



London SW1A 2AH

3 February 1984

Indian Request for Advice on Plans for the Removal of Dissident
Sikhs from the Golden Temple

The Indian Intelligence Co-ordinator, _____ has sent an urgent request to _____ for advice on an Indian plan for possible action against the dissident Sikhs currently occupying parts of the Golden Temple in Amritsa. The Foreign Secretary believes that the Prime Minister would wish to be aware of the approach and our proposed response.

Representatives of various extremist Sikh groups have, over the last year or so, taken up residence within the Golden Temple; some of them are believed to be armed. By a convention dating back to the British period in India, representatives of the Indian authorities, including the police and armed forces, do not enter the Temple precincts in uniform, but _____ understand from _____ that a contingency plan for possible action against the extremists is being drawn up by the Indians. The Indians have requested that _____ provide an expert to advise on this contingency plan.

The fact that this request has been made personally by _____ underlines not only its delicacy but the importance attached to it by the Indian Government. Given the nature of the request, and from what is known of the role played by _____ it seems likely that Mrs Gandhi would have been informed before the request was made. In putting the request _____ made it clear that it had not been made lightly and that he was looking for help from them on a matter of real importance to the Indians.

The High Commissioner in New Delhi fully supports the proposal. He has commented that the request demonstrates the close relationship between Britain and India. A positive response would earn a good deal of credit; at the same time Mrs Gandhi would find it hard to understand a refusal.

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that it is of some importance that a response should be given quickly, not least because they understand that the latest developments at the Temple, where the rift between the moderates and extremists has now widened, may soon force the Indian Government's hand.

The Foreign Secretary believes that, in the interests of our bilateral relations with India, we should respond positively to the request. He has therefore authorised discuss the request with the [redacted] and with the MOD and, subject to the agreement of the Prime Minister and (if the visit is to be made by a member of the armed services) of the Secretary of State for Defence, to make arrangements with the Indians for an early visit, either by [redacted] or by another suitably qualified adviser. [redacted] would make clear to the Indians that the true origin of the advice must be adequately safeguarded and that HMG could not contemplate assistance beyond that which might be given by the adviser. The Foreign Secretary would inform the Prime Minister of the outcome of the adviser's visit; and, in view of possible repercussions among the Sikh community in this country, the Home Secretary would be informed if the Indians seemed likely to proceed with their plan.

I am copying this letter to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

Handwritten signature

(B J P Fall)
Private Secretary

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