

C.S.

Confidential

1924.

No.

*3/24**Soft Secret Despatch*

SUBJECT.

1923

8th Oct.

Previous Paper.

Proposed Extension of Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Movement to Colonies.

MINUTES.

*Soft Secret Despatch 8th Oct 1923 (1)
Memorandum by Oversea Defence Committee (a)**Y.E. Submitted
G.H. 13
O.C. Sec
19 Jan 1924.*

For reply please to (1) that I consider
(2) it both desirable and practicable to form
a R. N. Vol. Reserve Force in this Colony
and that the necessary measures for
the formation of the Force can be put
into operation at short notice at any
time. I am in entire agreement with the
principles of contained in the memorandum

Subsequent Paper.

H.H.H. 19 Jan. '24

Despatch to S. & S. of 21st Jan'y, 1924. (2)

(S.O. Secret 6/1924)

①

CIRCULAR.

SECRET.

Downing Street,
8th October, 1923.

Sir,

With reference to my Secret Circular despatch of the 18th of January last respecting Empire Naval policy and co-operation, I have the honour to transmit to you copies of a Memorandum by the Oversea Defence Committee—No. 507 M.—on the extension of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve movement to the Colonies and Protectorates.

2. It will be obvious to you that in the formation of Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve forces it is desirable to ensure some measure of uniformity throughout the Empire. It is not desired at this stage that steps should be taken actually to form such local forces. A detailed scheme is under consideration, and I hope to be able to communicate it to you in a further memorandum; but in the meantime I shall be glad to learn that you are in general agreement with the principles contained in Memorandum 507 M., and to know whether you consider it will be desirable and practicable to form a Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve force in the territory under your administration when the time comes. You will, of course, consult the Naval Commander-in-Chief in regard to the details of any scheme which you may be ready to propose.

3. I have to inform you that it is the wish of the Admiralty that the various local schemes which may be put into force should be started on the basis that officers of commissioned rank shall be of pure European descent, with a view to seeing what progress can be made under those conditions.

4. It has been pointed out that an emergency might arise in circumstances not demanding the services of the local Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in naval duties. In Colonies which recognise the principle of universal liability for service in the local defence forces in an emergency, therefore, it would appear desirable that the legislative measure constituting the local Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve should contain a proviso that members of it when not called up for naval duties are not thereby absolved from any liability they would otherwise have for service in the local Land Defence force.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,
DEVONSHIRE.

The Officer Administering
the Government of

Printed for the Committee of Imperial Defence. September 1923.

SECRET.

C.O. No. 64182/22 and 40109/23.
Admiralty No. N. 3214/22.

507-M.

261

COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE.

OVERSEA DEFENCE COMMITTEE.

EXTENSION OF THE ROYAL NAVAL VOLUNTEER RESERVE MOVEMENT TO THE COLONIES AND PROTECTORATES.

Memorandum by the Oversea Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence.

THE Admiralty have referred to the Oversea Defence Committee the question of the desirability of the extension of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve movement to the Colonies and Protectorates, and it appears desirable to formulate clearly the manner in which Colonies and Protectorates can render assistance to the Navy in this respect.

2. Detailed proposals for the co-operation of the Dominions in the naval defence of the Empire were submitted for consideration at the Imperial Conference in June 1921, and recommendations affecting the Colonies were also included as follows:—

“British Colonies and Protectorates can best co-operate in the naval defence of the Empire in one or more of the following methods:—

- “ (i.) By the organisation of minesweeping or local defence craft for use in the event of war.
- “ (ii.) By the organisation of the local branches of the Royal Naval Reserve or Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve for manning the vessels mentioned in (i); for the manning of advanced bases; to assist in the Examination Service, or in a contraband control organisation, as well as for service in the Fleet.

* * * *

“ (iv.) Direct financial co-operation.

“ (v.) The provision and maintenance of naval bases, fuel depôts, &c., necessary to the Fleet in the event of war.”

“The method of co-operation selected must necessarily depend upon the resources and geographical situation of the Colony in question; but the active co-operation of the Colonies in assisting to support the naval burden of the Empire is welcomed.”

3. It is desired, therefore:—

- (i.) To instil the doctrine of self-help, pointing out that modern naval warfare is world-wide, and that the Colonies have a direct interest in the protection of trade, &c.
- (ii.) To make it clear that the Admiralty will look with favour on all schemes for organising local volunteer reserve forces, and will offer all advice and assistance in their power, although unable to contribute directly to the cost.

4. The Oversea Defence Committee are of the opinion that the formation of local Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Forces is desirable in the Colonies and Protectorates, especially in those which contain ports or harbours requiring naval defences of any kind, in order to supply the trained personnel which would be required throughout the Empire on the outbreak of war to perform some or all of the following duties:—

- (a.) For local protection—mine-sweeping, boom defences, &c.
- (b.) For local employment in connection with the control of mercantile traffic, intelligence, &c.

5. At the same time, it must be remembered that the provision of volunteer reserve personnel is only one of several ways in which assistance can be given and is not necessarily the most valuable and acceptable. For example, in certain cases it would be preferable to expend any money available on the erection of storage accommodation for oil fuel and the provision of oil fuel reserves.

6. The formation of voluntary forces on the lines of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve should be possible in the Colonies, and it seems probable that the scheme would meet with ready support if an undertaking were given that such forces would primarily be employed locally.

