

1919

C.S.

**CONFIDENTIAL.**

DEF/NCA/1#4

No. *C. 12*

*S. A. S. Circ.*

SUBJECT.

1919

*9<sup>th</sup> August*

*Admiralty Oiling Stations*

Previous Paper.

MINUTES.

*H.E.*

*? no action at present.*

*T.M.F.*

*26.11.19.*

*no.*

*T.R.F.*

*Nov 26/19*

Subsequent Paper.

C.12/19

CIRCULAR.

CONFIDENTIAL.



Downing Street,

9th August, 1919.

Sir,

With reference to my predecessor's Confidential Circular despatch of the 10th August, 1914, I have the honour to transmit for your information copies of a memorandum stating the policy of the Admiralty as regards Oiling Stations abroad for British men-of-war, together with a copy of a letter which I have caused to be addressed to the Admiralty.

\*  
Memorandum.

To Admiralty,  
31st July, 1919.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

MILNER.

The Officer Administering

the Government of

the  
Falkland Islands.



*Enclosure I. in Confidential Circular despatch of 9th August, 1919.*

ADMIRALTY, S.W.

The Admiralty has had under consideration the question of oil bunkering on Foreign Stations, and has approved a programme of provision to meet present and prospective needs of H.M. ships.

So far as these concern the respective Dominion Governments, Crown Colonies and Protectorates, the Admiralty is desirous of obtaining the co-operation of the local governing authorities in giving effect to their programme.

The attached statement indicates the places in \_\_\_\_\_ and adjacent areas at which the Admiralty regard a supply of oil fuel as necessary for Naval purposes.

In connection with this question the general principles upon which the policy was framed were defined by the Admiralty, and these are also attached in the form of a general statement.

*Enclosure I.*

MEDITERRANEAN AND RED SEA.

The principal oil depôts on the Mediterranean Naval Station remain as at present. viz., Malta, Gibraltar, Port Said, Alexandria and Suez.

The storage capacity at Malta will be increased to 100,000 tons. A considerable increase will also be made in the Gibraltar storage (now 10,000 tons). 40,000 tons is suggested.

As regards Egyptian ports, general trade developments will provide the Admiralty with all the storage they are likely to require at Alexandria, Port Said, Suez, Hurghada and Gemseh.

CAPE STATION.

*Union of South Africa; Sierra Leone, Ascension and St. Helena.*

Storage should be available as follows :—

Cape Town	...	...	...	...	...	20,000	tons.
Simonstown	...	...	...	...	...	10,000	„
Durban	...	...	...	...	...	20,000	„
Sierra Leone	...	...	...	...	...	30,000	„
Ascension	...	...	...	...	...	10,000	„
St. Helena	...	...	...	...	...	10,000	„

Sierra Leone is, and will continue to be, a very important Fleet base. It is proposed to provide Government storage, unless reliance can ultimately be placed on commercial stocks for a proportion of the quantity required.

SOUTH AMERICAN STATION.

*Falkland Islands.*

The Falklands afford the only British port on the South-East Coast of America, and, from a strategical point of view, they are regarded as of great importance. Very little commercial use is, however, made of these islands, and it is very unlikely that any development of the bunkering facilities by one of the large companies will take place. It is also doubtful whether the base will be extensively used by warships under peace conditions. It is none the less absolutely necessary that oil storage should be provided here. Stock of 20,000 tons is proposed. Special care will be necessary when selecting the site for storage, which should be as free as possible from the risk of destruction by bombardment from sea.

NORTH AMERICA AND WEST INDIES STATION.

*Dominion of Canada, Bermuda, Jamaica, Trinidad: Fanning Island.*

*Halifax.*—It is regarded as most desirable that a large reserve stock, quite independent of the supplies maintained in the south, should be kept at Halifax and in the St. Lawrence by the Dominion Government, to meet the contingency of battle-ships being sent there. The views and proposals of the Dominion Government on this point are urgently desired.

*Bermuda.* 16,000 tons.—This Admiralty storage is already erected and in use. It is not proposed to legislate for any increase at present, but British commercial firms should be encouraged to provide installations, and also foreign companies.

*Jamaica.* 16,000 tons.—This base is considered of exceptional importance. The provision of Admiralty storage is now under consideration, but commercial applications for sites might be favourably entertained with a view to fuller development of the port.

*Trinidad.* 7,000 tons.—The island is a large centre of production, and supplies will no doubt be readily available to this extent.

