

'TARZAN' SWINGS IT IN WAR OVER COPTER FIRM



Heseltine . . . scents victory

By TREVOR KAVANAGH, Political Editor

DEFENCE Secretary Michael "Tarzan" Heseltine is set to have swung victory his way in the Cabinet battle over the ailing Westland helicopter firm.

Premier Margaret Thatcher seems to have switched sides in his bitter clash with Industry Secretary Leon Brittan.

The board of near-bankrupt Westland has now demanded details of a Euro-consortium rescue bid set up by Mr Heseltine.

Only a week ago Mr Brittan confidently laid out the "welcome mat" for a £30million bid from the American Sikorsky helicopter giant.

Swallow

Backed by Mrs Thatcher, he insisted that, as a limited company, Westland was free to decide its own commercial fate.

But now Mrs Thatcher has become irritated over what she sees as Mr Brittan's "petulant" attitude to the Heseltine rescue bid.

Mr Heseltine has cancelled a family holiday to Nepal next week to be in at the "bill."

He fears Sikorsky will swallow Westland, then shut down Britain's last military helicopter builder.

Now it is likely Mr Brittan will have the job of promoting the European connection.

Such an about-turn would be a major loss of "face" for Mr Brittan.