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PRIME MINISTER

Presentation on Soviet Military Capability

You have agreed to a request from the Secretary of State for Defence that he should give the Cabinet a briefing on the military capability of the Soviet Union. This has been arranged to take place in the Cabinet Office Briefing Room after the normal business of Cabinet has been completed.

2. The procedure will be that members of the Cabinet will be conducted to the Briefing Room from 10 Downing Street without leaving the building. At the end of the briefing, they will be brought back to 10 Downing Street and will be able to leave from the front door of No.10 in the normal way. The briefing will last about 1½ hours and will be completed before lunch.

3. Mr. Butler has warned the Private Secretaries of members of the Cabinet that the briefing will not be announced and has asked them to confine knowledge of it to their Minister and themselves. You may like to repeat this warning to the Cabinet at the start. The content of the briefing is highly classified and includes information which is not normally made available to Ministers who do not have a direct responsibility for defence and oversea affairs.

4. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is absent abroad but is content that the briefing should be given in his absence. He will be given a separate briefing.

5. The briefing will be given by Vice Admiral Sir Roy Halliday, Director General of Intelligence, Ministry of Defence, assisted by Lt.-General Sir James Glover, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Intelligence) and by Mr. N.H. Hughes, Director of Scientific and Technical Intelligence. It will cover:

- (a) the recent Soviet command post exercise CENTRE 82;
- (b) the covert military threat to the United Kingdom posed by Soviet forces;
- (c) our principal intelligence sources;



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- (d) Soviet military capabilities and equipment, both nuclear and conventional;
- (e) Soviet chemical warfare capability;
- (f) Soviet laser weapons;
- (g) Soviet space programme.

6. This briefing represents Ministry of Defence views. The Joint Intelligence Committee has prepared reports on the Soviet military capability to attack the United Kingdom (JIC(82) 6 of October 1982) and the threat of sabotage in the United Kingdom (JIC(81) 17 of December 1981). OD will shortly be considering a report by officials on action to counter the threat to security posed by the activities of the Soviet merchant fleet (which will be mentioned in the briefing). The Ministerial Committee on Home Defence, under the Home Secretary's chairmanship, has set in hand a programme of work on civil defence preparations: this programme takes account of the latest intelligence information and assessments.

RA

Robert Armstrong

10th November 1982



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

5 November 1982

*Dear Private Secretary,*

Following the Cabinet meeting on this Thursday, 11 November, a briefing has been arranged for members of the Cabinet on Soviet conventional and chemical capability. This will be a sequel to the briefing given previously to members of the Cabinet on Trident and the Soviet capability. Its content is highly classified.

The briefing will take place in the Cabinet Office Briefing Room, and members of the Cabinet will be conducted to the Briefing Room from 10 Downing Street without leaving the building. At the end of the briefing, they will be brought back to 10 Downing Street and will be able to leave from the Front Door of No. 10 in the normal way.

This briefing will not be announced, and I should be grateful if you could confine knowledge of it to your Minister and to yourself.

The briefing will last about 1½ hours, and will be completed before lunch.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet, the Chief Whip and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Your sincerely,*

*Robin Butler*

The Private Secretary.

*cc Cabinet  
CXX  
CO*

*JH*