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CORRESPONDENCE

RESPECTING

THE MOSQUITO TERRITORY.

*Presented to the House of Commons, July 3, 1848, in pursuance of their
Address of April 3, 1848.*

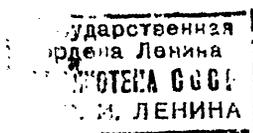
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RESPECTING

THE MOSQUITO TERRITORY.

No. 1.

*Viscount Palmerston to Mr. Chatfield.**

(Extract.)

Foreign Office, January 30, 1847.

I AM desirous of obtaining the most authentic information that can be procured as to the boundary claimed by the King of Mosquito, and for this purpose I have to instruct you to transmit to this office all the information which it may be in your power to obtain as to the exact line of boundary claimed by the King of Mosquito, as dividing his territory from the State of New Granada and from the States of Central America.

In your report you will state the grounds upon which any and each particular line of boundary can on the one hand be claimed by the King of Mosquito, or may, on the other hand, be rejected by New Granada or Central America.

You will accompany your report by lines drawn on a map, for convenience of reference.

You will also report what, in your opinion, is the line of boundary which Her Majesty's Government should insist upon as absolutely essential for the security and well-being of the Mosquito State.

No. 2.

Viscount Palmerston to Mr. Chatfield.

Sir,

Foreign Office, June 30, 1847.

THE encroachments committed at various times by the authorities of the Central American States of Honduras and Nicaragua, upon the territories of the King of Mosquito, having given rise to a question as to the extent of the coast frontier of the Kingdom of Mosquito, Her Majesty's Government have carefully examined the various documents and historical records which exist relative to this subject; and they are of opinion that the right of the King of Mosquito should be maintained as extending from Cape Honduras down to the mouth of the River San Juan.

I have therefore to instruct you to inform the authorities of the several States of Central America bordering on the Kingdom of Mosquito, that this is the extent of coast to which Her Majesty's Government consider the King of Mosquito to be entitled; and you will inform them that Her Majesty's Government will not view with indifference any attempt to encroach upon the rights or territory of the King of Mosquito, who is under the protection of the British Crown.

I am, &c.

(Signed) PALMERSTON.

P.S.—A similar instruction has been addressed to Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Bogotá.

* A similar despatch was addressed to Mr. Walker, January 30, 1847, and to Mr. O'Leary, February 16, 1847.

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No. 3.

Viscount Palmerston to Mr. Walker.

Sir,

Foreign Office, June 30, 1847.

I TRANSMIT herewith, for your information and guidance, copy of a despatch which I have addressed to Her Majesty's Consul-General at Guatemala, directing him to state to the Governments bordering on the territories of the King of Mosquito, that Her Majesty's Government maintain that the coast frontier of those territories extends from Cape Honduras down to the mouth of the River San Juan.

I have addressed a similar instruction to Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Bogotá.

I am, &c.
(Signed) PALMERSTON.

No. 4.

Mr. O'Leary to Viscount Palmerston.—(Received July 8.)

(Extract.)

Bogotá, May 10, 1847.

WITH reference to your Lordship's despatch of the 16th of February last, instructing me to transmit to your Lordship all the information which it may be in my power to obtain as to the exact line of boundary claimed by the King of Mosquito as dividing his territory from the State of New Granada and from the States of Central America, I shall endeavour to comply with your Lordship's instructions without loss of time.

No. 5.

Mr. Chatfield to Viscount Palmerston.—(Received July 8.)

(Extract.)

Guatemala, April 15, 1847.

I HAD the honour of receiving your Lordship's despatch of the 30th January last, instructing me to report—

1st. Upon the exact line of boundary claimed by the Mosquito King, as dividing his territory from the State of New Granada and from the States of Central America;

2nd. Upon what, in my opinion, is the line of boundary which Her Majesty's Government should insist upon as absolutely essential to the security and well-being of the Mosquito State.

In replying to the first question I have to observe that nothing has reached me officially to enable me to state positively what is the line of boundary claimed by the King of Mosquito; nevertheless the subject has sufficiently attracted my attention to cause me to take pains to collect information upon it; and in giving the result of my inquiries, I shall be gratified if it should prove acceptable to your Lordship.

