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CC(83) 1st
Conclusions

CABINET

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet
held at 10 Downing Street on
THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER 1983
at 11.00 am

P R E S E N T

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon Lord Hailsham
Lord Chancellor

The Rt Hon Viscount Whitelaw
Lord President of the Council
(Items 1 and 2)

The Rt Hon Nigel Lawson MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department

The Rt Hon Peter Walker MP
Secretary of State for Energy

The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph MP
Secretary of State for Education and Science

The Rt Hon Nicholas Edwards MP
Secretary of State for Wales

The Rt Hon George Younger MP
Secretary of State for Scotland

The Rt Hon John Biffen MP
Lord Privy Seal

The Rt Hon Patrick Jenkin MP
Secretary of State for the Environment

The Rt Hon Norman Tebbit MP
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP
Secretary of State for Social Services

The Rt Hon Tom King MP
Secretary of State for Employment

The Rt Hon Lord Cockfield
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

The Rt Hon Peter Rees QC MP
Chief Secretary, Treasury

The Rt Hon Michael Jopling MP
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

The Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley MP
Secretary of State for Transport

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon John Wakeham MP
Parliamentary Secretary, Treasury

The Rt Hon Baroness Young
Minister of State, Foreign and
Commonwealth Office

Mr John Stanley MP
Minister of State for the Armed Forces,
Ministry of Defence

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr A D S Goodall (Items 2 and 3)
Mr D F Williamson (Items 2 and 3)
Mr C J S Brearley (Item 1)
Mr R Watson (Item 1)

C O N T E N T S

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PARLIAMENTARY
AFFAIRS

1. The Cabinet were informed of the business to be taken in the House of Commons during the following week.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that the debate on 31 October on the deployment of intermediate range nuclear forces would be a difficult one. It was necessary for the Government to explain their policy fully and firmly and to secure an overwhelming vote in support.

FOREIGN
AFFAIRS

Grenada

Previous
Reference:
CC(83) 30th
Conclusions,
Minute 2

2. THE MINISTER OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE (BARONESS YOUNG), said that the Prime Minister of Dominica, Mrs Charles, had claimed that the Governor General of Grenada, Sir Paul Scoon, had requested military assistance from the Organisation of East Caribbean States (OECS) prior to the current military intervention in the island. The Queen had no knowledge of any such request and a statement was being issued by Buckingham Palace to this effect. There were conflicting reports as to whether the Governor General had made any request for assistance before the intervention or had welcomed it after it had taken place, but the British Government had had no knowledge of any such request and there was no firm evidence that one had been made. The Governor General was now back in Grenada.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES said that after some initial American reluctance there had now been a meeting between the United States force commander and the senior Royal Navy officer in the area at which it had been made clear that the United States force had encountered much fiercer resistance on Grenada than had been expected. There had proved to be more than a thousand Cuban combat troops on the island, and 11 United States helicopters had been lost in the fighting. The Americans believed that Cuban troops were withdrawing to camps in the interior with a view to carrying on guerilla warfare. A consular team from the British High Commission at Bridgetown headed by the Deputy High Commissioner had not yet been allowed access to Grenada, but six United Kingdom nationals had been evacuated under American arrangements the previous day. Meanwhile an Royal Air Force Hercules aircraft from Belize was in Barbados on a contingency basis in case it was needed for evacuation purposes.

In discussion it was emphasised that no formal request for military assistance had been received by the United Kingdom from the OECS. Oral statements by the Prime Minister of Barbados (which was not a member state of the OECS) to the British High Commissioner in Bridgetown that such a request would be made in writing on 23 October had not been followed up and had been overtaken by the meeting that day of the Caribbean Community (Caricom) at which there had been a majority decision in favour of the application of political and economic sanctions to Grenada but against any military intervention. There had been intensive contact between the British Embassy in Washington and the United States Administration over the weekend of 22-23 October, and the Americans had given no indication that a decision to intervene militarily was imminent. When the British Deputy High Commissioner in Barbados accompanied by two American consular officials had called on the Governor General of Grenada on 23 October the Governor General

