

Prime Minister

Agree to publication of
the report with these amendments?Yes
mk

Ref. A084/525

PRIME MINISTER

I believe that the procedure
requires you to write to Mr. Kinnock and tell
him what is proposed. There are difficulties
about showing him Appendix B which is not to be published.
I will seek Sir Robert's advice on this aspect.The Security Commission submitted to you on 21 December their
report on the case of Lance Corporal Philip Leslie Aldridge. PERB
15.2.

2. The Commission drafted their report with a view to publication and, following consultation with my senior colleagues in accordance with normal procedures, I now recommend publishing in full, with the exception of Appendix B which contains highly classified information about how Aldridge was caught. The proposed published version differs in two respects from the original which was submitted to you. The Commission themselves wish to see the Ministry of Defence witnesses listed in alphabetical order, without job titles or grades and, in accordance with normal practice, the names of the Security Service witnesses omitted altogether. Secondly, Lord Bridge has agreed the substitution of "the appropriate inter-departmental Committee" for "the Official Committee on Security".

3. Sir Clive Whitmore urged consideration of four amendments to remove references to the Commission's concern about security weaknesses in the Defence Intelligence Staff. He considered that these references could undermine the confidence of the United States agencies in the Ministry of Defence's ability to protect the large quantities of sensitive intelligence material which pass from the United States to the Ministry of Defence, particularly as the report does not specify the nature of these weaknesses. I discussed this concern with Lord Bridge, whose view was that the report represented fairly the Commission's view of the situation and, apart from agreeing one small amendment ("the" for "many" at the beginning of paragraph 6.3), was not disposed to accept the proposed changes. Sir Clive has accepted that this amendment goes some way to alleviating his concern, and is content to agree to publication of the report subject to that amendment.

4. The proposed amendments are shown in red in the attached copy of the report.

Paras. ---
5.6, 6.3
and 8.3



5. If you agree that the report should now be published in the form of a White Paper, as has been done in respect of earlier Security Commission cases except that of Miss Rhona Ritchie, I will provide a draft statement for your consideration, which, I suggest, might be given as a Written Answer to an arranged Parliamentary Question.

REA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

15 February 1984

CONQUEROR

de ve



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

The Prime Minister was grateful for your minute of 15 February (AO84/525) about the Security Commission report on the case of Lance Corporal Philip Leslie Aldridge. The Prime Minister is content that the report should be published, as amended, in the form of a White Paper.

I think that the procedure requires the Prime Minister to consult the Leader of the Opposition before the report is published, and the Leader of the Opposition usually puts down the Written Question. This raises a question over whether the Prime Minister should inform the Leader of the Opposition about the omission of Appendix B, and if so, in what terms. The Prime Minister would be very grateful for your advice on this aspect.

FALB

16 February 1984

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PRIME MINISTER

REPORT OF THE SECURITY COMMISSION ON THE CASE OF
LANCE CORPORAL PHILIP LESLIE ALDRIDGE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 18 January 1983 Philip Leslie Aldridge pleaded guilty to an offence under section 7 of the Official Secrets Act 1920. This section makes it an offence to do an act preparatory to the commission of an offence under the Official Secrets Act 1911. The preparatory act here was the unauthorised abstraction of a highly classified document. The relevant offence under the Act of 1911 which Aldridge was preparing to commit was the communication of that document to the Russian Intelligence Service. He was sentenced to four years imprisonment.

1.2 By your letter dated 23 December 1982 you had already asked the Security Commission "to investigate the circumstances in which breaches of security have or may have occurred arising out of the case of Lance Corporal P L Aldridge who has been charged with an offence under section 7 of the Official Secrets Act 1920; and to advise in the light of the investigation whether any change in security arrangements is necessary or desirable".

1.3 It is right to record at the outset of this Report, as a matter for public satisfaction, that Aldridge's attempts to sell his country's secrets to Russia were frustrated by the alertness and efficiency of the Security Service and that Aldridge himself was in due course unmasked and brought to justice by the co-operation of the Security Service and the Army. A full account of these highly successful operations is set out at Appendix B. It is unfortunate that, for security reasons, this story cannot be publicly recounted. The public and the media are rightly concerned by, and ready to criticise, any failure of security in the public service. It is, in a sense, ironic that the opportunity to redress the balance in a case where our counter-intelligence service can be seen to have operated at its best must yield to the requirement of security that the methods employed should remain secret.

