

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]

Sent: 04 May 2012 15:22

To: [REDACTED] [FCO]

Subject: RE: Spitfire excavation, Myanmar

I am writing regarding the reported discovery of Spitfire aeroplanes in Myanmar. [REDACTED]

For the last three weeks I have been working with one of our senior lecturers, [REDACTED], following the press announcement about the discovery and potential repatriation of the Spitfires. [REDACTED] has worked with [REDACTED] for nearly 20 years; and for the last 14 years he has provided geotechnical support and academic advice to support [REDACTED]'s quest to find these Spitfires. One of our former PhD students, [REDACTED], also supported the project, and we were looking forward to a joint press release with [REDACTED] when the planes returned to the UK. [REDACTED] is hoping to accompany [REDACTED] to Myanmar to provide geotechnical advice during the excavation.

Over the last two weeks, I have therefore met and discussed the project with [REDACTED] in some detail in order to assess the University's role. I understand fully the background to the recent misunderstanding with [REDACTED] that has been reported in the press (and have sight of the contract that [REDACTED] asked [REDACTED] to sign). I am led to understand that [REDACTED] agent, [REDACTED], shared [REDACTED]'s proprietary information regarding the Spitfires discovery with [REDACTED], and that [REDACTED] intends to use this information to launch his own excavation effort.

[REDACTED] has made it clear to me that he intends to press on with his project to excavate the planes with new UK based financial backers and, should he find the planes, return these to the UK for renovation. I also understand that [REDACTED] has been in correspondence with his local MP, [REDACTED] about creating jobs in the constituency working on restoring the planes. Unfortunately, there was no traction at the time, but [REDACTED] remains committed to restoring these planes to their English homeland.

I can understand how the recent press coverage has been unhelpful. [REDACTED] was, to say the least, unhappy with the way [REDACTED] conducted negotiations. [REDACTED] reassures me that he wishes to work with the British government to get the right result for the UK.

Should [REDACTED] proposed excavation go ahead and be a success, the University would be very pleased to work with the FCO [REDACTED] to deliver a very positive story for both the University's academic input and for the Government, particularly in support of [REDACTED]'s 14 years patriotic effort to find these planes. I have built up a close rapport with [REDACTED] over the last few weeks, and feel comfortable that, with the right support, there is a very good outcome for him, for us, and for the United Kingdom's heritage.

Please do not hesitate to make contact if you need any further information.

From: [REDACTED] [FCO]

Sent: 08 May 2012 13:31

To: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]

Subject: RE: Spitfire excavation, Myanmar

Thank you very much for your message – and sorry for the delay in replying.

You mention the commercial dispute over this project. I'm aware that it is a complicated situation. We have explained to [REDACTED] – as well as to other interested parties – that we cannot get involved in this and that we will not be favouring any particular bid over another. It is for the Burmese to make that decision. [REDACTED]

You may be interested to know that the President is above all interested in the heritage aspects of the deal, according to the advisers we spoke to, and is keen for planes to be made available to the

public in both countries. We agreed that this was our vision for the project, too. So we are more than happy to keep in touch on this, as it develops.

I would be very happy to discuss this if that would be helpful. Otherwise, we may well be in touch in due course.

Kind regards

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]

Sent: 08 May 2012 22:59

To: [REDACTED] [FCO]

Subject: RE: Spitfire excavation, Myanmar

Thank you for the response. It would be useful to have a quick conversation about this project – perhaps towards the end of this week? Would it be convenient to call you this Friday? If so, please advise what might be the best contact number and time to call.

From: [REDACTED] [FCO]

Sent: 09 May 2012 07:12

To: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]

Subject: RE: Spitfire excavation, Myanmar

That sounds good. I think the best times would either be 1130 BST today or 1130 Friday – could you do either of these?

Probably easiest if I call you, as we get a better line when we call out (long story). Please give me a good number to get you on.

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]

Sent: 09 May 2012 17:41

To: [REDACTED] [FCO]

Subject: RE: Spitfire excavation, Myanmar

[REDACTED] has forwarded me the attached which I thought would be of interest. I look forward to talking this through on Friday.

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]

Sent: 03 September 2012 21:59

To: [REDACTED] [FCO]

Subject: RE: Spitfires in Myanmar project

I hope that you are well?

