

1933

KENYA

1933

3127/2

3127/2

CO 533/435

Defunct

Establishment of an Air Branch

Previous

1931/1/25

Mr. Flood

Mr. Flood

12

I was rung up this morning by Brigadier-General A C. Lewin, CB., CMG., DSO., the Commandant of the Kenya Defence Force. He was anxious to obtain an interview with the S. of S. as regards the question of an Air Branch of the Kenya Defence Force, as to which, he gave me to understand, there was a difference of opinion between the Air Ministry and the War Office.

I told Brigadier-General Lewin that owing to the Conference work it would be impossible for the S. of S. to give him an interview, but that I would see whether Lord Plymouth could do so.

Could you advise that Lord Plymouth should see Brigadier-General Lewin? If so, would you please pass this on to Mr. J.B. Williams as Lord Plymouth would be willing.

Brigadier-General Lewin's address is the

*Mr Cliffe*  
1.7.33.

*Office Note*

What I want to know is what the Government thinks. Have we heard anything?

*S. C. Cliffe*

17.

We have had nothing from the General on this subject. Brigadier-General Lewin has been pursuing the matter in private conversation at the W.O. & the Ministry. (He has also been writing long and short to the

name of a ... the ...  
the ... Brigadier ...  
... ..

... ..  
... ..  
... ..

... ..

... ..  
... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

Lord Plymouth.  
Will you see him, or  
would you like someone else to  
do so?  
J.H.G.  
5.7.35

1. Brigadier ...  
... ..  
... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

... ..

maintaining the Branch.  
This cannot be overcome  
by any substitution of an  
air force for the existing regular  
ground forces. The latter,  
the King's African Rifles, stand  
at so low a strength at the  
present time, as a result of  
recent reductions, that the  
addition of a small potential  
air force would not afford  
sufficient compensation to justify  
any further reduction in their  
strength.

he would prefer to use it for training pilots, which  
he thinks would give the best results.

S. E. 760

137

up to us (though General Lewin assured me that Sir Edward Grigg had done so in his time) I do not suppose that we have ever obtained the views of the War Office or Air Ministry regarding it.

I said I would take an opportunity of discussing the question with Sir Joseph Byrne when I saw him, which will enable me to find <sup>out</sup> exactly what his attitude is towards this question.

P.  
14.7.33.

see attached note

P. 303

I spoke to Sir Joseph Byrne about this when he called on the 28th of July, but he said that he had not been considering any proposal for the establishment of an Air Unit in the Kenya Defence Force. On general grounds he was rather opposed to such a project and he reiterated his opinion that the best thing to do would be to train people as pilots, so that if emergency arose and aeroplanes were required they could be developed. Sir Joseph did not consider that aeroplanes would be of much use in the internal defence of Kenya.

What he had been considering was getting the Air Force to station a squadron at Nairobi, or somewhere in Kenya. He had been confabbing with the Air Ministry about it, and he gathered that the Air Ministry might consider such a suggestion, on the lines that Kenya would pay the extra cost involved by stationing a squadron in Kenya as compared with stationing it in this country. That in a system that is adopted in the Sudan for the Air Force at Khartoum, and it was the system in force in ~~Kenya~~ <sup>Kenya</sup> at one time. I told Sir Joseph that, in my opinion, the cost would be considerable and would probably be ruled out from practical consideration and he said that if there was heavy expense the idea would have to be dropped.

Major Clifton Wells told me to-day that proposals for establishing an Air Unit of the Defence Force had been mooted in Kenya, but had not got beyond various unofficial talks and had not been put up as yet to the Governor. This is probably the origin of General Lewin's move.