1.4 It was, on the other hand, an undoubted breach of security that Aldridge, while on temporary secondment from the Intelligence Corps to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and working in the Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) should have been able to abstract a highly classified document. The precise circumstances

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in which the document was taken and even the precise identity of the document have never been determined with certainty. We recognise that, once a determined spy is in a position where he has free access to highly classified documents, no system of document security can be guaranteed to provide effective protection against their illicit abstraction. Nevertheless, the prescribed system, within the limits of what is practicable, should be designed and enforced in such a way as to minimise the risk. We have directed our attention primarily at specific breaches of prescribed procedures or shortcomings in the procedures themselves which could be considered of some direct relevance as having facilitated Aldridge's removal of the document. However, in the course of a protracted and detailed investigation extending over many months, in which we have called for and been supplied with successive reports by the MOD and these have in turn been amplified for us by the oral evidence of MOD witnesses, we have become increasingly concerned at what we have learned about the state of security in the DIS generally and we have thought it right to address ourselves to this subject in this Report as well as to the matters immediately connected with Aldridge's treachery.

CONDUCT OF THE INQUIRY

2.1 We held our first meeting on 5 January 1983 and subsequently met on 11 occasions, including several meetings which lasted for the whole day.

2.2 We asked for and received a great deal of written material, particularly from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and in addition to this, we have examined the papers relating to Aldridge's vetting clearances; the transcript of his trial and the relevant briefing for it; the general security regulations which apply in the MOD and are contained in 'MOD Manual 4'; and the Branch Security Instructions issued in June 1983 provided especially for the Directorate of Economic and Logistic Intelligence (DELI).

2.3 Much of the written evidence supplied by the MOD related to the security regulations and procedures in force at the time of Aldridge's service in the DIS. In addition, however, the MOD were carrying out an investigation to identify the particular document which Aldridge claimed he had taken and the way that this might have been done. This, of course, meant that the evidence had to be updated and amended as further information came to light. In May 1983, nearly four months after his conviction, Aldridge

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changed his story about the document he claimed he had taken (see paragraph 4.3). This new story had to be thoroughly investigated and this investigation has brought to light some of the inadequacies in security procedures within the MOD on which we comment in the following sections. We have also studied the report of a detailed inspection of the DIS carried out by the Directorate of MOD Security during the summer months to which we refer in paragraph 7.2. This was not made available to us until very late in our inquiry, which helps to explain the time taken in submitting this Report.

2.4 We took oral evidence from those listed in Appendix A. Because of the changing nature of the MOD's evidence during the inquiry, it was necessary to see the Second Permanent Secretary, Mr Ewen Broadbent, on six occasions, the last being on 21 October 1983. The Commission record their gratitude to Mr Broadbent for the helpful and courteous manner in which he gave evidence and clarified apparent inconsistencies in the Ministry's evidence which had earlier given us some cause for concern.

2.5 Mrs Sally Sutton resigned from the Civil Service and was replaced as secretary of the Commission during the course of the inquiry by Miss Patricia Andrews. Fortunately continuity in the secretariat was ensured by our continued enjoyment, in the role of senior secretary, of the services of Mr Rex Davie, who was secretary of the Commission in 1977 and 1978 and who is now Head of the Security Division in the Cabinet Office. We express our gratitude to Mr Davie and Miss Andrews for all their help to us in facilitating the conduct of the inquiry and in the preparation of this Report.

ALDRIDGE'S RECRUITMENT, PV CLEARANCE, AND SECONDMENT TO THE MOD

3.1 Aldridge was born on 4 September 1962. He joined the Intelligence Corps on 8 December 1981. All members of the Intelligence Corps are required to obtain Positive Vetting (PV) clearance during training. Aldridge was subjected to all appropriate PV procedures, including the psychological testing to which we made reference in paragraph 9.21 of our Report which was published as Cmnd 8876. No adverse indication was revealed. Clearance was granted on 5 May 1982 subject to the restriction which it is standard practice to impose on persons under 21 years of age that until reaching that age "access to TOP SECRET is to be given on a need to know basis only and under strict supervision".

