



cc - Mr Wicks
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From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO

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Select Committee on Defence

I understand that, in connection with your Committee's inquiry into the defence implications of recent developments relating to Westland plc, you have invited Miss Colette Bowe, Mr M J Michell and Mr J F Mogg of the Department of Trade and Industry and Mr Bernard Ingham and Mr Charles Powell of the Prime Minister's office, to attend and give evidence to the Committee.

All five of these officials gave a full account of their role in these matters to me in the course of my recent inquiry and co-operated fully in my investigation. The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry believe that your Committee will recognise and share their view that it would be neither fair nor reasonable to expect these officials to submit to a second round of detailed questioning, of the kind that would be involved in giving evidence to your Committee.

With the Prime Minister's agreement, however, I am writing to you to say that, if the Committee believed that it would be helpful, I should be ready to accept an invitation to give evidence to the Committee. The basis of my evidence would of course be the comprehensive account of the matters in question which the Prime Minister gave the House of Commons on 23 and 27 January. I would hope, on the basis of my inquiry, to be able to deal as helpfully as possible with the Committee's questions, consistently with the normal conditions of confidence under which my inquiry was conducted.

No doubt you will let me know whether the Committee wishes to invite me to attend and, if so, when.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

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