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FILE TITLE: Relations		SERIES: ANTIQUA
		PART: 1
PART BEGINS: 15 September <del>2 May 1997</del>	PART ENDS: 21 March <del>7 JUNE 2001</del>	CAB ONE:

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PART

CLOSED

DATE CLOSED

7 JUNE 2001

Series : ANTIGUA

File Title : Relations

Part : 1

Date	From	To	Subject	Class	Secret
15/09/1997	FA/APS	FCO	CHOGM/NIGERIA: Letter from the PM of Antigua and Barbuda	C	0
15/09/1997	Ant/Barbuda/PM	PM	Letter of Greetings	C	0
12/03/1999	FCO	FA/APS	Message of congratulations to the Prime Minister of Antigua and Bar	C	0
14/02/2000	Ant/Barbuda/PM	PM	(H) British Trade International is considering amalgamating	U	0
01/03/2000	FA/APS	DTI	Caribbean Trade Advisory Group: Letter from the Prime Minister of A	C	0
09/03/2000	DTI	FA/APS	Caribbean Trade Advisory Group: Letter from the Prime Minister of A	U	0
21/03/2000	PM	Ant/Barbuda/PM	(H) future of the Caribbean Trade Advisory Group (CARITAG)	C	0

FILE



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

cc: POST  
FCO  
SUBJECT  
MASTER

File on

THE PRIME MINISTER

21 March 2000

Dear Lester,

Thank you for your letter of 14 February about the future of the Caribbean Trade Advisory Group (CARITAG).

To give you the background, a review of Business Advisory Groups, such as CARITAG, was recommended by "The Review of Export Promotion" carried out during 1998/99 by the Secretary to the Cabinet, Sir Richard Wilson. The Wilson Review led to the setting up of British Trade International, which brought together the trade promotion activities of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in a unified operation under a Chief Executive reporting to a Board drawn predominantly from the private sector. The emphasis was on developing a more coherent approach with an overriding customer focus. The Wilson Review also recommended a review of the structure and role of the business advisory groups.

The Board decided at its first meeting in June 1999 to invite Sir Martin Laing, then Vice-Chairman of the Board, to lead a review of business advisory groups. Sir Martin presented initial recommendations to the Board at its meeting on 30 November 1999. The structure he proposed included provision for four strategic multi-market groups, mirroring the internal structure of British Trade International, to provide advice on regional priorities and spending. This would fill a gap and strengthen the role of business advice at that level. He also

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proposed the establishment of export groups associated with the multi-market groups, where they were required to provide more focused advice and activity. These groups would be established for a defined period, at the end of which their continued relevance and contribution to British Trade International's objectives would be reviewed.

Sir Martin will be presenting his recommendations, including options for the structure of business advisory groups, to the Board of British Trade International at the end of March. Meanwhile, no decisions have been reached on the structure, or on the role of existing groups such as CARITAG.

Our intention is to introduce a more effective mechanism for developing our trade and business relations with the Caribbean. I know that CARITAG themselves have submitted proposals to Sir David Wright, Chief Executive of British Trade International, on how their relationship with them might evolve in the future. We will give serious consideration to these proposals.

*Yours ever*  
*Tony*

The Hon Lester B Bird MP

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Top - PB  
AJH  
JS  
JPO  
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The Rt Hon Stephen Byers MP  
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

(T)

Secretary of State  
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London SW1H 0ET

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Philip Barton Esq  
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

9 March 2000

Dear Philip

Thank you for your letter of 1 March with which you enclosed a copy of a letter to the Prime Minister from the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda about the future of the Caribbean Trade Advisory Group (CARITAG). I attach a draft reply for the Prime Minister's signature.

The Minister for Trade has received letters on the same subject from the High Commissioners for Antigua, Guyana and Trinidad and the draft reply follows the line of the responses to these letters.

Meanwhile, CARITAG have submitted detailed proposals to Sir David Wright on how their relationship with British Trade International might evolve in the future. These proposals will be given serious consideration.

British Trade International intend to ensure that the review of business advisory groups will result in a more effective mechanism for developing trade and business relations with the Caribbean. They are fully committed to working in partnership with industry and enhancing business involvement in providing advice to British companies seeking to develop their export markets. They continue to value business advice and will look to business to provide it, whatever the outcome of the review. The timing of an announcement of the outcome of the Business Advisory Group Review has yet to be considered by the Board of British Trade International.

