO 35/9785.
72. CO telegram No 335 to Kuala Lumpur (for MacGillivray), 23 Aug 1957, PREM 11/1767.
73. Singapore (from Scott) telegram No 86 to CO, 26 Aug 1957, PREM 11/1767.
74. Sandys to Lennox-Boyd, FOS 31, 27 Aug 1957, DO 35/9785.
75. For background see, for example, Chin, *Defence of Malaysia and Singapore*, 38–44.
76. Kuala Lumpur telegram No 274 to CO, 24 Aug 1957, CO 1030/834.

77. CO telegram No 336 to Kuala Lumpur, 25 Aug 1957, CO 1030/834. The carefully composed confidential letters between the Tunku and Lennox-Boyd are in the same file.
78. Kuala Lumpur telegram No 138 to CRO, 2 Sept 1957, CO 1030/834.
79. CRO telegram No 109 to Kuala Lumpur, 30 Aug 1957, CO 1030/834.
80. Kuala Lumpur telegram No 121 to CRO, 27 Aug 1957, DO 35/9785.
81. Ibid.
82. Profumo unnumbered telegram for Sandys, 30 Aug 1957, DEFE 7/688.
83. CRO telegram No 95 to Kuala Lumpur, 29 Aug 1957, PREM 11/1767.
84. See Kuala Lumpur telegram No 129 to CRO, 29 Aug 1957, DO 35/9785; Reuter's report, Kuala Lumpur, 28 Aug 1957, DEFE 7/688.
85. Singapore (from Scott) telegram No 9 to CRO, 3 Sept 1957, PREM 11/1767.
86. BDCC(Far East) to COS, SEACOS 139, 4 Sept 1957; COS to BDCC(Far East), COSSEA 22, 5 Sept 1957, DO 35/9785.
87. Sandys to Powell, FOS 38, 1 Sept 1957, PREM 11/1767.
88. For London's reaffirmation, see CRO telegram No 172 to Kuala Lumpur, 9 Sept 1957, DEFE 7/688.
89. On this point see Kuala Lumpur telegram No 135 to CRO, 1 Sept 1957, PREM 11/1767.
90. Kuala Lumpur (from Tory) telegram No 179 to CRO, 11 Sept 1957, DO 35/9785.
91. BDCC(FE)(57)211th meeting, 11 Sept 1957, DEFE 13/20.
92. Sandys to MoD (for Colonial Secretary and Commonwealth Secretary), FOS 61, 13 Sept 1957, PREM 11/1767.
93. J. D. Hennings letter to Hosie, 3 Sept 1957, DO 35/9785.
94. Singapore (from Scott) telegram No 96 to CO, 13 Sept 1957, DEFE 7/688.
95. Chadwick letter to Lawrence-Wilson, 4 Sept 1957, DO 35/9785.
96. See "British Contribution to Defence of South-East Asia: Mr Sandys on Major Role for Conventional Arms," *The Times*, Sept 16, 1957, p7.
97. See Singapore (from Scott) telegram No 100 to CO, 17 Sept 1957, DEFE 7/688. And see, "Atomic base? We hope to be told – Lim," *The Straits Times*, Sept 17, 1957, p1, accessed at: <https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19570917-1.2.13>.
98. Kuala Lumpur (from Tory) telegram No 188 to CRO, 16 Sept 1957, DEFE 7/688.
99. *Proposed Agreement on External Defence and Mutual Assistance between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Federation of Malaya*, Cmd 263, Sept 1957.
100. "Malaya Defence Pact to Cover Far East," *The Times*, Sept 19, 1957, p8.
101. Kuala Lumpur (from Tory) telegram No 3 to Macmillan, 12 Oct 1957, PREM 11/1767; see also Chin, *Defence of Malaysia and Singapore*, 31–5.
102. Singapore (from Scott) telegram No 9 to CRO, 3 Sept 1957, DEFE 7/688.
103. See Arnold, *Britain and the H-Bomb*, op cit.
104. See Trend minute for Macmillan, 19 Feb 1958, PREM 11/4475; D(58)3rd meeting, 20 Feb 1958, CAB 131/19.
105. See, for example, W. H. Alexander letter to W. A. R. Wolfe, 6 July 1959; W. F. Mumford letter to Wolfe, 21 Sept 1959, DEFE 7/688.
106. See Dickson minute for Way, "Tengah Airfield," WFD/290, 13 Jan 1958, DEFE 7/688; Snelling letter to Mottershead, 17 Feb 1958; W. P. Oliver letter to D. J. P. Lee (Secretary, COS Committee), 5 March 1958; Larmour minute for Snelling, 20 March 1958; CRO telegram No 332 to Kuala Lumpur, 22 March 1958; Singapore (from Scott) telegram No 8 Saving to CRO, 24 March 1958; Larmour minute for Snelling

and Oliver, 24 March 1958; Singapore (from Goode) telegram No 40 to CO, 25 March 1958; CRO telegram No 356 to Kuala Lumpur, 1 April 1958, DO 35/9866.

107. See Jones, “Up the Garden Path?” 327.

108. See, for example, “U.S. Bombers in Britain: Joint Decision on Military Use,” *The Times*, Nov 29, 1957, p14; “Scope of Agreement: Action from U.S. Bases,” *The Times*, Dec 13, 1957, p4.

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