*Vancouver.*—This base should be the principal depôt on the Pacific Coast, and it would be most desirable that storage for 50,000 tons should be provided by the Dominion Government. Their views on this provision will be appreciated.

On account of the very wide stretch of water in the Pacific the possibility of providing storage at Fanning Island is the subject of correspondence and negotiation.

#### COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA : NEW ZEALAND.

*Australia and New Zealand.*—A large standard of reserve will be required, divided between Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Fremantle, Thursday Island and Brisbane. A relatively small reserve will also be necessary at Auckland and Wellington, and possibly at Suva. It is suggested that the whole question be considered by these two Governments, and that they be invited to make proposals on the subject.

#### CHINA STATION.

*Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai, Chinese River Ports, Wei-Hai-Wei.*

Provision of total storage of 120,000 tons on the China Station is considered necessary. The main storage for this quantity will be divided between Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai; Wei-Hai-Wei will be served for the present by means of mobile tank vessels. Admiralty will negotiate supply contracts at principal commercial ports on this station to meet naval requirements, but it may be necessary to select a site at Hong Kong for an Admiralty installation at an early date. Assistance of local authorities may in that contingency be required.

#### EAST INDIES STATION.

*India, Rangoon, Aden, Seychelles, Mauritius, Zanzibar, &c.*

This station is well provided with commercial stocks, in view of the contingent sources of supply, *e.g.*, Persia, Burmah and Dutch East Indies. For this reason it is in contemplation to provide Admiralty stocks at Aden, Seychelles and Mauritius.

*Aden.* Proposed stock 20,000 tons.—The Indian Government has agreed to reserve a site for the erection of an installation of this capacity.

*Seychelles.* Propose 5,000 tons; *Mauritius.* Propose 10,000 tons.—Sites will require to be selected; Naval Commander-in-Chief has been communicated with on this subject.

Contracts may be made with commercial firms at places such as Karachi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Colombo, Zanzibar and Kilindini.

#### Enclosure II.

#### MEMORANDUM EMBODYING APPROVED ADMIRALTY POLICY AS REGARDS OILING STATIONS ABROAD FOR BRITISH MEN-OF-WAR.

1. *Different Classes of Oil Bases.*—The oil stations in British territory abroad fall into the following two groups :—

- (a) Those in the Self-governing Dominions.
- (b) Those in the Crown Colonies and Protectorates.

The policy which the Admiralty considers it desirable to adopt for each of these groups is shown in the following paragraphs.

(a) *Self-governing Dominions.*—The oil bases in the self-governing Dominions (Canada, Australia, Union of South Africa and New Zealand) to be under the control of their respective Governments, and by arrangement with the Imperial

Government, to be kept up to a fixed standard of reserve. The stock can be combined with commercial supplies provided the standard of reserve fixed for warships is always maintained.

(b) *Crown Colonies and British Protectorates.*—Where there are dockyards and Government establishments, such as Gibraltar, Malta, Hong Kong, and the like, the oil supply for warships will as a general rule be in Government hands, and reserves will be kept up to a fixed standard by the Admiralty; this will also be the case at places where it would not pay commercial firms to keep oil for bunkering merchant ships, such as Ascension, St. Helena and Falkland Islands; elsewhere contracts will be made by the Admiralty with commercial firms at selected ports in which there will be a proviso for standard of reserve to be maintained for use of warships.

2. *Nationality of Commercial Bunkering Firms.*—British commercial firms should be given preferential consideration in allocating sites for installations, but it is better that foreign companies should maintain stocks in British rather than in adjacent foreign territory.

3. *Installations to be capable of Extension.*—In order to provide for increases in the squadrons on the various stations to meet political exigencies, it is regarded as important that sites for tank installations should be selected, and the installations themselves should be laid out, in such a manner as to admit of rapid extension without difficulty, especially at such important strategic centres as Sierra Leone, Ascension or the Falklands.