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Department of Trade and Industry



However, officials are fully aware of the wider political interest, both in the UK and in the Caribbean, in the outcome of the Review and of the particular sensitivities of its timing. They thoroughly appreciate the special relationship between the United Kingdom and Caribbean and continue to work with other Government Departments and with the private sector towards its further development. This is demonstrated by the approach to the UK/Caribbean Forum in May, where British Trade International are playing an integral part in the planning for the event.

*Yours ever*

*Nick*

**NICK WELLINGTON**  
**Assistant Private Secretary**



**DRAFT LETTER FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO SEND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA CONCERNING THE CARIBBEAN TRADE ADVISORY GROUP**

Thank you for your letter of 14 February about the future of the Caribbean Trade Advisory Group (CARITAG).

To give you the background, a review of Business Advisory Groups, such as CARITAG, was recommended by "The Review of Export Promotion" (~~February 1999~~ <sup>carried out</sup> conducted during 1998/99 for Ministers by the Secretary to the Cabinet, Sir Richard Wilson. The Wilson Review led to the setting up of British Trade International, which brought together the trade promotion activities of the DTI and the FCO, ~~through its overseas Posts~~, in a unified operation under a Chief Executive reporting to a Board drawn predominantly from the private sector. The emphasis was on developing a more coherent approach with an overriding customer focus. ~~While the Wilson Review underlined the importance of private sector involvement in the new operation, it also recommended a review by the Board of British Trade International of the present structure and role of the current business advisory groups, which it reported varied in their focus, financing and role. (Some had "in-housed" secretariats, while for others, such as CARITAG, they were "out-housed" thus operating outside British Trade International but with a financial contribution from it and with a close working relationship).~~

The Board decided at its first meeting in June 1999 to ~~initiate the review~~ <sup>have a</sup> and Sir Martin Laing, then Vice-Chairman of the Board, was invited to lead it. Sir Martin presented initial recommendations to the Board at its meeting on 30 November 1999. The structure he proposed included provision for four strategic multi-market groups, mirroring the internal structure of British Trade International, to provide advice on regional priorities and spend. This would fill a gap and strengthen the role of business advice at that level. He also proposed the establishment of export groups associated with the multi-market groups, where they were required to provide more focused advice and activity. These groups would be established for a defined period, at the end of which their continued relevance and contribution to British Trade International's objectives would be reviewed. <sup>of business advisory groups</sup>

Sir Martin will be presenting his recommendations, including options for the structure of business advisory groups, to the Board at the end of March. Meanwhile, no decisions have been reached on the structure, or on the role of existing groups such as CARITAG.

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Department of Trade and Industry





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~~However, it is our intention to ensure that this review will result in a more effective mechanism for developing trade and our business relations with the Caribbean. Meanwhile, CARITAG themselves have submitted proposals to Sir David Wright, Chief Executive of British Trade International, on how their relationship with them might evolve in the future. I can assure you that we shall give serious consideration to these proposals. Indeed, we remain fully committed to working in partnership with industry and enhancing business involvement in providing advice to British companies seeking to develop their export markets. We continue to value business advice ourselves and will look to business to provide it, whatever the outcome of the review.~~

We also fully appreciate our special relationship with the Caribbean and are constantly working towards its further development. This is demonstrated by our joined-up government approach to the UK/Caribbean Forum in May, where British Trade International are playing an integral part in the planning for the event and will be working closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the Forum. We look forward to a successful event.

File

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10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

1 March 2000

Dear Nick,

**CARIBBEAN TRADE ADVISORY GROUP:  
LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA**

The Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda has written to the Prime Minister about the future of CARITAG. A copy of his letter is enclosed. Please could we have advice and a draft reply for the Prime Minister's signature as soon as possible. As seen from here, it would be unfortunate for CARITAG to be merged into a single group for the Americas in the run-up to the UK/Caribbean Forum in May.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Andrew Patrick (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Sir David Wright (British Trade International) and Sebastian Wood (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

Philip

**PHILIP BARTON**

Nick Wellington Esq  
Department of Trade and Industry

DS



TOP PR  
cc: JS  
JPO  
AC

GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Prime Minister's Office  
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SUBJECT  
MASTER

Filed on:

14<sup>th</sup> February 2000

Rt Hon Tony Blair  
Prime Minister  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Downing Street  
London W1

Dear Tony

Greetings. I have received the troubling news that British Trade International is considering amalgamating all area advisory groups. In this connection, the Caribbean Trade Advisory Group (CARITAG) may lose its separate identity and be combined with a single group for the Americas.