[REDACTED] has returned from his latest trip to Myanmar and been in touch with the University with the positive news that he plans to sign the excavation contract later this month. I appreciate that the FCO has had to maintain impartiality during the commercial discussions for this project, but do you anticipate any FCO involvement at all now that the contract is ready for signature?

Academics [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are all planning to join the excavation in Myanmar in November. Please let me know if you need any further information at this stage.

From: [REDACTED] [FCO]

Sent: 04 September 2012 05:09

To: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]

Subject: RE: Spitfires in Myanmar project

I heard the news from [REDACTED], many congratulations! I understand that the contract will formally be signed on 13 September. Once that happens, we would be very keen to work together and to do whatever we can to facilitate the project. We would be keen to see the team when they arrive in country, and very open to any requests for assistance that you or they may have. I hope that you will also be able to move forward in the partnership with British Council, too.

Might it be worth a quick phone call to discuss how we can best help? I leave on Thursday, so I could speak today or tomorrow – or after I return on the 18th September? Please let me know if that would be of interest.

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Sent: 10 September 2012 22:22
To: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Subject: RE: Contact details

Thanks for this. I discussed the point you raised about the timing of informing the other bidders that they had not been successful with [REDACTED] last week. Their clear view on this was that the FCO should not inform the other bidders in advance of the public signing and that this action might jeopardise the signing.

On this basis, I strongly recommend that the FCO does not advise the other bidders of the outcome of the proposals. They will, no doubt, hear about this in due course either via from the Burmese authorities or via the media.

Please let me know if you wish to discuss this further,

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Sent: 11 September 2012 04:02
To: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Subject: FW: Contact details

In [REDACTED]'s absence, I am forwarding the attached email to you for action.

Please let me know if you require any further information,

From: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Sent: 12 September 2012 12:30
To: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Subject: RE: Contact details

Thank you for your email. As we have not yet received official notification of the outcome of the bid from the govt, we would not at this stage inform other bidders.

We will, as I believe [REDACTED] mentioned previously, let you know in advance before we do contact other bidders.

I hope that is of help.

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Sent: 12 September 2012 21:18
To: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Subject: RE: Contact details

Many thanks for your prompt response.

I appreciate that the FCO has not received official notification of the outcome of the bid however, can you confirm that, on the assumption that the Burmese sign the excavation contract with [REDACTED] and his party, the FCO will not notify the other parties of this outcome?

[REDACTED] has been working on this project for many years and we wish to avoid any interventions that could derail the excavation for him, even at such a late stage.

I look forward to hearing from you.

From: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Sent: 17 September 2012 07:47
To: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Cc: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Subject: RE: Contact details

We understand the concerns that you have. As I hope you will appreciate, we have throughout this process acted on the understanding that we would inform all bidders with whom we have had contact once there was an official outcome, rather than leaving them to hear the outcome from the media. We also believe that the Burmese govt would expect us to do so. As such, after the government here does officially confirm the bid outcome, we would, having first informed you, plan to inform the unsuccessful parties ahead of the signing ceremony. However, it remains the case that we have not as yet received any official notification from the govt.

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Sent: 17 September 2012 15:25
To: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Cc: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Subject: RE: Contact details

We may be emailing at cross purposes, given my original discussion was with [REDACTED], however in that conversation [REDACTED] asked my advice as to whether the FCO should inform the other bidders and at what stage in the process. I asked to discuss this with [REDACTED] given their stake in this project. My email of the 10th September reflects their feedback. I doubt [REDACTED] would have such concerns about the FCO informing the other bidders *after* the public signing, but I will check this for you.

Please also note that neither [REDACTED] or the University of Leeds are planning to issue a press release following the public signing, although we are discussing a potential media event later in the year. I understand from the conversation with [REDACTED] that the UK Government will not be issuing a press statement, so it is unlikely that there will be any media pick-up on this story until later in the year. This would leave ample time for the FCO to have a conversation with the other bidders without the risk of jeopardising the public signing.

If any of the above is unclear, please feel free to contact me on the numbers below,

From: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Sent: 19 September 2012 06:10
To: [REDACTED] [LEEDS], [FCO]
Subject: RE: Contact details

Apologies for the confusion – almost certainly my fault (I think I was probably already in holiday mode...).