The pretensions of sovereignty assumed by New Granada to the whole of the Mosquito Territory will, I conceive, be found upon examination quite irregular, and rest merely on the Royal Order of San Lorenzo of 30th November, 1803, separating for military purposes from the Captaincy-General of Guatemala the Islands of St. Andrew and that part of the Mosquito shore from Cape Gracias á Dios inclusive towards the River Chagres, and making them dependent on the Viceroyalty of Santa Fé de Bogotá; which order was never carried into effect any more than the decrees are allowed to have been which the Government of Spain has issued at different times in a view to regulate the internal affairs of its American provinces generally, after they had declared their independence of its rule.

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The Royal Order of San Lorenzo above alluded to is, I conclude, the only act upon which the New Granadian Government attempts to found a claim to the Mosquito Territory ; and it is strange that a measure of such importance as that order seems to involve—the transferring of a vast tract of country from one Government to another—should not have been provided for in a formal manner by a Royal Cedula, or Order of the Sovereign in Council, instead of by a simple ministerial notification or instruction, which the Royal Order of San Lorenzo only amounts to.

The main point is, whether the New Granadian Government has a just claim to any part of the Mosquito King's territory, or to any part of that of Central America ; and I request to lay before your Lordship such particulars as I have been able to collect respecting the origin and effect of the Order of San Lorenzo of 30th November, 1803 ; trusting that what I shall state will appear to Her Majesty's Government a sufficient ground for declining to recognize the right of New Granada to an extension of territory beyond the boundaries on the Central American side, as they existed previous to the independence of both countries of Spain, since it is demonstrable that New Granada has never acquired either a military or civil jurisdiction over the Mosquito and Central American territories, nor any title to treat for the division or appropriation of States which do not belong to it.

The history of this Royal Order of San Lorenzo appears to be, that Captain Thomas O'Neill, Governor of St. Andrew, being at variance with the Captain-General of Guatemala, under whose orders he was placed, applied to the Spanish Court for an accession of rank and pay, and for the transfer to the Viceroyalty of Santa Fé of St. Andrew and the coast adjacent, alleging the great distance of his post from Guatemala, and the greater facility of communicating with, and in case of need receiving assistance from, Carthagena, which at the time was a considerable naval station of Spain.

This suggestion was received and treated in a purely military sense, and was in consequence referred to the opinion of the Committee of Fortifications and Defence of the Indies, who reported thereon favourably to Captain O'Neill's wishes. But there is nothing to show that the political and jurisdictional authority of the Government at Guatemala over the places transferred to the Viceroy of Santa Fé was affected by the measure, or that it ever came under the notice of the Supreme Council of the Indies, since no orders on the subject were transmitted to the legislative branch of the Government of Guatemala, represented by the President and Oidores ; or that it was otherwise considered than (as the report of the Committee of Fortifications states) a means of uniting, for the better defence of the King's possessions towards Cape Gracias á Dios, the military command in that direction to the Viceroyalty of New Granada, whose large naval and military means were concentrated at Carthagena, so as to leave the Captain-General of Guatemala at greater liberty to provide for the security of the coast more immediately within his reach to the northward. And thus it is that the Viceroy of New Granada never exercised a legislative authority within the territory ; nor is there any trace of an establishment or local government subject to his rule having at any period existed on the coasts of Mosquito or of Central America, while it is equally true that Colombia abstained from any such occupancy.

In 1824 the Colombian President Santander, in consequence of the project of Macgregor to settle at Poyais on the Mosquito shore, issued a decree dated July 5, 1824, founded on the Royal Order of San Lorenzo, declaring all persons attempting to colonize that part of the coast liable to severe penalties ; giving directions, about the same time, to take possession of St. Andrew's and its dependencies.

On the 23rd September, 1836, the Governor of Veragua wrote to the chief of the State of Costarica, to protest, on the plea of the Order of San Lorenzo, against the occupation of Boca del Toro by Central American citizens, as had been projected by the deceased Colonel Galindo ; announcing that by virtue of Decree of May 30, 1836, the place would immediately be taken possession of by a competent force, with the functionaries necessary for establishing a local Government on the part of New Granada.

On the 30th of November, 1836, the Chief of Costarica replied to this notification, by stating that Article V of the Federal Constitution of Central