



(5)

PRIME MINISTER

*Bonnie Amster*  
*Paul*

HOME DEFENCE REVIEW

During the next few weeks we shall as a Government have to take some major decisions about the state of home defence. Home defence in this context means rather more than what used to be called civil defence: it embraces the whole range of the nation's readiness for war; it is closely related to military readiness, since adequate civil preparedness is essential to our deterrent strategy.

In 1968, expenditure on home defence was reduced by two thirds, and it was put on a care and maintenance basis. It now costs about £22m a year, mainly on the warning organisation, food stockpiles and planning by local authorities and Government Departments.

Revised NATO assumptions about a shorter warning period and a longer period of conventional war, together with our Party commitment, prompted me last Summer to initiate a review of home defence arrangements. The recent upsurge of public concern on the subject has obliged me to accelerate the review.

On 20 February there was an adjournment debate initiated by Robert Banks. And on 4 March there was a debate in the Lords, initiated by Lord Clifford of Chudleigh. We have responded to these and other expressions of Parliamentary concern by reference to the review, by seeking to encourage more use of volunteers within the local government framework, and by a new willingness to be open about these issues and their cost. I believe that this last point is particularly important.

I have let it be known that I hope to announce the outcome of the review soon after the Easter Recess. Meanwhile, arrangements have been made for OD to consider a report by the Official Committee on Home Defence on 20 March. We may well decide that we need to spend a little more money in this area (but probably not very much), and if so OD will need to consider whether offsetting savings can be found.

I am sending a copy of this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Defence Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*[Handwritten signature]*  
6 March 1980

7 MAR 1960

12  
11  
10  
9  
8  
7  
6  
5  
4  
3  
2  
1





to be  
reference

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

10 March 1980

~~B/F 19/380~~  
~~2/209~~

The Prime Minister has seen the Home Secretary's minute of 6 March about the Home Defence Review. She has noted that these matters are scheduled for discussion in OD on 20 March.

I am sending copies of this letter to George Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Brian Norbury (Ministry of Defence), John Wiggins (HM Treasury) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. A. PATTISON

J.A. Chilcot, Esq.,  
Home Office.

9.