Thank you for running this past [REDACTED] (and [REDACTED]?). We will only be able to contact the unsuccessful bidders if we get formal notification from the government that the decision has

been taken (at which point, presumably, there wouldn't be any risk to [REDACTED]'s bid anyway). The other bidders all have contacts here so it wouldn't surprise me if they learned about the decision even without any coverage in British media.

However, we obviously don't want to cause you and [REDACTED] any difficulties. I will certainly make sure that we contact you first, to discuss how best to synchronise.

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Sent: 19 September 2012 12:22
To: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Cc: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Subject: RE: Contact details

Welcome back – I hope that you have had a good break.

I did speak to [REDACTED] about this, but not [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]'s steer to me was that any communication to the other bidders should be after the formal signing ceremony and not before, even if the Burmese government have made their formal decision about this and notified the FCO. This may seem overly cautious, but after so many years of negotiating the project in Myanmar and the confusion of the last few months, then I can understand their reservations about doing anything that might upset matters, even at the 11th hour.

Let's speak when matters have progressed.

In the UK we are making arrangements for the film crew who are producing the documentary about the 'Lost Spitfires' to visit towards the end of next week – and I will let you know if we hear any more about the date of the signing ceremony at this end.

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Sent: 01 October 2012 10:39
To: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Subject: RE: Spitfires, update

I had dinner last night with [REDACTED], our academics and the [REDACTED] film crew who were in Leeds shooting footage for their documentary and caught up with the current status of the project. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are of the view that, subject to the availability of the right Burmese officials, the 'signing ceremony' will take place sometime in the next 2 weeks.

[REDACTED]

Many thanks and I will be in touch when I hear more,

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Sent: 16 October 2012 18:51
To: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Cc: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Subject: RE: Spitfires, Signing Ceremony

Have you any news yet on the above? We are all assuming it has happened (or is imminent) but if you can drop me an email at some stage to confirm that would be great.

As soon as the contract is signed, the University is preparing a press release to explain the science behind the discovery – I will send you a copy of this as a courtesy when we issue.

From: [REDACTED] [FCO]

Sent: 17 October 2012 10:41

To: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]

Cc: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]

Subject: RE: Spitfires, Signing Ceremony

Just quickly (I only have 10mins in the office this week!) – the ceremony happened yesterday, was a great success, [REDACTED] looked very happy and the Minister for Transport made a very warm speech, situating this project in the context of our improving bilateral relations. I attended with our DHM (HMA could not go). The documentary crew was on hand to capture it all.

I haven't seen press today but certainly AFP were there, along with lots of domestic media.

I had a good chat with [REDACTED] who was very keen on continued cooperation with the Leeds team, which is an angle that is going to play v well here.

I'd be very grateful for a copy of the press release when it goes out, thank you.

From: [REDACTED] [FCO]

Sent: 18 October 2012 05:10

To: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]

Cc: [REDACTED] [FCO]

Subject: Spitfire media enquiries

Are you happy for us to pass on your contact details for some of the more specific media enquiries we are receiving re Spitfires?

From the Embassy side, we are not of course getting into any details of the digging/how many aircraft etc, but there's obviously lots of interest here in Rangoon.

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]

Sent: 18 October 2012 15:26

To: [REDACTED] [FCO]

Cc: [REDACTED] [FCO, LEEDS]

Subject: RE: Spitfire media enquiries

Yes that would be fine. Can you please refer any media to [REDACTED]? I attach a copy of our press release which has her contact details.

ATTACHMENT:

University of Leeds press release

Release date: 17 October 2012

Leeds researchers help in Spitfires search

University of Leeds geophysicists will advise during the final stages of a search for buried Spitfires in Burma.

They will help carry out a ground investigation to establish whether any of the fighter aircraft exist, and if so, what condition they are in.

The expedition is the culmination of a 15-year investigation led by Lincolnshire farmer and aircraft enthusiast David Cundall, who has eyewitness reports that a number of the aircraft were buried in packing crates at a Burmese airbase at the end of World War Two.

Dr Roger Clark, a senior lecturer in the School of Earth and Environment at the University of Leeds, and Dr Adam Booth (formerly University of Leeds, now Imperial College London, Department of Earth Science and Engineering) will carry out further geophysical surveys to confirm and update data recorded by the Leeds team in 2004.

