



MO 21/2/27

PRIME MINISTER

Handwritten signature/initials in blue ink.

Prime Minister.
Content for W NOK to
proceed as he proposes?
Agree the draft loose-leaf
note?
HW

STATEMENT ON THE DEFENCE ESTIMATES

4/1/82

We agreed in Cabinet on 6th April that we would proceed with the printing of the Statement on the Defence Estimates, amended to give further emphasis to our capability for intervention outside the NATO area; but that we would defer a decision on the timing of publication.

2. We also agreed that we should present the Statement as a document prepared before the Falklands invasion and that its publication should therefore take place as soon as possible. The type-setting of the Statement is now complete, and printing will begin early next week. The earliest we can publish is the 28th April, and I believe that we should be ready to release the White Paper on that date. Any delay will make it all the more difficult to present the Statement as having been produced prior to the Argentinian invasion, although a final decision on the release date can be taken as late as 23rd April.

3. I believe, however, that our public presentation would be improved if an additional (loose-leaf) note were inserted as a foreword to the Statement. A draft text is attached. This explains that the Statement was finalised before the Argentinian invasion, and makes clear that events in the South Atlantic have demonstrated the flexibility of our Armed Forces but they in no way detract from the importance of the Government's plans for our future nuclear and conventional force structure.



4. I should be grateful for your agreement to the inclusion of the loose-leaf note in the Statement on the Defence Estimates for 1982, and to a likely publication date of 28th April. Because of printing deadlines, if we are to be ready for publication on 28th April, therefore, I shall need your agreement by Friday 16th April.

5. I am copying this minute to the members of the Cabinet and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

SN

Ministry of Defence

14th April 1982

ANNEX AFOREWORD

1. This Statement on the Defence Estimates was drawn up before the Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands. The speed with which we were able to despatch a large and powerful naval task force to the South Atlantic is a tribute to the professionalism and preparedness of our Armed Forces and of the civilian staff who support them. It is also evidence that our force structure is flexible enough to permit an effective and timely response to developments both within and outside the NATO area.

2. At the time of writing, our eyes are fixed firmly on events in the South Atlantic. Nevertheless, the main threat to the security of the United Kingdom remains the Soviet Union and her Warsaw Pact allies. The best defence against this threat is our continued membership of NATO and the contribution which we make in support of each element of the Alliance's deterrent strategy. Our plans to sustain and improve the capability of our nuclear and conventional forces remain firm and are set out in Chapters 1 and 2 of this Statement.

14th April 1982

APR 1982

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