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PRIME MINISTERDEFENCE ORGANISATION

I am coming to see you on 10th November about Chiefs of Staff appointments. I would welcome a word then about higher defence organisation.

2. I am not attracted towards a major reorganisation which would be disruptive and time-wasting when we have massive tasks in front of us as a result of the policy decisions taken earlier this year. Radical change would in any case be politically contentious.

3. As you know, I already have a good deal of work in hand about changes on the financial side and in the procurement field. I propose now to introduce progressively some changes on the military side which will take us further along the road which was started in the 1963/64 reorganisation.

4. The essence of the changes I propose are simple, but their long-term effects would be significant. They are aimed essentially at getting better military advice for the Government than is provided by the current Chiefs of Staff machinery. This is particularly necessary in the resource allocation field. In future, the Chief of the Defence Staff should be seen to be the Principal Military Adviser. The individual Chiefs of Staff should be recognised as the professional heads of their Services giving their own professional



advice rather than being collectively responsible for advising Ministers on overall defence matters. Recommendations to me on appointments and promotions of all three and four-star officers (and the appointment of some two-star officers) would become the responsibility of a Senior Appointments Board chaired by the Chief of the Defence Staff and with the three Service Chiefs of Staff as members.

5. A more detailed note comparing these proposals with the current position is attached. The most sensitive part of the changes involved would be that affecting the Chiefs of Staff Committee. This would continue, but on the basis of providing a forum for the Chief of the Defence Staff to gather his advice rather than as a body offering collective advice. The jobs of the single-Service Chiefs of Staff individually - and their stature - would remain essentially unchanged; they would retain their ultimate right of direct access to you and to me. But the Chief of the Defence Staff would be better placed to give me and other Ministers across-the-board and objective advice.

6. I propose to set work in hand now on working out the detailed arrangements, starting with the Senior Appointments Board. I feel that it would be better to play these changes in low key, and not to make a special public announcement. I am however giving evidence to the House of Commons Defence Committee on the morning of Wednesday 11th November, and if you are in agreement I would intend to indicate to them that there are a number of internal evolutionary changes in hand, in line with the new Ministerial organisation.

7. I would be glad to know if you are content that I should proceed accordingly.

Ministry of Defence

6th November 1981

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*Do LP
- Private Secretary
approved by the Secretary of State
and signed in his
name.*

HIGHER DEFENCE ORGANISATION

1. The Chiefs of Staff Committee (COS) was established on a permanent basis in 1924 following the Salisbury Committee's recommendation (Cmnd 2029) that "each of the three Chiefs of Staff should have an individual and collective responsibility for advising on defence policy as a whole".

2. During the 1950s the Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defence acted as an independent Chairman to the Committee, and in 1958 these posts were combined to form the post of Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS). With the creation of a unified Ministry of Defence in 1964, his role was set out in the White Paper "Central Organisation for Defence" (Cmnd 2097), but not enshrined in legislation.

3. The following table shows the current proposals alongside the current practice deriving from the 1963 model:

<u>Proposal</u>	<u>Current Position</u>
<p>a. CDS should be the principal military adviser to the Secretary of State. In tendering his advice he should take into account the views of the single-Service Chiefs of Staff. Service Chiefs of Staff will continue to have direct access to the Secretary of State as at present.</p>	<p>"The collective advice of the Chiefs of Staff Committee will be tendered by the CDS ... When there is divergence of view between the COS, the CDS will submit the alternatives ... CDS, as the principal military adviser to the Secretary of State, will tender his own advice to the Minister in the light of the views expressed."</p>
<p>b. The single-Service Chiefs of Staff will continue to be the professional Heads of the individual Services. They should give professional advice on single-Service matters and on strategy and military operations and on the military implications of defence policy.</p>	<p>"The Chiefs of Naval, General and Air Staffs will continue to be professional Heads of their own Service."</p>
<p>c. The Chiefs of Staff Committee should be the forum in which the CDS seeks the advice of the single-Service Chiefs of Staff.</p>	<p>"The Chiefs of Staff Committee are collectively responsible to the Government for professional advice on strategy and military operations of defence policy."</p>



d. The central Defence Staff should be directly accountable to the CDS; and CDS should have the responsibility for directing their work and reporting it to the Secretary of State to the individual Chiefs of Staff. The CDS and the central Defence Staff should have right of access to the staffs of the single-Service departments.

e. Recommendation to the Secretary of State on appointments and promotion to all four- and three-star posts (and appointments to some two-star posts) should be made by a Senior Appointments Board under the Chief of the Defence Staff with the other Chiefs of Staff as members.