7. In this connection, the Committee made the following observations in their Memorandum No. 137-M, dated the 22nd May, 1898, which dealt with the question of the establishment of branches of Royal Naval Reserve in the Colonies:—

“In 1865 the Colonial Naval Defence Act was passed by the Imperial Parliament ‘to make better provision for Naval Defence, and to that end to provide and man vessels of war, and also to raise a Volunteer Force to form part of the Royal Naval Reserve established under the Act of Parliament of 1859 . . . and accordingly to be available for general service in the Royal Navy in emergency.’ This Act made it lawful for Colonies to make provision at their own expense for raising and maintaining volunteers entered on the terms of being bound to general service in the Royal Navy in emergency, and for making them while ashore or afloat, within the limits of the Colony or elsewhere, subject to all enactments and regulations for the time being in force for the discipline of the Royal Navy. The Volunteers raised under local Acts, which might be made in accordance with this Imperial Act, were to form part of the Royal Naval Reserve, and a provision was included in the Imperial Act to enable the Admiralty to accept any offer made by a Colony to place the whole or part of its Naval Volunteers at Her Majesty’s disposal for general service in the Royal Navy. When so serving, the provisions of the Imperial Act of 1859 relating to the Royal Naval Reserve men on actual service were to apply to the Colonial Volunteers.”

The Committee are of the opinion, therefore, that a complete departure from the principles set out in the preceding quotation would be contrary to the interests of Imperial Defence.

8. With regard to the training and administration of Colonial Naval Reserves and conditions of service in the R.N.V.R., it is thought that the Naval Commanders-in-chief on foreign stations could render most valuable assistance, and it is suggested that they be empowered by Colonial Governments to exercise a general supervision over such Reserve Forces, in which case it would probably be beneficial that they should be assisted by Committees formed on the lines of the Volunteer Committee at home. In any event, Commanders-in-chief would be acquainted with Admiralty views, and will be informed of the scales of defence of the ports on their stations, when these have been determined. They will be in a position, therefore, to advise as to the duties which should be undertaken by local personnel.

9. It is hoped that Colonies and Protectorates will be prepared to bear the expense of forming units of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve as part of their contribution to Imperial Defence, but it is recognised that the strength of the Naval Reserve Forces required in each Colony must be considered in conjunction with the requirements of the other fighting services.

10. A table showing the types of personnel required for the various services is shown in an Appendix to this Memorandum.

11. Although concrete details for each Colony cannot be laid down until the

"Scale of Defence" for each port is decided, it is considered that sufficiently detailed information is contained herein to enable the various Governments to appreciate the need, and to set in motion machinery for the formation of local Naval Reserve Forces.

(Signed)

L. A. CLEMENS, *Secretary,*
Oversea Defence Committee.

2, Whitehall Gardens, S.W. 1,
September 10, 1923.

APPENDIX.

SUMMARY OF TYPE OF PERSONNEL REQUIRED FOR THE SEVERAL SERVICES.

Minesweeping.—European officers, preferably some European P.O.'s and seamen. European or native crews. Professional seamen preferable though not absolutely necessary.

Examination Service.—European officers. European armed guard, native crews. Professional seamen preferable but not absolutely necessary.

Booms.—European officers, European P.O.'s and seamen. Native artisans, seamen, firemen and labourers. Professional seamen required, but numbers of others, civilians, yachtsmen, &c., are also wanted, but require previous training.

Mines.—European officers, European P.O.'s and seamen, European or native crews. The officers for minelaying vessels should preferably be professional seamen, but some of these, and also officers for control stations, could be trained civilians. European P.O.'s and seamen for actual work with mines. Signalmen, &c., can be professional or civilian, but require considerable training. Actual crews of minelayers could be natives, professional seamen, or trained European civilians.

Detecting Devices.—Trained observers required. European and preferably trained civilians.

Communications and Administrative Staff.—Officers and ratings could be civilians suitably trained; most of the services required are such as exist in civil life. W/T operators and signalmen would require special training.

Shipping and Convoy.—Certain additional officers, who could be civilians or professional seamen. European officers and seamen for guns' crews, armed guards, &c. European or native crews for ships' launches, &c.

Crews for Armed Merchant Cruisers.—Complete European fighting crew. Professional seamen and trained civilians.

Personnel for General Service.—All ranks and ratings. Professional seamen and trained civilians.

Personnel required should consist of R.N.R. and R.N.V.R.—It will therefore be seen that any naval organisation of man-power overseas should preferably embrace the professional seaman and the civilian in a similar manner to the R.N.R. and R.N.V.R. at home, and it would be desirable that reserves of both natures should be enrolled.

FALKLAND ISLANDS.

SECRET.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,

STANLEY,

21st January, 1924.

My Lord Duke,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Your Grace's Secret Circular despatch of the 8th of October, 1923, respecting the extension of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve movement to the Colonies and Protectorates.

2. I am in entire agreement with the principles contained in the Memorandum by the Oversea Defence Committee, and consider it both desirable and practicable to form a Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in this Colony. The measures for the formation of the Force can be put into operation at short notice at any time.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord Duke,

Your Grace's most obedient,

humble servant,

H. Henniker-Heaton.

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE,

P.C., K.G., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES.