



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
 MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1  
 Telephone 01-~~2207022~~ 218 6169

D/S of S/PS/20/164/1

13th December 1984

Dear Tim,

Charles  
 NBPM, I think  
 Any obs?  
 T.

The House of Commons Defence Committee published its Report on "The Physical Security of Military Installations in the United Kingdom" (HC 397) on 26th July. The Defence Secretary proposes that the Government Observations on the Report should be published as a Command Paper on Thursday 10th January, the day after the House reassembles following the Christmas Adjournment.

I attach a copy of the draft Observations, which have been prepared in consultation with Home Office officials and the Treasury Solicitor. The Observations, you will note, fall into three main sections, mirroring the structure of the Defence Committee's report:

- a. security at nuclear bases;
- b. security at the Royal Ordnance Factories; and
- c. the Ministry of Defence Police.

I would be grateful if you could confirm that the Prime Minister is content for the draft Observations to be published as a Command Paper on Thursday 10th January 1985. Copies of this letter and the attached draft go to Nigel Pantling (Home Office), Alan Davies (Department of the Environment), Charles Marshall (Lord Privy Seal's Office), Murdo MacLean (Chief Whip's Office), Bernard Ingham, and Richard Hatfield in Sir Robert Armstrong's Office.

Yours ever,  
 Barry  
 (B P NEALE)

T Flesher Esq

SECOND REPORT FROM THE DEFENCE COMMITTEE -

THE PHYSICAL SECURITY OF MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Observations presented by the Secretary of State for Defence

1. The House of Commons Defence Committee published its report on the Physical Security of Military Installations in the United Kingdom on 26 July 1984. The Government welcomes this report and notes that the Committee shares its view of the high importance of maintaining the security of defence assets against a wide range of potential threats.

2. The Government notes that the report concentrates on three main issues: the security of nuclear bases, the security of the Royal Ordnance Factories and the Ministry of Defence Police. The Committee have made a number of recommendations which are the subjects of detailed comments in the following paragraphs. But in general the Government agrees with the broad thrust of the Committee's comments, though not necessarily with all the specific recommendations. In particular, as the Committee have noted, a decision in principle to retain the Ministry of Defence Police at the Royal Ordnance Factories for at least some time after their change of status, has already been taken.

Security of Nuclear Bases

3. One of the principal points highlighted in the Committee's report is the recent emergence of a threat to security from protest groups when taking physical action, often deplorably of an illegal nature, to express their opposition to the Government's policies on nuclear weapons.

4. The Government shares the Committee's concern that the practice of forcibly entering nuclear bases for the purpose of a protest could give increased scope to terrorists and other violent extremists. Ministers have drawn attention publicly to the gross irresponsibility of the organisers of demonstrations who encourage attempts at forcible entry and to the potential danger to life which such acts entail. As the Committee notes, guard forces at all nuclear sites are prepared at all times for armed attack by terrorists and saboteurs and are appropriately armed to meet such threats. These guard forces are put on enhanced alert when demonstrations take place. Security personnel are instructed to exercise vigilance to identify in advance groups of protestors who might constitute a potential danger.

5. The Government notes the Committee's observation that it believes that incursions into nuclear bases by protestors have been unacceptably frequent, and its recommendations that means should be sought to keep them to a minimum. In its evidence to the Committee the Ministry of Defence made clear its view that incursions through perimeter fences were not in themselves necessarily serious breaches of security provided that sensitive areas and equipments within such bases remained securely guarded; such highly guarded areas have not been penetrated.

6. The Government shares the Committee's view of the importance of keeping incursions to the minimum by the flexible use of physical and manpower security arrangements, so as to ensure that confronta-

tions do not ensue between demonstrators and armed guards charged with the protection of sensitive equipment; and the Government recognises the validity of the Committee's observation that unacceptably high numbers of incursions, though in themselves posing no threat to security, could lead to unfounded fears as to the genuine security of nuclear installations. The Ministry of Defence has continually sought means of keeping such incursions to a minimum. As the Committee has noted, however, airfields in particular have very long perimeters - that at Greenham Common being 9 miles long - and an absolute assurance that all attempts at incursions could be prevented at all possible sites of demonstrator activity could be achieved only by the diversion of very substantial financial and manpower resources from other high priority defence tasks. The Government has preferred to deal with the problem posed by demonstrations in the most flexible and economic manner by concentrating additional security measures including reinforcement and physical improvements at times and at bases where events made them necessary and will continue with this policy.

7. The Ministry's arrangements have had to take account of changing patterns of demonstrator activity; for example while in 1983 such activity was characterised by a small number of very large demonstrations at particular sites, 1984 has so far seen a pattern of smaller scale local activities at a wide variety of Defence establishments, not all of them predictable in advance.

8. The Government welcomes the Committee's support for its policy of keeping to a minimum contact between US Service personnel and anti-nuclear demonstrators, although it is not possible to give an absolute assurance that demonstrators will never encounter US personnel. The main priority must therefore be to ensure that demonstrators do not penetrate to sensitive areas where armed United States personnel are concentrated. Where temporary deployments of UK personnel are necessary for this purpose, this will, as the Committee recommends, be done. The Ministry of Defence and the United States Military Authorities in this country both recognise the importance of preventing such confrontations.

9. The Government notes the Committee's observation that where possible Ministry of Defence Police or RAF Police should be responsible for handling unauthorised intruders rather than ordinary Servicemen; and that if necessary police manpower should be increased. This observation accords with the Ministry of Defence's policy that demonstrators should wherever possible be dealt with by Ministry of Defence Police, (or by RAF Police on those RAF stations where they are normally deployed) and this policy is reflected in the recent decision to establish a police reserve unit and extra complements at locations previously without MDP (see also paragraphs 30-31). But it would be an uneconomical use of manpower to increase police complements to the level where they could deal without reinforcement with the very few major demonstrations that take place. For such occasions it remains the Ministry's view that the most sensible solution is temporary police reinforcement supplemented as necessary

by unarmed Servicemen acting in their support. (The broader question of Ministry of Defence Police numbers is discussed in paragraphs 29-31).

10. The Government notes the Committee's view that "lasting improvements" should be made in the security of establishments storing nuclear weapons or materials. The Government wishes to stress that in more than 30 years in which nuclear weapons and associated materials have been deployed in the UK there has been no unauthorised penetration into the areas where they are stored.

11. The Committee's report discusses perimeter security at Greenham Common as the key to maintaining the security of the storage area. The Government accepts the importance of providing adequate perimeter security, but it does not accept that the relationship between that and the security of sensitive areas is necessarily as direct as the Committee describes; or that perimeter security at all establishments containing storage areas should be based on experience at RAF Greenham Common. As the Committee notes the Ministry of Defence takes the view that it is neither practical nor cost effective to attempt to provide a level of security which could guarantee to prevent unauthorised entry of the outer perimeter to all establishments which contain such storage areas within their boundaries; and that resources should be concentrated primarily on preventing access to sensitive areas within establishments. Adjustments to the level of security provided must be related to the character of the establishments, the level and nature of the security threat and the importance of the assets to be protected.

12. Accordingly improvements in security provision at the relevant Royal Navy and Royal Air Force establishment in the last five years have been made to meet specific requirements. These improvements have included physical security measures and changes to the procedures and training of the guard forces. Further arrangements are in hand to achieve lasting improvements to the current state of security. The Government is playing an active part in joint work at official level under the auspices of the NATO Ministerial Nuclear Planning Group to improve procedures and training for guard forces throughout the Alliance including those at British bases. There is a well established programme of routine evaluations of security at such bases. This programme is being enhanced by further tests to counter the known capabilities of terrorists. Thus development of revised and expanded NATO procedures will maintain the uniformity of standards at nuclear storage sites noted by the Committee but will allow sufficient flexibility for the requirements of individual sites to be met.

13. The Government notes the recommendation that weldmesh fencing, supported by appropriate intruder alarm systems should be installed at RAF Greenham Common and a number of other sites. The Ministry of Defence agrees that perimeter security would be enhanced by these means against certain kinds of threat, particularly that represented by protest groups. But, as the Committee noted, the cost of any such measures would be substantial; and to constitute an effective barrier the fencing must be supplemented by intruder detection devices and adequate manpower. The use of weldmesh and associated

measures is already planned at the Clyde Submarine Base. Further trials have taken place, the initial results of which are encouraging and the evidence is now being reviewed before final decisions are taken on the implementation of weldmesh at Greenham Common and elsewhere.

14. The Government notes the Committee's recommendations that the civil police, as well as playing the principal security role outside base perimeters - a recommendation with which they wholly agree - should, in the event of major incursions, provide assistance within the perimeter when this is necessary; and that in certain circumstances the Ministry of Defence should defray part of their costs.

15. The Government is concerned that the Committee's recommendations, if put into effect, would not be the most efficient and effective way of providing reinforcements in the circumstances which the Committee envisage. The Civil Police can assist with policing inside the perimeter at RAF Greenham Common; under the common law, they have the power to enter in order to deal with or prevent a breach of the peace. They could also enter at the invitation of the Ministry of Defence to assist the MDP or RAF Police. Once there, the Civil Police would still have their Constabulary powers: broadly speaking their position would be no different from members of the MDP or RAF Police. But the question which the Committee raises is whether, as a matter of policy, the MOD should look to the Civil Police, rather than Servicemen, to act as reinforcements during large scale disturbances. Generally the police look to the owners of vulnerable or dangerous property to take their own precautions to secure their premises. There are, of course, occasions where operational considerations lead the Civil Police to make deployments on private property. For example, in an emergency they may have to enter private property of their own volition because of their perception of the threat to public order



or they may agree with the owner of land or premises to take up a position within the property. In the Government's view, however, the scope for such actions or arrangements does not justify the adoption of a policy of relying on emergency reinforcement by Civil Police within the perimeter of a military installation.

16. Whilst it may be desirable that the first 2 lines of defence of a military base should be provided by the Police (the Civil and MDP or RAF Police), it is not, in the Government's view, unreasonable that those who breach those defences should then find themselves confronted by Servicemen. Moreover, the operational dispositions are such that the only practical way of providing short term, large scale emergency reinforcement of a base is through the use of Servicemen. In the sort of circumstances which are envisaged, it is highly likely that the resources of the Civil Police would be as badly stretched as those of the MDP and RAF Police. It must also be remembered that a decision whether to commit Civil Police Officers in such a way rests not with the Government, but with the Chief Officer of the Police Force involved. He will be rightly concerned to ensure that his force acts, and is seen to act, impartially. While liaison between the Civil Police and MDP and RAF Police is obviously important, it would not be proper for Government policy to anticipate Chief Officers' decisions on how to deploy the police officers in their command.

17. The Committee's proposal would also pose practical difficulties for command and control of security activities within the perimeter of bases during demonstrations. The task of military base Commanders in such circumstances is clearly facilitated if they can exercise close operational control of reinforcing personnel, as at present, but as a matter of law, the police may not subject themselves to the operational control of others.

18. The Government notes the Committee's recommendations that the Rules of Engagement issued to armed servicemen at bases where nuclear weapons may be present and the manner in which they are issued should be made identical for British and American servicemen. Under the NATO Status of Forces Agreement governing the conditions under which US units are based in the UK, the Americans are responsible for security at the bases they use. This responsibility extends to the rules governing the carriage and use of fire arms by members of guard forces on duty. US security personnel follow the same basic principles as UK personal: and they are required to use the absolute minimum force necessary in a situation; they are subject to and must act within UK law. There are, however, detailed differences in the orders and procedures of British and American guards at nuclear sites. The detailed procedures for US forces are designed to enable their servicemen to adapt easily to different conditions throughout the world; and with this in mind the Americans prefer to rely on oral instructions. Thirty years of responsible conduct under the Status of Forces Agreement attest to the adequacy of the arrangements hitherto. Nevertheless, the Government is in close and regular contact with the US authorities on security matters particularly given the increased activity of the protest movement and following the Committee's recommendation, will discuss further what more might be done to align procedures.

19. The Ministry of Defence also takes note of the Committee's comments on the effect of the differences between English and Scottish Law. As Ministers explained in evidence to the Committee

this comparison raises complex issues affecting statute and common law in England and Scotland. Careful consideration of the legal consequences will be needed before any measures are taken to introduce changes. Ministers are examining the implications of the Committee's recommendation in consultation with their colleagues.

20. The Government notes the Committee's view that the Government should publicise more details of the security arrangements which will be in force when armed cruise missiles are deployed off-base during a period of tension. Ministers have made it clear that the joint Defence Force of US Air Force and RAF Regiment personnel exists to protect cruise missile flights on and off-base in both peace and war. As the Committee has noted, live missiles will not be carried during peacetime training exercises. It should not normally be necessary, therefore, for the accompanying elements of the Joint Defence Force to be armed with live weapons. For operational deployments during a period of tension or war both the British and American personnel in the Joint Defence Force would be appropriately armed to protect the deployed cruise missiles from attack. Detailed contingency arrangements exist for such operational deployments but the Government considers these must be kept secret for overriding reasons of security and to preserve the validity and effectiveness of the system as a deterrent.

21. On a specific point the Government notes the Committee's views on the MDP detachment at RAF St Mawgan. The purpose of this detachment is to provide a small on the spot force with constabulary

powers to deal with minor no-notice incidents and to provide a nucleus of police officers with local knowledge and experience which could be rapidly and effectively reinforced. The detachment at RAF St Mawgan is one of several similar small detachments introduced at a number of military establishments earlier this year as part of the continuing effort to improve the security response to the activities of protest groups. It is intended to review the effectiveness of these detachments in the Autumn.

#### Security at the Royal Ordnance Factories

22. The Government, together with (following Vesting Day) the Board of Royal Ordnance plc, will take decisions on the future arrangements for guarding and physical security at Royal Ordnance Factories (ROFs) in the light of the requirements of the authorities responsible for the issue of licences under the Firearms Act 1968 and the Explosives Act 1875 and following consultation as appropriate with Parliament and others.

23. Following Vesting Day, the Ministry of Defence will continue to monitor security arrangements and, through contractual arrangements, will require the company to meet the level of security which it considers necessary. Subject to these procedures which will be kept under review, responsibility for satisfying the requirements of the licensing authorities, will rest with the Board of the Company.

24. The Government will not withdraw the Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) from any ROF until it is satisfied that a company guard force is available that can, in conjunction with other measures of physical security, provide effective and adequate protection there. On this basis it is planned that MDP will be retained at all factories for at least three years; the question of further extension of this period will be considered at a suitable time. The Committee's detailed observations and recommendations will be taken fully into account in the preparation of any proposals for a company guard force.

25. As is the practice for companies engaged in work for the Ministry of Defence, Royal Ordnance plc will appoint a security controller at Headquarters with any necessary support. Factory security officers will be appointed either full-time or part-time, with support if appropriate, according to the needs of security at individual factories. Account will be taken in these arrangements of the continuing presence of the MDP and the continuing responsibilities of the Ministry of Defence.

26. Action is in hand to enhance physical security at ROFs in the light of discussions with the civil police forces concerned and the Health and Safety Executive following the recent police surveys.

27. The Government notes the recommendations of the Committee about the minimum number of guards on duty at any one time. Manning levels will be determined in relation to all relevant factors

including the current perceived threat, the tasks to be performed, the physical security arrangements, the size and nature of the site, and its remoteness and the availability of back up support. The frequency of stopping and searching of both personnel and vehicles is being reviewed. Arrangements are being made for regular exercises to test the security of each of the factories.

28. The Government was particularly concerned to read the Committee's comments about security at the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield even though, as the Committee recognised, plans for a substantial programme of improvements for physical security were well advanced when the Committee began its enquiry. These plans are being extended in the light of the recommendations of the Metropolitan Police survey of security at Enfield, and the specific weaknesses to which the Committee drew attention are being remedied. The Government has increased the complement of Ministry of Defence Police at Enfield and there are now more MDP officers there than at any time in the last decade.

#### The Ministry of Defence Police

29. The Committee discussed in extenso the roles and size of the Ministry of Defence Police, and the particular and valuable contribution the force makes to ensuring the security of defence assets.

30. The Committee have highlighted a number of problem areas in the Ministry of Defence Police among which is the overstretch being

generated in a force now faced with the more extreme activities of the anti-nuclear protest movement. The Government has taken a number of steps designed to rectify the situation, particularly by authorising the forming of a 50 strong reserve unit for flexible deployment to establishments under threat from major demonstrations, and the establishment of an MDP presence at several establishments where previously there had been none.

31. These measures may not be sufficient to cure the problem of overstretch, particularly given the decision to retain MDP at the Royal Ordnance Factories; nor do they address some of the other problems highlighted by the Committee such as the statutory basis under which the MDP operate. It has therefore been decided to commission an independent and wide-ranging study of all aspects of the Ministry of Defence Police to formulate a long term strategy for the force's future role, composition and size. Term of Reference for the study are being drawn up. Meanwhile steps will be taken to set up a second reserve unit as soon as manning levels permit.

### Conclusion

32. Security is a subject which permeates virtually all areas of the work of the Ministry of Defence and impinges on other government departments. The Government attaches great importance to the maintenance of appropriate security standards at defence installations while ensuring that the resources devoted to security are deployed in the most cost-effective manner and against the most likely threat. The Government's view is that its general approach

to security is sound and feels that this is largely supported by what is said in the Committee's report. It is nevertheless accepted that in certain specific areas the Committee have identified weaknesses. The fact that they have done so, and that the Government has been prepared to take prompt action to rectify them is , as the Committee say in their report, a vindication of the Select Committee system.