Should this happen it will have harmful effect on CARITAG with a possibility that it may be disbanded altogether. This unfortunate development comes against the background of the discussion between you and Heads of Caribbean governments in Durban last November about the clear desirability of strengthening the UK/Caribbean relationship.


Indeed, the Second UK/Caribbean Forum of Foreign Ministers which will be held in May in London will discuss ways of building on existing structures to enhance the UK/Caribbean relationship.

The contemplated action on CARITAG almost on the eve of the Second UK/Caribbean Forum causes alarm particularly as CARITAG is probably the only institution that focusses any attention on the commercial relationship between Britain and the Caribbean.

I hope that you would find it possible to intervene so that serious and favourable consideration could be given to the British Government's continued support for CARITAG as a separate and distinct entity. This would send a clear signal of your government's determination to enhance the UK-Caribbean relationship.

With very best regards.

Yours sincerely



Lester B Bird  
Prime Minister



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

London SW1A 2AH

*file - hold FCO to issue .*

*PRB 17/3  
PB*

12 March 1999

*C:JS  
JAS  
AE*

*Dear Philip*

Message of Congratulations to the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda

At a General Election on 9 March the ruling Antigua Labour Party, led by Prime Minister Lester Bird, won the election for the sixth time in succession. The Antigua Labour Party increased their majority from 11 to 12 seats, with the opposition United Progressive Party taking only 4 seats (down from 5), and the Barbuda Peoples Movement retaining their one seat.

The Antigua Labour Party were always firm favourites to win the election. Lester Bird succeeded his father Vere Bird Snr as Prime Minister at the 1994 election and the Bird family has dominated Antiguan politics, with one brief break, since the 1940s. Although we have some doubts about PM Lester Bird's integrity on a number of issues, we have no reason to doubt the probity of the election result; the General Election was monitored by a Commonwealth Observer Group which concluded the proceedings were, generally speaking, free and fair.

Despite various UK Government sponsored initiatives in the Caribbean we still continue to receive signals that some leaders in the region are not satisfied that sufficient effort has been made by HMG to establish a close working relationship with Caribbean Governments. Indeed, the Antiguan High Commissioner in London has been one of the main perpetrators of this theory.

... We believe that a brief personal congratulatory message from the Prime Minister along the lines of the enclosed draft would be appropriate. The Prime Minister has sent messages to other Caribbean counterparts after recent elections (Barbados and Grenada).

*Yours ever  
Andrew Patrick*

(Andrew Patrick)  
Private Secretary

Philip Barton Esq OBE  
10 Downing Street

*PA 12/3*

**MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE HON LESTER BIRD MP**

Please accept my warm congratulations on your re-appointment as Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda.

I look forward to working with you to ensure that relations between Antigua and Barbuda and the United Kingdom remain in good shape.

Signed

Tony Blair

[G Wicks, LACD: 270-2687]

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GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Prime Minister's Office  
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15 September 1997

Via Fax: 011 44 171 839-9044

Rt Hon Mr Tony Blair MP  
Prime Minister  
Office of the Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA.

Dear Prime Minister

I extend my greetings and refer to a letter which, like me, you would have received from the Inter Action Council signed by former Prime Minister of Britain, James Callaghan, former Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm Fraser and former Chancellor of Germany Helmut Schmidt concerning the former Head of State of Nigeria, General Olusugen Obasanjo.

My purpose in writing to you is to indicate my full support for the position taken by the Inter Action Council and urge that this situation be specifically addressed by us, as Heads of Government, at the Commonwealth Summit in Edinburgh in October. I agree that a strong message should be sent to the Nigerian regime requesting that full freedom be restored to General Obasanjo and that other political prisoners be released.

We will no doubt discuss the entire situation in the context of the report of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group charged with the responsibility to review events in Nigeria, The Gambia and Sierra Leone, and while I am in favour of firm Commonwealth action against all those who violate the Harare Declaration, I agree that General Obasanjo's case as a former Head of State has a particular symbolic importance.

With best regards.

Lester B Bird  
Prime Minister



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

15 September 1997

**CHOGM/NIGERIA: LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER OF  
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA**

The Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda has written to the Prime Minister urging that the case of General Obasanjo be discussed at CHOGM next month. A copy of his letter is enclosed. I would be grateful for your advice and a draft reply, if you think this is necessary.

**PHILIP BARTON**

Mrs Fiona Mylchreest  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office



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