



10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

- You said that you wanted to have a preliminary talk with Mr. Heseltine about his paper on the "U.K.'s ability to counter the Soviet threat to the U.K. base."
2. I have told the ROO what your main concerns are: you may like to go through the points in my letter (attached).
  3. The Treasury and Home Office wanted their Ministers to attend. I said "no" because this was a preliminary discussion which would not arrive at substantive decisions.
  4. The Defence Secretary would like to bring the CDS.

A.J.C.  $\frac{15}{4}$



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bc AP  
RJ

10 DOWNING STREET

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From the Private Secretary

5 April 1983

THE UK'S ABILITY TO COUNTER THE SOVIET  
MILITARY THREAT TO THE UK BASE

BT | The Prime Minister read with interest your Secretary of State's minute of 24 March and the enclosed assessment of the United Kingdom's ability to counter the Soviet military threat to the UK base. She would like to discuss these papers with Mr. Heseltine at an early date (and we shall make arrangements separately for a meeting).

You should know that the Prime Minister was particularly struck by:

- (a) the statement in paragraph 18 that our ground defence forces are short of 40,000 men, that stocks of small arms are inadequate and that we are severely deficient in nuclear biological and chemical equipment, survivable communications and protected war headquarters;
- (b) the observation in paragraph 23 that "no measures are planned at present to control non-Soviet Warsaw Pact shipping in peacetime";
- (c) the description in paragraph 26 of the shortcomings in our present air defences and the statement in paragraph 27 that, despite the modernisation of the air defence system which is now in hand, stocks of modern air-to-air missiles will still be inadequate;
- (d) the judgement in paragraph 28 that our ability to withstand a determined Warsaw Pact attack is questionable and that we must expect the threat to increase with time;
- (e) the reference later in that paragraph to our continued over reliance upon plans to return units based overseas;
- (f) the observation in paragraph 29 that we have no plans for NBC protection for the civil population.

/ Your Secretary

Your Secretary of State pointed out in his covering minute that we were investing heavily in a substantial range of improvements to our capability and that the case for spending more of the available resources on the defence of the UK base would need to be looked at alongside the contribution to deterrence of other competing defence programmes.

I am copying this letter to Tony Rawsthorne (Home Office), John Kerr (HM Treasury), Brian Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

A. J. COLES

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

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