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3.2 On 9 July 1982 Aldridge qualified as a Grade III Operator. On 3 August 1982 he was posted to 96 Security Section at Aldershot in the rank of Lance Corporal.

3.3 The Falklands campaign provoked an enormous upsurge of work in the DIS. Even after the Argentinians surrendered, many of the demands for relevant intelligence continued at an only slightly lower level of intensity. It was in these circumstances that the DELI established a small section on 30 July 1982 to handle a particular specialised area of the work. The personnel in the section comprised a Principal Research Officer (PRO), a Senior Research Officer (SRO), a Leading Naval Writer, and an Intelligence Corps NCO seconded from the Army. Reinforcement of the DIS by secondment from the Forces, particularly in the provision of additional clerical staff, was undertaken in pursuance of standard arrangements applicable to such a situation as that provoked by the Falklands crisis.

3.4 The Intelligence Corps NCOs seconded to work in this section were initially provided by the Army on a fortnightly rotation. Aldridge was the third to fill the post and worked in the section from 24 August to 3 September 1982.

3.5 The section was housed in a single room in the Metropole Building. It is unnecessary to describe in detail the important responsibilities of the two Research Officers, but suffices, for present purposes, to say that they were working under great pressure and were handling a very considerable volume of highly classified documents. The Leading Naval Writer and the Intelligence Corps NCO shared responsibility for document control. During Aldridge's time working in the section, he was responsible for maintaining the Confidential Documents Register (CDR), in which receipt, movement, and final disposal of all documents classified SECRET and above were required to be recorded and, as instructed, for the copying, filing, and eventual destruction of documents.

THE DOCUMENT TAKEN BY ALDRIDGE

4.1 A great deal of painstaking research has been directed at identifying the document taken by Aldridge in the face of different accounts given by him. Two conclusions can, we think, be stated with confidence. First, there is no reason to doubt that Aldridge did abstract a document of the highest classification. Although some of the accounts he gave of his activities in the course of the investigation turned out to be imaginary, it is not conceivable that he should have adhered throughout, both before

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and after trial, to the central feature of his confession on which the prosecution relied, if this had not occurred. Secondly, it is established as certainly as a negative proposition can be that Aldridge did not, in the event, communicate the document to any third party, but destroyed it himself some time after his return to his unit at Aldershot and sometime before the investigation described in Appendix B had identified him.

4.2 In the room where Aldridge worked classified documents awaiting destruction, having been torn in pieces, were stored in a canvas bag kept in a Manifoil lock cabinet awaiting transfer to an official classified waste sack for eventual incineration. In the course of the initial investigation Aldridge claimed to have taken from this bag a document which had only been torn in half. He gave a detailed description of the appearance and some account of the contents of the document. Aldridge adhered to this account in an interview with MOD investigators after his trial. The MOD investigators were unable to relate Aldridge's description of the document and the circumstances of its abstraction to any document which they could identify as having been handled in the section and destined for disposal.

4.3 On 4 May 1983, however, Aldridge was seen again, at his own request, by MOD investigators. He now changed entirely his description of the document he had taken. He said that he thought that the document he had taken was an especially sensitive one, and he had previously been afraid to describe it correctly for fear of making the case against himself worse. He had therefore made up a description of a paper of lesser importance, which so far as he knew had never existed. When he was interviewed by the MOD investigators on 14 February (only some four weeks after his trial) he was still frightened and confused and felt it best to stick to his original story. In the subsequent months, spending most of his time in solitary confinement, he had had time to reflect more seriously on the matter and wanted to clear his conscience by telling the truth about the paper. He also hoped that such frankness might lead to a favourable consideration of a change from his present Category A status (i.e. as a high security risk prisoner) which was, for example, preventing him from enrolling for a course of study for the Open University.

