

**CONFIDENTIAL**

*Mr.*  
*Cabinet.*

Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall  
London SW1

17 March 1982

PS(82) 8

Dear Private Secretary

Security of Ministers Travelling Overseas

Section VI of Questions of Procedure for Ministers (C(P)(79) 1) sets out the procedure which Departments should observe in planning Ministerial visits overseas. In particular, it emphasises the importance of early consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

I should be grateful if all Private Secretaries would ensure that these established procedures are fully observed, in particular so that appropriate measures can be taken to ensure the security of Ministers travelling overseas. The procedures require that when Departments seek the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's approval for overseas visits they should at the same time provide full details of the Minister's proposed travelling plans. If this is done, the security aspects of the proposed visit can be assessed at the same time as political approval is considered.

It is particularly important that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary should be consulted as early as possible about proposed Ministerial visits overseas. This will not only give the FCO time to consult the relevant posts abroad, but it will also allow sufficient time for alternative travel arrangements for a visit to be made if the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has to advise against the proposed plans for security reasons. The security grounds for advice will be given, and, where possible, some indication of the degree of risk. It is, of course, the responsibility of the individual Minister to decide whether to accept or reject such security advice and, in the light of the advice received from the FCO and the appropriate political clearance, responsibility for the practical arrangements rests with Ministers' own Departments.

Departments may like to note that the Security Section of the FCO's Protocol and Conference Department (Colonel P A W G Durrant, tel no 233 5037) is responsible for consulting the Security Service and then advising the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on the security aspects of Ministers' travel overseas. I understand, however, that they are at the moment seldom being provided by Departments with sufficient details on which to base sound advice.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Proposals for Ministerial travel overseas should always include the following details:

- (a) Destination.
- (b) Dates.
- (c) Name of airline, and if possible the flight number and timings.
- (d) Purpose of the visit and likelihood of advance publicity.
- (e) Such programme and accommodation details as may be available.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the other members of the Cabinet, the Chief Whip and the Law Officers. I should be grateful if those Private Secretaries could draw my letter to the attention of all Private Offices in their Departments.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) D J WRIGHT