



Ref. A02095

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PRIME MINISTER

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Civil Preparedness for Home Defence

(OD(80) 40)

BACKGROUND

The Home Secretary has circulated this paper and the attached draft statement on the Home Defence Review to follow up the conclusions of the OD discussion on 20th March. The Secretary of State for Scotland has been invited for this item because of his responsibilities for civil defence in Scotland. The Secretary of State for the Environment has been invited because of the references to local authorities. A number of other Cabinet members have Departmental interests in the subject of civil home defence, but their attendance is not necessary on this occasion. At the OD meeting on 20th March it was agreed that officials should complete their study of the problem of civil defence preparedness in order to provide a comprehensive basis for further Ministerial decisions. The first step in this work is to turn the existing JIC assessment of the threat into a set of agreed assumptions to provide a basis for Departmental home defence planning.

HANDLING

2. You will wish to invite the Home Secretary to introduce his memorandum. You may then care to invite the Secretary of State for Scotland to comment on the Scottish aspects of his proposals and the Secretary of State for the Environment to speak on the local authority aspects. You may also wish to ask for any comments from the Secretary of State for Defence, particularly in view of the interest shown in this subject by Government supporters during the defence debate on 28th-29th April. You may also care to invite the Chancellor of the Exchequer to speak on the financial aspects. You will recall that at the previous OD discussion he said that the Treasury felt that there was a great deal more work to be done by officials before Ministers should be asked to take major decisions.

3. The Home Secretary's proposals in this memorandum do not generally go beyond what OD already agreed at its previous discussion on 20th March. You may therefore care to concentrate the discussion on his proposed draft statement, particularly the following points:-





- (a) Will the proposed draft statement be considered to be a sufficient response by the Government to the threat even as a first step?
- (b) Although the measures covered in the draft statement are relatively modest, will they not create an expectation of more major steps in the future? Is it right to create this expectation in view of the public expenditure implications?
- (c) Is there a risk that a statement along these lines will arouse political disquiet rather than dispel it?

CONCLUSIONS

4. Subject to points made in discussion, you may wish to guide the Committee to agree to -

- (a) Authorise further studies by officials on the remaining options on industrial planning and on shelter and disposal (in effect OD has already taken this decision following its 20th March discussion).
- (b) Note that the outcome of the studies will need to be considered in the light of expenditure priorities.
- (c) Agree to the Home Secretary's proposed draft statement.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

6th May, 1980