On 16 October 2012, Mr Cundall signed a contract with the Burmese government giving him the rights to excavate the site and repatriate some of the aircraft, if they exist. It is hoped the ground investigation will start in November after the monsoon season ends.

University of Leeds student Lauren Braidwood, who has just completed an MSc in Exploration Geophysics, will help operate the geophysical equipment, which includes electromagnetic and magnetic systems. An archaeologist and film crew will also join the expedition.

Mr Cundall first sought technical advice from the University in the late 1990s. Surveys led by Drs Clark and Booth in 2004 show large electrical conductivity anomalies, consistent with the expected signature of buried aircraft, at a location that matches Mr Cundall's eyewitness reports.

Dr Clark said: "We know there's something unusually conductive down there – it's not a natural formation. Excavations are required to discover exactly what these anomalies are, but the correlation between the historical and geophysical data is encouraging."

Dr Booth said: "I'm really pleased to see this project finally reaching a conclusion. David has put years of effort into getting to the bottom of this unique story."

For more information:

Please contact Esther Harward, University of Leeds press office, phone +44 113 343 4196 or email e.harward@leeds.ac.uk

Notes to editors:

1. An image used by the University of Leeds on its web page with this press release is of an electromagnetic survey carried out by Drs Clark and Booth at the Burmese site in 2004, with the red areas indicating the highest conductivities, suggestive of buried metal. www.leeds.ac.uk/news
2. The 2008 Research Assessment Exercise showed the **University of Leeds** to be the UK's eighth biggest research powerhouse. The University is one of the largest higher education institutions in the UK and a member of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities. The University's vision is to secure a place among the world's top 50 by 2015. www.leeds.ac.uk
3. The **School of Earth and Environment (SEE)** was ranked second nationally in terms of research power in earth and environmental sciences in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise. The school is at the forefront in tackling global issues such as climate change, energy, water and sustainable development. Its research is

organised across four institutes and two national research centres.

www.see.leeds.ac.uk

4. The **MSc Exploration Geophysics** within SEE is the longest continually-running Master's geophysics course in the UK, specialising in training students for careers in hydrocarbon exploration & production, mineral exploration, and engineering and environmental fields. It gets substantial support and scholarships from industry. Its graduates (25-30 annually) are highly sought-after by oil & gas industries, and it has an 100% job success rate. <http://goo.gl/birgg>

From: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Sent: 18 October 2012 11:42
To: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Cc: [REDACTED] [FCO], [LEEDS]
Subject: RE: Spitfire media enquiries
Thanks- I will do.

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Sent: 26 October 2012 19:04
To: [REDACTED] [FCO]
Cc: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Subject: RE: Spitfires, Signing Ceremony
I hope this finds you well.

You might already know, but [REDACTED] has appointed a PR consultant to handle his media enquiries. [REDACTED] and I are liaising with this person, but details of [REDACTED] media arrangements and dates of the next expedition to Burma are proving difficult to clarify. In light of this I think it's best that journalists go straight to the PR for this kind of info, so I don't accidentally give them the wrong steer. To that end I've copied his details below.

By all means please feel free to keep giving out my contact info as I'm more than happy to share what I know and set up interviews with our geophysicists, who are looking forward to joining the excavation when it finally happens!

PR's contact details:

[REDACTED]

Kindest regards,

From: [REDACTED][FCO]
Sent: 26 October 2012 13:35
To: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Cc: [REDACTED] [LEEDS, FCO]
Subject: RE: Spitfires, Signing Ceremony
Many thanks – we will do. Apologies if you have been bombarded!
Copying to [REDACTED], for info.

From: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]
Sent: 26 October 2012 13:56
To: [REDACTED] [FCO]

Cc: [REDACTED] [LEEDS]

Subject: RE: Spitfires, Signing Ceremony

Sorry for not CCing you [REDACTED].

Not at all. The researchers have had several very good interviews on the back of your referrals [REDACTED] and we've made excellent contacts with national/international newsdesks who we'll keep in touch with leading up to and during the excavation. Given the lack of clarity over the next stages it's probably useful for media to have the University as a second contact, so if it's not trouble please do keep giving out my details!