We know from other sources that unofficial opinion in Kenya is in favour of the abolition of the K.A.R., which they consider is too expensive,

and

and its replacement by some kind of local semi-military police, officered by local recruitment, on the ground that the local people would be familiar with the native mind and would cost less, and would stay in Kenya all their time instead of going backwards and forwards as our regular seconded officers do. I don't think however, that there can be any suggestion of using any money so saved to finance an Air Branch of the Defence Force and I must say that in any event, the idea does not commend itself to me. Major Clifton Wells' notion was that people who owned private aeroplanes should be invited to register themselves, and put their aeroplanes, with themselves, at the disposal of the Government in the event of emergency. There could, of course, be no objection to this, as a thoroughly sensible proceeding, but there is a long difference between that and an

21-7-33

*Mr. [unclear]*  
*quite desirable*  
*possibility*  
*for the use of planes*  
*but I should not like the general*  
*extension of the use of the air arm*  
*opinion of the natives to be*  
*stamped by the side some*  
*from his branch for the*  
*Henry [unclear] [unclear]*

*Suggestion of [unclear]*  
*WAR by [unclear]*  
*police to act [unclear]*  
*business, [unclear]*  
*money [unclear]*  
*low [unclear]*  
*I think [unclear]*  
*anything [unclear]*  
*the Government [unclear]*  
*Sir J. Byrnes [unclear]*  
*take that line?*

*W.C.S.*  
*2/8/33*

*Jafiec*  
*9/8/33*  
*abance*  
*9.8.33*

*To Sir J. Byrnes*

*16/5/33*

and its replacement by some kind of local semi-military police, officers by local recruitment, on the ground that the local people would be familiar with the native mind and would cost less, and would stay in Kenya all their time instead of going backwards and forwards as our regular seconded officers do. I don't think however, that there can be any suggestion of using any money so saved to finance an Air Branch of the Defence Force and I must say that in any event, the idea does not commend itself to me. Major Clifton Wells' notion was that people who owned private aeroplanes should be invited to register themselves, and put their machines, with themselves, at the disposal of the Government in the event of emergency. It would, of course, be no objection to this, as a thoroughly sensible proceeding, but there is a big difference between that and an

31.7.33

*The use of private aeroplanes - quite available for training, & possibly for the use of police force. - does not disturb me; but I should not like the proposal of the use of the aeroplanes & special vehicles to be stamped by the side some form of license for the Kenya Defence Force.*

*Suggestion of placing H.A.R. by some military police to act as a reserve force, which is a good idea. I think we can do anything for the Government we may wish Sir J. Byrnes has to be done take that line!*

*Wells 2/8/33*

*Jafiec  
J.B.L.  
at once  
9.8.33*

*To Sir J. Byrnes*

*16/8/33*

C. O.

1127/313

Handwritten marks and scribbles in the top right corner.

Mr. Flood. 14-8

Mr.

Mr.

Mr. Parkerson.

Mr. Tomlinson.

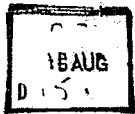
Sir G. Hollomley

Sir J. Stauchburgh.

Princl. U.S. of S.

Parly. U.S. of S.

Secretary of State.



**DRAFT.**

SIR JOSEPH BYRNE, K.C.M.G.,  
K.B.E., C.B.

*Resident*

OPENING LETTER

18 August 1948

Dear Sir Joseph,

I mention to you the other day the fact that General Lewin had called on Lord Lynton about his <sup>suggestion</sup> ~~proposal~~ for the establishment of an air unit in the Kenya Defence Force, and since I saw you Clinton Wells said he believed that a proposal of the kind had actually come up in a very tentative manner in Kenya, but it never got as far as you. The object of this letter is to tell you that if anything more is said he shall take the line that in a matter of such importance which is closely mixed up with the internal and external defence of the colony, it ~~will~~ <sup>will</sup> have to be put on an official footing and dealt with strictly through the official channel of the Governor or Acting Governor and the

Secretary

Secretary of State, and that we  
cannot consider it any further in  
s.o. conversation.

*Yours sincerely*

(Signed) J. E. W. FLOOD

18 Berkeley St.

8  
END!

W. I.

11<sup>th</sup> July

Dear Mr. Williams

I have been much in Town hence  
the delay in replying to your letter of  
the 6<sup>th</sup> inst. - I had Phymmit come  
to see me at 11.30 on Friday the 10<sup>th</sup> July  
as suggested in your letter. I shall be very  
pleas'd to receive reports of the subscription.

The report you are in command for the  
expenses of the Register as published  
from us, but the two opposite views  
concerning the fact. and an answer to  
it is enclosed. The case of the Register  
is financial. How to solve it is the  
question. This is the point  
where the business will have to  
be decided.