4. *Protection and Siting of Storage Tanks.*—The principles on which sites should be selected with reference to security against damage have been laid down by the Oversea Defence Committee as follows :—

- (a) It is desirable that oil suitable for fuel in His Majesty's ships should, if practicable, be stored in positions where the tanks can be easily defended and that the tanks should, if practicable, be invisible from seawards.
- (b) Oil tanks should not be erected in positions where it would appear that the escape and combustion of the oil, from whatever cause arising, might endanger any material of importance to the defence, or interfere with the use of guns or electric lights in fixed defences.
- (c) Oil tanks should not be erected near the shores of an enclosed harbour with no scour by tide or river, if it is likely that ships will be anchored in that harbour in time of emergency, and if it appears from the proposed position and construction of the tanks as though it would be physically possible to cause damage to the shipping by setting light to the oil and allowing it to escape.
- (d) While taking into consideration the importance of siting and constructing oil tanks so that they can be easily defended, it must at the same time be borne in mind that, in considering applications for permission to erect tanks, it is inadvisable to impose such restrictions as will add unduly to the cost of establishing oil depôts on British soil.
- (e) It is not in the general interest alone, but also in that of the oil companies themselves, that the tanks should be so sited and constructed as to ensure, so far as possible, the safety of their contents in time of emergency.
- (f) Until His Majesty's Government have been referred to in each case, permission should not be given for the erection of oil tanks at oversea defended ports where there are garrisons administered by the War Office.

In those cases, if any, where the existing laws do not afford sufficient powers to control on the above lines the erection of oil tanks, the Oversea Defence Committee recommend that appropriate legislation should be enacted.

Where such an alternative is possible, reservoirs are considered preferable to tanks.

5. *Method of Receiving and Issue.*—It is suggested that the applicability of the system of under-water pipe-lines to the anchorage should be inquired into in each case, and adopted where suitable. This system may in some instances, save a good deal of money, which would otherwise be required for the erection of jetties, &c.,

and would also enable fuelling to be carried out in anchorages where, owing to sea conditions, vessels could not proceed alongside a jetty with safety. In certain positions the preferable method of a floating pipe-line might be found to suit local conditions.

6. *Quantity of Oil Fuel.*—In considering commercial schemes for development of installations at the bunkering ports, it will be important to stipulate that the stocks laid down conform as nearly as possible to the Admiralty specification, the principal factors in which are :—

Flashpoint not below 175 per cent. F.

Sulphur not exceeding 0.75 per cent.

Acid not exceeding 0.05 per cent.

Water 0.5 per cent.

Viscosity (by Redwood's Standard Viscometer, Admiralty type) not exceeding 1.000 secs. at 32° F.

Some latitude may be allowed, particularly in tropical climates, as regards the viscosity tests, but everything possible should be done to ensure that the oil is of 175° flashpoint or over, and that sulphur contents are not excessive.

7. *Development of Oil-producing Areas.*—It is obvious that everything possible should be done to stimulate development in areas under British control. For example, the desirability of strongly encouraging oil production in West Africa is of great importance in relation to the maintenance of supplies on that coast and to the adjacent naval bases in the South Atlantic, *e.g.*, Ascension and St. Helena. Such a source of supply would also be of very great value to South America and the Falkland Islands.

8. *Oil-bunkering of Commercial Ships.*—The Admiralty programme of oiling bases has been drawn up with due regard to the prospective use of oil fuel by merchant shipping. This subject is, however, receiving special consideration, and the results of the deliberations will be communicated.

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[Enclosure II. in Confidential Circular despatch of 9th August, 1919.]

CONFIDENTIAL.

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DOWNING STREET,

31st July, 1919.

Sir,

With reference to your letter C.E. in C. 07564/53F of the 8th March, respecting the storage of oil fuel at Colonial ports, I am directed by Viscount Milner to request you to inform the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that he has had before him a revised copy of the Admiralty Memorandum on the subject which was considered by the Oversea Defence Committee at their meeting on the 20th May.

2. Lord Milner presumes that their Lordships will inform him when they are ready to proceed to the erection of an installation in any Colony or Protectorate where no Admiralty depot at present exists, and will indicate what assistance they will require from the Colonial Government in each case.

3. I am to request that this Department may be communicated with before any contracts are negotiated with commercial firms at the "selected ports" referred to in paragraph 1 (b) of the memorandum, as it is possible that a Colonial Government may be contemplating negotiations for the same purpose. For instance, as the Admiralty is already aware, the Government of Barbados are making arrangements for the erection of an oil fuel installation in that Colony.

4. I am to enquire whether their Lordships would desire the Secretary of State to ask the Governor of Trinidad for a report on the applicability of the system of under-water pipe lines, as referred to in paragraph 5 of the memorandum.

5. Lord Milner is sending a copy of the Admiralty memorandum, and of this letter to the Officers Administering the Governments of all Maritime Colonies and Protectorates.

I am,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

H. J. READ.

The Secretary,

Admiralty.