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had made no request for military assistance. It appeared that the provisional American decision to launch the military intervention had been taken on the afternoon (Washington time) of 24 October, at a meeting which ended very shortly after the Prime Minister received President Reagan's first message; and the final decision had been taken shortly thereafter. Concern was expressed at the failure of the United States Administration to take the British Government into its confidence about their plans for intervention, which must have been prepared well in advance of the decision to implement them. At the same time it was recognised that security considerations would have necessitated keeping such plans as secret as possible. From an American perspective the intervention might well appear politically justified, but it was hard to defend in terms of international law and difficult to reconcile with the contention that the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation threatened no one. There was no comparison with Britain's military action in the Falkland Islands, which had been taken in defence of international law and to protect British citizens. The American action in Grenada had struck a powerful anti-American chord with British public opinion. Many of the Government's own supporters were unhappy at the inadequacy of the consultation which had preceded the American decision and the Government's refusal to condemn it outright. But, despite its membership of the Commonwealth and link with the Crown, Grenada was a fully independent country in which British interests were not directly engaged and for which the United Kingdom Government had no residual responsibility. There had been no obligation on the United States to seek British advice, or to accept it if sought; nor was condemnation appropriate as between close allies.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that there was no need to rake over the detailed events leading up to the military intervention in Grenada. The Government had received no formal request for assistance from the OECS and had made their reservations about the proposed action clear to the United States Government. That advice had been sound. The United States for their part had exercised their right to take a different view on an issue which directly touched their national interests. But Britain's friendship with the United States must on no account be jeopardised. The position taken by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in the House of Commons, on which he was to be congratulated, had struck the right balance. It would not be consistent with that position to join the United States in voting against the draft resolution condemning the American action which Guyana was tabling in the United Nations Security Council, but it would be right for Britain to abstain - expressing to the United States Government the hope that the United States might likewise see fit to abstain on the Argentine-sponsored resolution about the Falkland Islands, for which they were likely to vote in favour. If British help were sought to organise free elections in Grenada, the request could be considered. Meanwhile, however, Britain should avoid becoming involved in the situation there.

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The Cabinet -

1. Invited the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to send instructions to the United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the United Nations in the terms indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.

Lebanon

THE MINISTER OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE, said that the Foreign Ministers of the states contributing to the multinational force (MNF) in the Lebanon were meeting in Paris that day. The purpose of the meeting was to demonstrate that the contributing states would not be deterred by the attacks against the United States and French contingents which had taken place on 23 October; and, looking further ahead, to consider how best to create conditions in which the MNF could properly be withdrawn. Meanwhile, the ceasefire was holding. The Greek and Italian observer force would not be in place for some days.

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES said that the Commander in Chief, United Kingdom Land Forces, General Sir Frank Kitson, had returned the previous day from a visit to the British contingent to the MNF and had submitted a valuable report. His recommendations for improving the security of the British contingent were being implemented urgently. The main improvement would be to divert the road which at present ran alongside the British headquarters and which carried traffic of the kind which had been used in the suicidal attacks on the American and French contingents. In addition, action would be needed to improve the security of the offices of the British Embassy, where some American diplomatic officials were also accommodated.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that all the measures necessary to improve the security of British military and civilian personnel in the Lebanon must be taken without delay.

The Cabinet -

2. Took note.

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COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Community Budget and United Kingdom Refunds

Previous Reference: CC(83) 30th Conclusions, Minute 3

3. THE MINISTER OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE (BARONESS YOUNG), said that the discussion of the post-Stuttgart negotiations at the Anglo-French Summit on 20-21 October had been conducted in a good atmosphere. The French had remained firm in opposing the concept of net contributions and the strict financial guideline for agricultural expenditure. It seemed clear, however, that they expected to make concessions on the correction of the budget inequity in return for some relaxation of United Kingdom demands on agricultural spending. The French were keen to find some common ground on new policies, particularly in the industrial sphere. Further contacts were being arranged. There had also been some discussion of the progress of the post-Stuttgart negotiations at the informal meeting of Community Foreign Ministers on 22-23 October.

THE MINISTER OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE, also reported that the European Parliament would now be voting on the inclusion of the United Kingdom's 1983 refunds in the 1984 budget. It was expected that they would vote to put the 1983 refunds and 5 per cent of the agricultural budget provision into the reserve chapter.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that in the margins of the Council of Ministers (Finance) on 24 October he had learnt that the Germans were planning to table an unhelpful rival paper to the United Kingdom's own paper on the budgetary "safety net". He had told Herr Tietmeyer, the Federal German Chancellor's Personal Representative, of his objections. The Prime Minister had also approved an approach by Her Majesty's Ambassador in Bonn. As a consequence, the Germans had deferred the tabling of their paper and had made a more careful oral presentation. He expected to have further discussions with Herr Tietmeyer on 31 October.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that the negotiating prospects for the European Council on 5-6 December did not seem to be improving. In addition, the French considered that, if there were no agreement at Athens in December, the difficulties of compromise could be greater in the period running up to the European Parliament elections.

The Cabinet -

Took note.

Cabinet Office

27 October 1983