

Prime Minister

4.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-832 222 218 6169

MO 24/3

19th May 1982

*Fraser
N.B. Have
already spoken
to Chris
not*

*Mr. G. ...
No - this
announcement must
not be made
Dear Sir, Please
Defence
MS*

In the wake of the invasion of the Falkland Islands Defence Ministers have withheld various potentially sensitive announcements concerning defence establishment closures, which would otherwise have flowed naturally from restructuring measures associated with my Secretary of State's White Paper of last June, Cmnd 8288. However, my Secretary of State now believes that such announcements should go ahead, but under close Ministerial control. Against the possibility that any such announcements might be raised with the Prime Minister during Question Time I will ensure that you are informed of each significant one in advance.



The Prime Minister may, therefore, wish to be aware that as part of the continuing search for economies in the Defence training organisation we have been examining the provision for the higher defence training of officers. As a result it has been decided that the National Defence College (NDC) at Latimer, Bucks should be closed after April 1983. It is planned to provide a similar but slightly modified course to that currently given by the Defence Studies Wing of the NDC within the larger premises available at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. Joint Warfare training for United Kingdom personnel which has been carried out at the NDC will be co-ordinated by Ministry of Defence Headquarters and, where necessary, alternative provision will be made for this type of training. Our NATO allies have been informed.

The decision to close the NDC does not signify any lessening in commitment to joint staff training. It will, however, result in the use of spare capacity at Greenwich and significant savings to the defence budget are anticipated. The Latimer estate is to be passed back to the Property Services Agency for disposal either to an outside buyer or, possible, to another Government Department.

M A Pattison Esq



As yet we are not able to give a precise figure of the number of redundancies that will arise from this closure, but it will not be substantial. The establishment at present includes some 83 civilian posts.

It is intended to make the closure announcement in response to an inspired Parliamentary Question on 25th May. Sir Ian Gilmour MP and Guy Barnett MP who have the constituency interest in Latimer and Greenwich respectively will be told of the decision earlier in the day, but both had been forewarned in February of this proposed change.

Yours ever,

Henry Pimper

(D T PIPER) _____



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

24 May 1982

Defence

File AH

~~APP~~ to see

MAO 24/5

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

Dear David,

Derek Piper wrote to Mike Pattison on 19 May 1982 about the proposal to announce the closure of the National Defence College in a Written Answer on 25 May.

I told you on Friday evening of the Prime Minister's strong opposition to this proposal. She raised the matter herself with your Secretary of State at the end of Saturday morning's meeting of OD(SA), and she and Mr Nott agreed that the announcement of the closure should be delayed until the Falkland Islands operation was over.

Yours ever,

Mark Whitmore.

David Omand Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

AH

at 10/60
W.F.S.
28/6



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MO 24/3

28th June 1982

Alan Irvine

[Handwritten signature]

Clive Whitmore wrote to David Omand on 24 May conveying the Prime Minister's strong opposition to the proposal to announce the following day the move of the Joint Services staff course from Latimer to Greenwich and the disposal of the present site. Having discussed this with my Secretary of State the Prime Minister agreed that the announcement should be delayed until the Falkland Islands operation was over.

My Secretary of State feels that with the recapture of the Falklands and the publication of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1982 containing a reference to the consultations about Latimer's closure, it would now be appropriate to end local speculation and announce this measure. Further delay would cause great uncertainty, disrupt plans for the expansion of Greenwich and rundown at Latimer, and result in the temporary loss of a significant savings measure. As I said in my letter to Mike Pattison of 19th May, the measure does not signify any lessening in our commitment to joint staff training and it can be justifiably presented as being of benefit to Greenwich. The provision of Joint Warfare Training after the closure of Latimer is currently being considered in the light of the Falkland Islands operations.

My Secretary of State would be grateful to know if the Prime Minister now agrees to the announcement of the decision to transfer joint service training and to dispose of Latimer next year. The announcement would be made by means of a Written Answer as soon as it could be arranged. Sir Ian Gilmour MP and Guy Barnett MP would be told of the decision earlier in the day, though both were forewarned of this change in February.

Prime Minister

Yours ever
Alan Irvine
(D T PIPER)

Are you content for the transfer of the staff course from Latimer to Greenwich to go ahead, and for the announcement to be made soon by the written answer attached?

Yes

WM 28/6

W F S Rickett Esq



QUESTION:

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist for the future of the National Defence College.

Suggested Answer
(Mr Jerry Wiggin)

The higher defence training of officers on a joint service basis, to which we attach great importance, has recently been reviewed. It has been established that spare capacity at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich could be put to use by the provision there of a joint service staff course. It has therefore been decided to transfer the provision of the joint service staff course to Greenwich from the National Defence College at Latimer and to dispose of of the Latimer site after 1983. Joint Warfare training for United Kingdom personnel will be provided under alternative arrangements.