4.4 The entirely new description of the document given by Aldridge on 4 May has enabled the MOD to identify a document which corresponds with that description sufficiently closely, although not precisely in all respects, to engender the belief that this very probably was in fact the document taken. There was received in the section where Aldridge worked on 24 August 1982 a copy of the Joint Intelligence Committee Weekly

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Survey of Intelligence for 6-12 August 1982. This was entered in the CDR by another member of the staff. Aldridge was instructed, probably later on the same day, by the PRO to abstract and file 5 pages of this Survey, which he did, and to destroy the remaining 17 pages. If the identification is right, Aldridge retained this portion of the Survey and took it with him when he left the MOD on 3 September 1982.

THE RESTRICTED PV CERTIFICATE

5.1 The PV certificate relating to a soldier is normally held by his Commanding Officer. If he is posted away from his unit for a period in excess of 14 days, his certificate will accompany him and any relevant restriction on his clearance will then come immediately to the notice of those by whom he is to be employed. Since Aldridge was only to be seconded to the MOD for 14 days, his PV certificate did not accompany him. The restriction on Aldridge's PV certificate was, however, known to the security officer in the DIS who was responsible for authorising his clearance for employment in the section where he was to work. The officer not only gave him clearance, but told no-one under whom Aldridge would be working that his PV clearance was restricted or that he was under 21 years of age. Aldridge looked older than 21.

5.2 We heard a body of evidence from MOD witnesses who sought to persuade us:

- (i) that Aldridge's restricted PV clearance was no obstacle to his employment in work where he would have extensive access to TOP SECRET material;
- (ii) that he was to be employed in a position where the degree of supervision to which he would be subject would be sufficient to comply with the requirement of 'strict supervision' in the PV certificate; and
- (iii) that communicating the restriction on his PV certificate to those with whom he would be working was a formality which would have had little, if any, practical effect.

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The security officer referred to in paragraph 5.1 above accepted that "with hindsight" it was an omission on his part not to have communicated the restriction on Aldridge's PV certificate to those with whom he was to be working.

5.3 On the other hand, the PRO in charge of the section where Aldridge worked, on whom the responsibility for exercising any supervision over him necessarily rested, firmly maintained that, if he had been told of the restriction on Aldridge's PV certificate, he would not have been prepared to accept him, since, in the prevailing conditions, it would have been impossible to exercise any effective supervision over his access to TOP SECRET material. If no holder of an unrestricted PV certificate was available, he would have preferred that his section should accept the additional burden of working with only one clerical assistant.

5.4 We accept that, at the time of Aldridge's secondment, the DIS were overworked and short, in particular, of PV cleared clerical staff. Once Aldridge was employed, it followed, of course, that he had a 'need to know' the contents of the TOP SECRET documents he was daily handling, since he could not do the job without seeing what they contained. But we question whether the 'need to know' restriction on a PV certificate ought to be interpreted to allow the holder to be employed in a job for which he has no special qualification and for which the one essential qualification is a PV clearance. A narrower, and possibly preferable, interpretation would be that the restricted certificate is intended to permit the employment of young people trained in special technical skills in positions where those skills are indispensable notwithstanding that the positions involve access to TOP SECRET material.

5.5 There is room for wide differences of opinion, as the evidence we heard clearly illustrated, as to what is required to satisfy the criterion of 'strict supervision' which the restricted certificate demands.

5.6 Insofar as it is necessary to employ people under 21 in positions where they must have access to TOP SECRET material, some form of restricted PV certificate is, for obvious reasons, necessary and appropriate. We think it is important, however, that the restriction should be uniformly

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interpreted and applied throughout the public service. We accordingly recommend that the ^{appropriate interdepartmental Committee} ~~Official Committee on Security~~ be invited to consider the circumstances in which persons under 21 should be allowed access to TOP SECRET material and the degree of supervision to which they should be subject, with a view to issuing general guidance on the employment of holders of restricted PV certificates.

5.7 We consider that failure to communicate the known restriction on Aldridge's PV certificate to those with whom he was to work was a serious omission. In the light of all the evidence we have heard, we doubt if this was an isolated oversight on the part of the security officer concerned, but think rather that it reflected a general laxity of approach to restricted PV certificates. Our impression is that the standard restriction on PV clearance granted to a person under 21 is treated by security staff in the MOD as having little significance. We recommend that in future whenever the holder of a restricted PV certificate is to be employed in a position where he will need to have access to TOP SECRET material, the officer responsible for authorising his employment in that position should allocate responsibility for his supervision to a named person and give specific instructions, in the light of any guidance issued in pursuance of our recommendation in the foregoing paragraph, as to how supervision is to be exercised.

