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BI

Prime Minister  
Agree that British Forces  
Programme Germany can  
now introduce their  
programme? The  
German government is  
content.  
C.D.P.  
24/1

Yes no

MO 3/9/4/1

PRIME MINISTER

NON-COMBATANT EVACUATION FROM GERMANY

You may recall that, during the Anglo-German Summit in April 1983, Chancellor Kohl raised with you proposals from British Forces Germany to brief our Service dependants and other non combatants on the Government's plans to evacuate them from Europe in a major international crisis, including issuing them all with an advisory booklet. The Commanders in Chief in Germany are concerned that without such briefings in peacetime there could be severe problems in implementing evacuation in a crisis, and that morale in peacetime suffers from the present limited knowledge of the plans.

2. Chancellor Kohl was at the time worried about the effect of these proposals on the nuclear debate. I shared his concern, and therefore froze all action on the briefings. Since then British Forces Germany have revised their proposals so that briefings would not be accompanied by any high profile publicity, and would be phased in over a period of months. This is a much lower key arrangement than the recent American briefing practice in Germany, on which the original British proposals were based. There would be no live exercising of the plans.

3. These revised proposals have been put by our Embassy in Bonn to German officials who were for their part content for the briefings now to go ahead. I had a word with Manfred Woerner about this in the margins of last week's Summit who confirmed that he and Chancellor Kohl were content and that he saw no need for them to be consulted more formally.

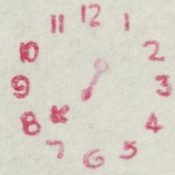


4. I have also considered the possible response domestically. There remains a risk that CND and others might seize upon the briefings and misinterpret them, but that problem is not as acute as it was eighteen months ago. Some unfavourable comparisons might also be drawn with the situation of other British citizens on the Continent, whom the Foreign and Commonwealth Office would be advising to stay put at the time Service dependants were being evacuated. Nevertheless a clear distinction can be drawn between Service families whose head would have been deployed away on active service and other British citizens who would not be divided as a result of the crisis and who may have had earlier opportunities to return to the UK if they had wished. British Forces Germany could not support Service families separated from their head without serious detriment to their operational capability.
5. Our press line in the event of enquiries would be that the briefing programme was a revised and improved form of the information already given to families on the long standing plans to evacuate them from Europe in a crisis. Detailed, defensive press briefings would be prepared by officials and agreed with the Germans.
6. I therefore propose, subject to your views and those to whom I am copying this minute, that British Forces Germany should now introduce their programme in the form they have agreed it with German officials.
7. I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Home Secretary, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Ministry of Defence

22nd January 1985

24 JAN 1985



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QUEEN ANNE'S GATE  
LONDON SW1H 9AT

January 1985

*Dear Michael*

NON-COMBATANT EVACUATION FROM GERMANY

Thank you for copying to me your minute of 22 January to the Prime Minister. I see no difficulty from a Home Office point of view in your proposals.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, Sir Geoffrey Howe and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Lw,  
Lw*

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine, MP

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GERMANY

Anglo / German Relations. P. 3.



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Re: Sir P. Cadock

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

25 January 1985

NON-COMBATANT EVACUATION FROM GERMANY

Your Secretary of State minuted the Prime Minister on this subject on 22 January, proposing that British Forces Germany should now introduce their revised briefing programme on the evacuation of Service dependants and other non-combatants.

The Prime Minister agrees.

I am copying this letter to Colin Budd (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Hugh Taylor (Home Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

(C.D. POWELL)

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

~~CCPC~~

FCS/85/37

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CDP 1571.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCENon-Combatant Evacuation from Germany

1. You minuted to the Prime Minister on 22 January about proposals to brief Service Dependents and other non-combatants about plans to evacuate them from mainland Europe during serious East/West tension. I have also seen the Prime Minister's reply of 25 January.

2. I agree that the programme should go ahead. We are however left with the problem, to which your minute referred, of what to do about other British citizens resident in mainland Europe or travelling there. Notwithstanding its low-key nature, the briefing programme for Service non-combatants you have in mind seems likely to give rise to questions about what plans we have for these other citizens during a crisis. It will therefore be necessary for a line to be prepared for use in the event that the briefing programme causes public comment about the distinction being drawn between Service non-combatants and other civilians. The special treatment accorded to Service civilians might best be justified in terms of the operational difficulties which would be faced by British Forces Germany if they were to stay. The line to take should also emphasise the fact that HMG's precise advice to British citizens in a crisis would be dictated by the circumstances, but that official evacuation might not be practicable for all such citizens in view of the size of British communities abroad and because of the paramount importance of the reinforcement process.

.../3.

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3. I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
15 February 1985

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