



PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

MT

The Franks Report

Prime Minister
You discussed the gist of this with Sir Robert Armstrong this evening. It is a great pity that the Committee have decided not to provide an informal opportunity for Sir R. Armstrong to advise them on matters of fact or national security.
F.E.R.B.
20.12.

It is still expected that the Report will be delivered by the end of the year, and perhaps even just before Christmas. I understand that the Franks Committee have it in mind that they will let it be known that they have delivered the Report.

This is probably the best course: it would leak anyway.

2. I have been discussing the subsequent arrangements with Sir Antony Acland and Sir Frank Cooper, and what follows is agreed with them.

3. It would in any case be difficult to publish the Report before the House of Commons resumes on 17th January. We think that it would be preferable that it should be published during the first week after the recess. I imagine that you will want to make a statement, the contents of which will depend upon what the Report says. There would be something to be said for postponing the statement until Thursday, 20th January, but I do not suppose that the House of Commons will want to wait that long, and you may think that it would be better to publish on Tuesday, 18th January.

4. I think that this is a case in which no copies should be released to the Press ahead of publication: the Report should be published at 4.00 pm on the day of publication, with copies available in the Vote Office when you sit down.

5. There will of course be intense Press interest in the Report, and reporters will be wanting to question Lord Carrington, Mr. Atkins and Mr. Luce. It will be a kindness to let them have copies a few hours in advance of publication: perhaps at 10.00 am on the day of publication - on the wrong paper.

6. We have considered whether advance copies should go to anyone else, for instance Mr. Ridley; or members of previous Administrations. On balance, we think that it had better stop at the Foreign Office Ministers who resigned at the beginning of April.

7. I suggest that copies should be circulated to the Cabinet about one hour before publication.

Should not
Plus Mr. Knott, on the assumption that he is no longer Secretary of State for Defence (unless he is still Secretary of State for Defence when you receive the report)



8. When you receive the Report, I imagine that you will want to let the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence see copies on a strictly personal basis. I hope that you will agree that copies should also be made available to me, Sir Antony Acland and Sir Frank Cooper or Mr Whitmore, again on a personal basis.

*Amend
not*

9. We shall read it through, to see whether there are any passages whose amendment or deletion we need to suggest on grounds of national security or prejudice to international relations. Though the Committee and its secretariat will, I am sure, have sought to avoid the necessity for such deletions, they do not have the experience which would enable us to be confident that they have succeeded in doing so; and they are not willing to show more than a very few selected extracts to anyone in Government in advance of delivery. It seems likely that they will inadvertently include passages which need to be amended or deleted, in order to protect sources or for some other reason.

10. At Lord Franks's request I set out the reasons why the Government does not avow the existence of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) and the assessments staff. I fear, however, that the Committee are likely to include in their Report explicit references to the JIC and the assessments staff, and some account of how they work. We shall have to consider whether the Report has to be amended so as to remove those references.

11. There is some reason to believe that the Report will not refer in terms to the SIS or to the SIGINT role of GCHQ.

12. The Report will have in any case to be scrutinised for factual accuracy, since when the Report is published, the Government will need to draw attention to any passages whose accuracy it disputes. We have considered whether we should report any factual inaccuracies we find to the Committee, so that they can consider whether they wish to amend the Report. We have come to the conclusion that as a matter of principle we should not do so, since the Government should not accept responsibility for the accuracy of the Report. Nonetheless, if we light upon any particularly glaring and obvious factual



inaccuracies, I propose to let the Secretary know privately and informally, so that he can tell Lord Franks and they can consider what if anything they want to do about them. If we can avoid major disagreements with the Committee on matters of fact, that will be preferable.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

20 December 1982

CONFIDENTIAL



2.6.82

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

THE FRANKS REPORT

The Prime Minister was grateful for your minute of 20 December (A082/0578) about the proposed arrangements surrounding receipt and publication of the Franks Report.

The Prime Minister is generally content with the proposed arrangements. She has commented that we ought to give Lord Carrington, Mr Atkins and Mr Luce somewhat longer notice of the report, and I understand that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has taken the same point, suggesting that they might be given the report as long as forty-eight hours before. Could you please consider this point.

F.R.B.

23 December 1982

Personal and confidential



MS

From the Secretary of the Cabinet

Mr Butler

We do not now
expect the Franks
Report to be delivered
before 31 December,
and perhaps not
until the week
beginning 3 January.

RA

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