DESTRUCTION OF DOCUMENTS CLASSIFIED SECRET AND ABOVE

6.1 If the letter of MOD security regulations had been complied with, whenever the destruction of a document classified SECRET or above was authorised by the PRO or the SRO in the section where Aldridge was working, Aldridge should have torn the document into small pieces and placed it in the canvas bag referred to in paragraph 4.2 above, the officer authorising the destruction should have physically witnessed this process, and both should then have signed an entry in the CDR recording the destruction of the document.

6.2 In fact the procedure described in the foregoing paragraph was never followed. The two Research Officers concerned told us with the utmost candour that, having authorised the destruction of a highly classified document, they never supervised Aldridge in the physical act of its destruction. They insisted that they were unaware at the time that security regulations required them to do so. We accepted this evidence.

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6.3 This is only one of ~~many~~^{the} security weaknesses in the DIS which the Aldridge investigation has brought to light. It is the most directly relevant since, if the requirement of supervised destruction had been strictly complied with, Aldridge could not have retained intact the document referred to in paragraph 4.4 above and eventually removed it as there described.

6.4 The requirement that the destruction of a TOP SECRET or SECRET document be witnessed and certified by two persons affords an example of a security procedure which raises for consideration two matters of general principle. The first question which must be asked of any prescribed security procedure is whether its importance and effectiveness as a security safeguard are sufficient to warrant the expenditure of time and energy (and in some cases material resources) which compliance with the procedure involves. One way of answering this question is to ask whether those instructed to comply with the procedure will appreciate the necessity for it and be willing to carry it out without constant supervision and the threat of disciplinary measures if the procedure is disregarded. We find it extremely difficult to suppose that the disregard of the requirement of supervised destruction of highly classified documents in the section where Aldridge worked was in any way exceptional. On the contrary, if two officers, one empowered to authorise the destruction of TOP SECRET or SECRET documents, the other his clerical assistant, have worked together long enough to know and trust each other, even if they are well aware that the regulations require that both should witness every destruction, they are very likely, we would suppose, to treat this as a tedious and unnecessary formality. Moreover, if a spy or potential spy is in a position where he has access to TOP SECRET or SECRET documents, supervised destruction is unlikely to frustrate him in obtaining a document or copy at some stage in its life before destruction. All this leads us to the conclusion that, despite the part played in the present case by lack of supervision of Aldridge in the destruction of classified documents, this requirement may, on examination, be one which it is hard to justify in terms of its overall utility as a security safeguard against hostile penetration. Like the over-classification of documents, which the Security Commission have criticised so often, it must do a positive disservice to the interests of security to stipulate a security procedure which, from its nature, is likely to be widely disregarded and thus tend to discredit the whole system.

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6.5 The second matter of general principle to which it is convenient to draw attention in this context is the paramount importance of ensuring that those responsible for observing security procedures are precisely instructed as to what it is they are required to do. The question of security education generally in the MOD is beyond the scope of this Report. But some matters have come to our attention which we think it right to mention. Our impression from the whole of the evidence is that there is a tendency in the MOD to place too much reliance on MOD Manual 4 as the repository of all wisdom on every aspect of security and to which all concerned with security may be expected to refer to find the answer to their particular security problem. MOD Manual 4 is a massive, complex, and indigestible document, which is certainly not always drafted in such a way as to provide a simple answer to a simple question. No doubt such a document, in which all security rules are collected, is very necessary. But it provides, in our view, no reliable instrument of security education. It is very desirable that in different areas of activity within the MOD appropriate local security instructions should be issued in clear and unambiguous terms covering at least the most important security procedures required to be observed in each area. At the time of Aldridge's employment in the DIS there were no local security instructions applicable to the DELI, which embraced Aldridge's section. A new Director of the DELI was appointed in October 1982. He issued security instructions for his Directorate in June 1983. Unfortunately, apart from a reference to the relevant paragraphs of MOD Manual 4, the text of these instructions describing the procedures for destroying and certifying the destruction of highly classified documents is at best ambiguous, at worst misleading.

