

Ref. A084/853

MR BUTLER

*Shall we discuss
first, clearly**Prime Minister
Agree a reference
to the Security Commission
after Miss Tisdall's trial?*Security Commission: Miss Sarah Tisdall*Lord Bridge has some doubts*FERB
16.3.

You will recall that Miss Sarah Tisdall, who until January of this year was serving as a Grade 10 Officer in the Private Office of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, has been charged with an offence under Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. This followed the legal action which the Government took to obtain the return from The Guardian newspaper of the document about the delivery of Cruise missiles at Greenham Common, and the subsequent police investigation to identify the culprit.

2. In accordance with the normal procedure, I consulted Lord Bridge about a possible reference to the Security Commission. I subsequently discussed the matter in some detail with him and explained that, as this was the first leak that had been proved to come from a Minister's Private Office, we were particularly concerned. There were therefore a number of questions which we needed to pursue about the selection of staff for work in particularly sensitive areas, such as Private Offices, and that this covered matters other than security vetting.
3. Lord Bridge said that, while this was clearly not the type of case which would normally be referred to the Security Commission, he would be very ready to accept a reference if the Prime Minister felt that an investigation by the Commission would be more likely to get at the facts, and that its recommendations would carry more weight and authority than any other type of inquiry. In any event, Lord Bridge considered that there should be no reference until the outcome of the trial was known.
4. I understand that Miss Tisdall's trial has now been fixed for 23 March. My own view is that a reference to the Commission would be helpful and, if the Prime Minister agrees, I will provide a draft letter to send to Mr Kinnock after the trial letting him know what is proposed. We can then make the announcement in the normal way.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

16 March 1984



PRIME MINISTER

Mr Butler

MR. BARCLAY

There is a meeting,
but FCS and ChEx will
be present. RTA
could stay on afterwards.

Is there a business meeting ^{Dub}
this Friday? If not, can ^{19/3}
you suggest another convenient
moment for a word about the
attached?

F.R.B.

19 March 1984



to UK
b2DB

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Security Commission: Miss Sarah Tisdall

Thank you for your minute of 16 March
(A084/853).

The Prime Minister has detected in paragraph 3 of your minute some indication that Lord Bridge has doubts about taking on this reference. The Prime Minister has suggested that she should have a word with you, before we proceed. I will arrange an opportunity for this.

F. E. R. BUTLER

19 March 1984