

Ref: A09270



Prime Minister 1/1

Content in general with the way Sir Robert is moving?

SECRET AND PERSONAL

PRIME MINISTER

In particular have you any initial reaction to his suggestion at paragraph 4?

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As I have indicated to you, I am contemplating certain changes in the working of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), with a view to -

Agreed

- (i) improving its capacity to provide adequate warning of developing threats to the national interest;
- (ii) increasing the element of independent judgment - independent (that is to say) of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence - on the assessment of intelligence and on the significance of that assessment.

This seems to me a change without much difference except that one that it increases the already large no. of people who would do this

As to the first point, we are discussing an addition to the terms of reference of the JIC which would expressly require it to give early warning of developing foreign threats to British interests, whether political, military or economic. Each member of the Assessments Staff would also be directly charged with a "watch" responsibility for the geographical area with which he was concerned; and one member of the Assessments Staff might be designated as a Warning Officer to keep his attention on all problem areas, to query the perceptions of his colleagues in the Assessments Staff and in other Departments, and generally to ask the awkward questions. The flows of information to the JIC and to the Assessments Staff would be arranged and as necessary increased to make this possible.

Where does he come from?

3. On the second point, I have in mind to propose that, instead of the Chairman of the JIC being provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Intelligence Co-ordinator should become the Chairman. He would be supported by a staff officer, who could well be the Warning Officer referred to in paragraph 2 of this note. The Deputy Under Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who is now the Chairman might become one of two Deputy Chairmen, the other being the Director General of Intelligence, Ministry of Defence. At the same time we should add to the membership of the JIC the Head of the Planning Staff in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office



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and a representative of the Central Staff in the Ministry of Defence. In order to increase the element of independent judgment, I would also add a member of the Cabinet Office defence and overseas policy secretariat to the JIC, and would seek to strengthen the working links between that secretariat and the Assessments Staff.

4. It would be for consideration whether the head of the Foreign Affairs Policy Unit in 10 Downing Street should also be invited to attend; he would obviously need to be in close touch with the intelligence machine, but it might be preferable for him not to become a member of the JIC and thus in some degree committed to its assessments.

5. It will be necessary to discuss these changes with the various people concerned, and that is being put in hand. But the process will not be completed until we are all back in September, and I wanted to give you this advance warning of the way my mind is moving.

Robert Armstrong

9th August 1982