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No 10. A.R. 31

(2)

Prime Minister

MO 18/1/1

f.s.

Paul

ant

- 29/6

PRIME MINISTER

BRITISH UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TEST

The first of our underground nuclear tests of the 1980 series was successfully fired at 18.00 hours BST on Saturday 26th April. This was two days later than planned; the delay was caused by unfavourable meteorological conditions at the US Nevada Test Site on the preceding days.

2. The preliminary indications are that the test device achieved its designed nuclear yield of and that the explosion was fully contained, ie there was no venting of radioactive debris. The full records of the test will be available shortly and the subsequent detailed analysis will allow us to judge how well the device operated and how far we have met our objectives. The initial reactions are all favourable.

3. The agreed Press Releases made by the Americans and ourselves on the evening of 26th April have so far occasioned no comment.

4. I am copying this minute to the Home Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

[Handwritten signature]

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT



Defence

10 DOWNING STREET

Mr Whitmore.

The 'event' due to take place in Nevada has had to be postponed ~~to~~ because the weather is unfavourable. The P.A.

should therefore say something along the following lines

"There will ^{probably} be a nuclear test in Nevada sometime within the next 48 hours. The precise timing will depend on the weather conditions."

Ants

-24/4/80



SECRET

36

Ref. A02005

PRIME MINISTER

Cabinet: British Nuclear Test Programme

In his minute to you dated 3rd March the Secretary of State for Defence suggested that you might wish to give the Cabinet advance warning on 24th April that later that day an underground nuclear test would be taking place at the Nevada Test site as part of the British Nuclear Test programme. You agreed to this suggestion.

2. You may care to announce this test to the Cabinet during the Foreign Affairs item tomorrow, in the terms set out in the previous paragraph.

3. For your own information, and not for announcement to the Cabinet, you will recall that this test is the first of the programme of five spread over 1980-81 which the Secretary of State for Defence proposed in his minute to you dated 17th December 1979, to which Mr. Whitmore conveyed your agreement in his letter to Mr. Pym's Private Secretary of 11th January 1980.

(Robert Armstrong)

23rd April, 1980

SECRET



Defence 24

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

5 March 1980

BF for Cabinet
23.4.80

BRITISH NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAMME

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 3 March about the next British underground nuclear test.

She agrees with Mr. Pym's suggestion that she should give the Cabinet advance warning of the test and she will do this on Thursday 24 April, the day of the firing (which you confirmed on the telephone yesterday was not expected to take place until after Cabinet was over).

I am sending a copy of this letter to John Chilcot, George Walden, John Wiggins and David Wright.

C. A. WHITMORE

Brian Norbury, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

SECRET

GB

SECRET

21A



MO 18/1/1

Prime Minister.

no content to do XI later?
If you are, the day to do
it will be Thursday 24 April,
the day of the test. The firing
will not take place until after
Cabinet.

mt

file
400

PRIME MINISTER

BRITISH NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAMME

BAC to TLD-D

on Pt 2
with clause

You earlier agreed (Mr Whitmore's letters of 13th July 1979 and 11th January 1980) to a programme of three UK underground nuclear tests in 1980.

2. Preparations at the Nevada Test Site for the first of these tests are now well advanced. Some parts of the test device have already been dispatched to the United States and the remainder will follow shortly. The assembled device is scheduled to be moved to the emplacement hole by 21st March 1980 in readiness for firing on or about 24th April, and I would now propose to give final clearance for this.

x |

3. You may wish to give the Cabinet advance warning of the test shortly before it takes place. As regards publicity, I propose that we should give no public notice of our intentions but make a Press Announcement simultaneously in the United States and London, immediately after the test has been carried out.

4. I am sending copies of this minute to the Home Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

7.1

Ministry of Defence

3rd March 1980

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4 MAR 1980



POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

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