

Ref. A08038

PRIME MINISTER

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Statement on the Defence Estimates 1982

(C(82) 9)

BACKGROUND

The draft Statement on the Defence Estimates (SDE) was briefly considered at OD on 1st April and generally welcomed.

2. The Secretary of State for Defence has taken account of the only two comments made then; he has removed Table 2.2. from Part 2, and he has revised the section on problems outside the NATO area, which is now to be found in paragraphs 229-235.

3. You will also see that the Secretary of State for Defence has included the most recent assessment of the numbers of Russian SS20 missiles deployed within range of targets in Europe (paragraph 303).

4. The Secretary of State for Defence will be tabling (at Cabinet) some amendments to the draft Statement designed to take account of the Falkland Islands crisis.

HANDLING

5. The Secretary of State for Defence should be invited to introduce the draft SDE. You will wish to ask whether any member of the Cabinet has any points, and in particular whether the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is content with the treatment of "out-of-area" problems in Chapter 2.

6. You will also wish to consider the date of publication, at present still planned for 28th April, in the light of the Falkland Islands crisis. There is an obvious difficulty about publishing a document of this sort if we are still in the middle of a crisis. The present draft says virtually nothing relevant to the Falklands problem, but clearly it would be premature to attempt any drafting to cover the crisis until the crisis has been resolved. You will wish to ask the Secretary of State for Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Lord President to give their views on timing. You may feel that it would be right to go ahead with early publication and make it clear at the time that the document had been drafted before the crisis broke.

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CONCLUSION

7. You will wish to record the Cabinet's approval of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1982; and their decision on when it should be published.



ROBERT ARMSTRONG

5th April, 1982

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