

CONFIDENTIAL



Prime Minister

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In view of X below, there must be serious doubt not just about the maintenance of order but about the actual security of the bases before and after Cruise is installed. What is to stop every agent getting in?

Yes - Surely we should strengthen perimeter would you like me to seal comments on this problem?

PRIME MINISTER

POLICING OF DEMONSTRATIONS AT MILITARY BASES

A.J.C. 18. 2

I have been concerned about the possibility of disorder and breaches of security at demonstrations organised around the semi-permanent "peace camps" outside military bases and I know that my concern has been shared by the Secretary of State for Defence. Up to twenty of these camps exist or have existed in the past year, but the only one with which serious disorder has so far been associated is Greenham Common. Demonstrators were able to enter the base on 9 July 1982 and on 1 January and 7, 14 and 15 February this year.

The problems faced by the Thames Valley Police in preventing such incursions have been formidable. The Women's Peace Movement has refused to discuss its activities with the police, and no advance information about their intentions is normally available. The nine-mile perimeter fence is not difficult to scale, and for more than half its length cover is provided by woodland. The powers of the police to deal with those entering the site are limited and the protesters seem to be very well briefed about the limits of the criminal law and the police's powers.

Officials in my Department, in conjunction with representatives of the Ministry of Defence, have discussed these matters with the Chief Constable of the Thames Valley Police, who is now well aware of the importance attached by the Government to the maintenance of order at Greenham Common. It is not practicable to ensure that attempted incursions at any point in the nine miles are always foiled. But 23 officers are on duty around the base every day and this number is, of course, augmented whenever heightened activity by the demonstrators demands it. In the early part of this week there was an average of 160 officers on the site. Thames Valley Police have discussed with officials, and with members of other forces with relevant experience, how best to pool information about those likely to cause disruption, in order to help police operations.

Contingency planning by the police is being carried forward for two large scale events at Greenham Common. On Good Friday, 1 April, the CND plan to link arms between the base, the Royal Ordnance Factory at Burghfield, and the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston: it hopes to attract 40,000 supporters. Much smaller demonstrations at Greenham and Burghfield are expected on the previous day. The policing of the demonstrations will involve the Hampshire and Thames Valley forces in a joint operation, and a series of meetings has been held to draw up plans. The police are relatively sanguine about these and other planned CND activity at Easter in London and at Faslane because they receive good co-operation from CND organisers. The major CND marches in London recently have been very large but peaceful and law-abiding. Later in the year, on 23 and 24 July, the International Air Tattoo will be held at Greenham Common, its normal venue, and is expected to draw up to 200,000 people. The Thames Valley force is already planning for this event on the assumption that the anti-nuclear campaigners will not wish to let it pass unnoticed. My officials will continue to be in frequent contact with the police and will report to me.

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I am sending copies of this minute to the Secretary of State for Defence, the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Attorney General and Sir Robert Armstrong.

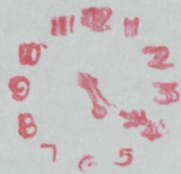
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February 1983

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

21 February 1983

Dear Tony,

POLICING OF DEMONSTRATIONS AT MILITARY BASES

The Prime Minister has seen the Home Secretary's minute of 17 February about the possibility of disorder and breaches of security at demonstrations at the "peace camps" outside military bases.

While noting the difficulty of preventing incursions, the Prime Minister has expressed concern about the implications for security. If incursions into, e.g. the Greenham Common base, are as easy as they appear to be, she feels that the security of this and other bases both before and after Cruise is installed must be at risk. The Prime Minister is inclined to think that we should take urgent steps to strengthen the whole perimeter of the Greenham Common base and perhaps other bases.

She would be grateful for further comments on this problem.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence), Brian Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Muir Russell (Scottish Office), Henry Steel (Law Officers' Department) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

John Gles.

A.R. Rawsthorne, Esq.,
Home Office.

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To note.

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HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

25 February 1983

Dear John,

POLICING OF DEMONSTRATIONS AT MILITARY BASES

The Home Secretary has seen your letter of 21 February, in which you said that the Prime Minister would be grateful for further comments on the problem of preventing incursions at Greenham Common and elsewhere.

The Home Secretary has asked me to say that he agrees with the Prime Minister that the options for strengthening the whole or part of the perimeter at Greenham Common should be identified and costed by the Ministry of Defence. It would be useful if the note which sets out this analysis could also make proposals for a second line of defence around the site of the missiles itself. The Home Secretary understands that some thought has already been given to this latter point. If the Prime Minister thought that it would be helpful, the Home Secretary would be very ready to join in a discussion of this subject when the Secretary of State for Defence is ready with his analysis.

We had a
word about it
on Thursday

It is generally accepted that determined attempts to enter the base at Greenham Common cannot be reliably prevented by police patrolling. The length of the perimeter (9 miles) and the terrain through which it runs (much of it common land covered by trees) make this impossible. The precise number of police officers to be committed each day to duties in connection with the "peace" camp is a matter for the chief constable's judgment, and he can if necessary call for reinforcements from other police forces. But it would be enormously expensive in manpower to provide on a continuous basis sufficient officers to guarantee that there would be no further incursions.

Since his minute of 17 February the Home Secretary has received a further report about the chief constable's plans for Easter. He is satisfied that preparations are well-advanced and, on present information, adequate. There is a high level of co-operation between the police and the military authorities.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence), Brian Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Muir Russell (Scottish Office), Henry Steel (Law Officers Department) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,
Tony Rawsthorne

A R RAWSTHORNE
Principal Private Secretary

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John Coles, Esq

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Defence

28 February 1983

This is just to record that the Prime Minister has seen and noted your letter of 25 February about the policing of demonstrations at military bases.

Timothy Flesher

A.R. Rawsthorne, Esq.,
Home Office.

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