"The Naval, General and Air Staffs, with the joint Service staffs of the ... MOD, will together constitute the Defence Staff ... They will be responsible to the COS Committee and through its Chairman to the Secretary of State." At present, the COS Committee collectively directs the work of the central Defence Staff (successors to joint Service staffs). Individual Chiefs of Staff direct their single-Service staffs.

"Arrangements will be made to refer to the Secretary of State for decision proposals for the promotion and appointment of senior officers ..."

At present the career of an officer up to the highest ranks is in the hands of his own Service. The single-Service Chiefs of Staff make the recommendations even for key central staff and rotational appointments (eg Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Policy) and UK Military Representative to NATO).

Note: Extracts from Cmnd 2097 are shown in quotation marks.



Defence file AH

COPIED CO. 16/11/81

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

10 November 1981

PERSONAL
MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

Dear David,

DEFENCE ORGANISATION

As you know, your Secretary of State was unable to see the Prime Minister this morning and therefore did not have an opportunity to raise the question of higher defence organisation about which he had minuted her on 6 November 1981.

I subsequently told the Prime Minister that Mr Nott was anxious to get her early clearance for his proposals and she authorised me to say that she is content for him to go ahead on the lines set out in his minute.

We shall be in touch with you to arrange another time for the Prime Minister and Mr Nott to discuss Chiefs of Staff appointments.

Yours truly,

— Anne Whiston

David Omand Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

AH



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~2367028~~ 218 2111/3

MO 20

6th November 1981

Dear Clive,

ML

DEFENCE ORGANISATION

The attached minute from my Secretary of State is relevant to the meeting he is to have with the Prime Minister after E Committee on 10th November, concerning the 'top plot'. I should add that the Chief of the Defence Staff is aware and fully supports the proposals in the attached minute, and the Chief of the General Staff is also in favour of a move in this direction. The other two Chiefs of Staff are not as yet fully in the picture - but it is the intention that this be done early next week. I make this last remark in the knowledge that the Prime Minister is likely to meet all the Chiefs of Staff at or following Sunday's Remembrance Ceremony.

Yours ever,

David Owen

Prime Minister.

(D B OMAND)

The changes Mr NOK is proposing to make could have a substantial effect for the better on the way the MOD does its business. The core of them is described in paragraph 3c of the Annex to his minute. They should have been made years ago, and I hope that you will give Mr NOK your full backing in introducing them.

C A Whitmore Esq I also enclose a minute from Sir Robert Armstrong about changes in the personalities in the Chiefs of Staff Committee. Mr NOK will be raising them too.

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File AH
Defence

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

PERSONAL
MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

DEFENCE ORGANISATION

Thank you for your minute AO5944 of 11 November 1981 about defence organisation.

Mr Nott was anxious to obtain the Prime Minister's approval for his proposals quickly since he wished to mention them at a meeting with the Select Committee on Defence on Wednesday of last week, and she accordingly gave her agreement to them the day before. I attach a ✓ copy of my letter to Mr Nott's Private Secretary conveying the Prime Minister's approval, and I apologise for not letting you have a copy of this at the time.

Although the Prime Minister had already dealt with Mr Nott's proposals, I nonetheless showed her your minute, which she noted. As regards the attendance of the Chiefs of Staff at OD and Cabinet, she agrees that it is likely to become the normal procedure that only the Chief of the Defence Staff is invited to attend, but she thinks that we can leave Mr Nott to make the running on this.

JWW.

16 November 1981

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