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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

1 December 1982

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to...

PRESENTATION OF DEFENCE NUCLEAR POLICIES

As you know, the Prime Minister held a meeting on Wednesday 24 November with the Lord President of the Council and other colleagues, at which the Minister of State for Defence for the Armed Forces was present, to discuss the presentation of the Government's defence nuclear policies. The meeting had before it a report by officials including recommendations by the Minister of State for Defence.

2. It was agreed that the Government needed to retain, and increase, the general public acceptance of existing NATO and British nuclear defence capabilities, and widen support both among opinion formers and the general public for the measures needed - Cruise and Trident - to maintain that capability. It was further agreed that the Government's particular concern must be with that section of opinion which, though normally supporting existing nuclear and conventional defence capabilities, was for a variety of reasons worried about Cruise and Trident.

3. The meeting agreed that responsibility for presentation in this field must remain with the Ministers concerned; MOD, FCO and Home Office, with the MOD in the lead. It was noted that this task was an additional responsibility for Ministers who were already hard pressed, and that this was particularly so in respect of the Minister of State for Defence for the Armed Forces. The meeting was, however, in no doubt that Defence Ministers, despite their many other preoccupations, should give the highest priority in the months ahead to putting over the case for the Government's policy.

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Richard Mottram Esq
Private Secretary to the
Secretary of State for Defence

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4. It was noted that the planned first deployment of Cruise missiles to the United Kingdom in 1983 would undoubtedly cause the Government's opponents to step up their efforts, and that the Government would need to respond. The meeting therefore endorsed all the recommendations made by the Minister of State for Defence in paragraph 27 of the report. Every effort should be made to take the initiative in explaining the Government's case, both nationally and locally. Non-Governmental organisations working in this field should be given as much support as possible. It was important that the Government's arguments were not only conveyed to opinion formers, especially the universities, but also put over more effectively to the general public. The meeting endorsed the report's recommendations in that respect, although noting that it would be desirable to assess the results of the opinion polls recently commissioned by the MOD before launching major exercises such as finger post campaigns. Finally, the meeting agreed that the MOD should prepare, on a contingency basis, a further national campaign, not excluding advertising in the national press on the precedent set by the previous Labour administration.

5. In addition, the meeting agreed that a guidance note on the presentation of the Government's nuclear defence policies should be drawn up for circulation to all Ministers. This note, which the MOD should lead in drafting, should be issued as quickly as possible under the Lord President's auspices.

6. I am copying this letter to the private secretaries to the Prime Minister, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; and to Sir Robert Armstrong. The Lord President would be grateful if recipients could restrict its circulation to those who have an operational need to see it.

Done
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D C R HEYHOE
Private Secretary

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