THE SECURITY INSPECTION OF THE DIS

7.1 In a report to us dated 28 February 1983 the then Director of MOD Security drew attention to some of the security weaknesses in the DIS which the investigation following the discovery of Aldridge's theft of a TOP SECRET document had brought to light, and discussed remedial measures which had been put in hand or were under consideration. The report stated:-

"We intend to carry out a review of security arrangements in the DIS as a whole to assess in particular whether the level of document security is acceptable."

7.2 The review was in fact put in hand under terms of reference issued by the Assistant Director of MOD Security on 3 June 1983. A complete security inspection of the DIS was undertaken by a team of eight officers headed by

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a Senior Executive Officer (SEO) who reported on 12 September 1983. A copy of the report was furnished to us on 19 October 1983.

7.3 The full document is extremely lengthy. It comprises 35 individual reports on branches and sections within the DIS, presumably each made by an individual member of the team, and a general report written, we understand, by the SEO, setting out his conclusions and recommendations.

7.4 Before passing any criticism on the inspection report or the security weaknesses within the DIS which it reveals we wish to acknowledge our full awareness of the security problems created for the DIS by their current workload, in particular by the large volume of highly classified documents which they handle, and by shortage of staff, particularly clerical staff.

7.5 We are nevertheless disturbed by what the inspection report reveals and far from satisfied that, even within the limitations imposed by shortage of staff, the solutions proposed are the best that could be devised.

7.6 Much painstaking industry has undoubtedly gone into the production of the report and we would not wish to criticise any of those who have contributed to it. As to the methods employed in producing the report, we observe that the individual branch and section reports follow no set pattern and it would appear that each member of the team was left to pursue his inquiries in whatever way he thought best. The task of the SEO who produced the general report was a particularly onerous one and we feel bound to observe that, however expert in his field, an officer of his grade should not have been expected to carry so heavy a responsibility.

7.7 We recommend that protective security in the DIS should be subject to a fresh review, this time by the Security Service which, while taking due account of the problems created by manpower restrictions, will aim at a comprehensive overhaul of the existing security arrangements.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Aldridge's attempts to sell his country's secrets to the Russians were frustrated by the efficiency of the Security Service. Aldridge was brought to justice by the co-operation of the Security Service and the Army (paragraph 1.3 and Appendix B).

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8.2 Aldridge did, in fact, abstract a TOP SECRET document while working with the DIS, even though the document itself has not been positively identified (paragraph 4.1).

8.3 The ~~Official Committee on Security~~ ^{appropriate interdepartmental committee} should be invited to issue guidance on the employment of those whose PV clearance is subject to some restriction. Responsibility for supervision of the holder of a restricted PV certificate appointed to a PV post should always be allocated to a named person (paragraphs 5.6 and 5.7).

8.4 The rules governing the destruction of highly classified documents, in particular the need for two persons to witness the destruction, should be reviewed (paragraph 6.4).

8.5 Local security instructions should be issued and written in clear and unambiguous terms (paragraph 6.5).

8.6 The Security Service should conduct a comprehensive review of protective security arrangements in the DIS (paragraph 7.7).

BRIDGE OF HARWICH

(The Rt Hon the Lord Bridge of Harwich)
(Chairman)

HUGH GRIFFITHS

(The Rt Hon Lord Justice Griffiths MC)

ALLEN OF ABBEYDALE

(The Lord Allen of Abbeydale GCB)

HUGH BEACH

(General Sir Hugh Beach GBE KCB MC)

21 December 1983

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF WITNESSES

(i) Ministry of Defence

Mr E Broadbent CB CMG
Mr G J Burton
Mr J W Crichton
Mr P R Davies
Mrs B A Dunphy
Major-General H E M L Garrett CBE (Retd)
Mr D Hills
Mr M Holton
Leading Writer A Hugill
Mr E Pendlebury
Mr R Primrose
Lt Col A N L Thom
Mr J Tolson
Brigadier P D Wickenden

(ii) Representatives of the Security Service