

Reference  
40483

CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister

(2)



Important. The Home Secretary  
will need to have up to 1000  
unarmed UK personnel available to  
deal with the CND blockade  
from 31 May to 3 June.  
This could become public any time  
from Wednesday onwards when the  
notice to the Services concerned is reduced.

MF  
~~RAF~~

MO 11/2/2

PRIME MINISTER

POLICING OF DEMONSTRATIONS: RAF UPPER HEYFORD

mf, A.S.C. 23/5

I have seen your Private Secretary's note in response to my minute of 12th May, and the Home Secretary's minute of 17th May.

2. I have received the further report from my officials on the work in hand to prepare for the events to take place at the end of this month at RAF Upper Heyford. I should say first of all that the "Peace Pentecost" is not assessed by us or the civil police as likely to pose any security problems. Our security concern remains with the planned CND blockade from 31st May to 3rd June. The assessment of the likely scale of CND's blockade remains unchanged as yet, but the responsible authorities have now reviewed in detail the security arrangements necessary to meet my direction that the base should continue normal operations; and that intruders must be swiftly apprehended before they are able to halt or impede operations or penetrate to sensitive areas. Against the background of a normal planned flying programme, with aircraft being refuelled or maintained in various parts of the airfield, the assessment of the required security force has been revised upwards. I should also add, as a supplementary to my earlier minute, that the Americans are required by their own authorities to protect operational aircraft with armed guards; the armed US security police will not therefore be totally confined to the two nuclear sites on the base. I do not see this as a major problem given the scale and nature of the security operations now planned and which are outlined below.





3. In addition to the forces whose deployment I had already approved as outlined in my earlier minute ie 160 MOD police and 100 RAF police, with dog teams and slightly smaller forces by night, it is now judged necessary to increase the MOD police presence by 75, day and night; to deploy on base throughout the period an unarmed RAF Regiment Squadron of 160 men; and to have available for the period a force equivalent to that of an infantry battalion (slightly under 600 men). This yields a total force of 1,000 unarmed UK personnel. With such a force there is confidence that our requirements for the base operations and security can be met in full. I have accordingly directed that forces of this size should be discreetly held ready for possible deployment in whole or in part subject to the developing threat assessment. This is a very substantial operation, and will no doubt attract much media attention but the alternative would be either ourselves to close the base down and lock all the aircraft away or to take unacceptable risks with security. Notice to the Servicemen concerned will be reduced with effect from tomorrow. MT.

(now put off till Wednesday)  
A.J.C. 23/5

4. Of course I very much share the Home Secretary's concerns about the political sensitivity of the presence of armed guards, and above all the grave consequences that would attend any use of weapons. On the questions of signs, I can offer the reassurance that the warning signs now being prepared are intended to be erected only on the internal fences; they will not be erected along the public road. I cannot give a total guarantee that they will be invisible from outside the fence but they will be much less visible than the USAF armed police who are there every day. The purpose of these notices is to give a warning to those who have already trespassed by penetrating the outer fences. The only notices to be erected outside the perimeter fence will be the standard signs declaring that the base is a prohibited area within the meaning of the Official Secrets Act.





5. On the question of the actual use of firearms, I can give an absolute assurance that the United States Air Force in this country, from their Commanding General downwards, have a complete understanding of the British viewpoint and of the need to exercise the maximum possible restraint. Not only will special briefings be given to those armed personnel who will be on the base during the period, but the USAF Commander has made several constructive suggestions in order to minimise the risk still further such as, for example, that UK personnel operate right alongside armed US guards and even take up positions within the secure nuclear areas. Moreover, the overall size of the UK security force is such as to give us confidence that we should be able to prevent any intruders getting to the sensitive areas where armed US personnel may be present. The US Embassy are in fact in no doubt as to the importance we attach to avoiding the use of weapons, which has been the subject of frequent official level discussions; but I understand that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has directed his officials to make an approach to the Minister in the Embassy in this respect and I welcome that.

6. My officials remain in close touch with their American counterparts, and will continue to liaise closely with the Home Office. I shall of course report further should there be any new developments.

7. I am copying this minute to the Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary, the Paymaster General and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*MHC:ram*

*[Approved by the Defence Secretary and signed on his behalf]*

Ministry of Defence  
23rd May 1983



23 MAY 1955



COMMUNICATIONS



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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

24 May 1983

Policing of Demonstrations: RAF Upper Heyford

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 23 May and has noted the security operations which are now planned for dealing with the CND blockade of RAF Upper Heyford from 31 May to 3 June. Following a telephone conversation with Nick Evans this morning, I shall assume that these plans remain unchanged in the light of Colin Walters' letter of 23 May describing police estimates of the likely size of the demonstration.

I am copying this letter to Brian Fall (FCO), Colin Walters (Home Office), Alex Galloway (Paymaster General's Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

A. J. COLES

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

CONFIDENTIAL



reference  
Feb 83

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

CONFIDENTIAL



HOME OFFICE  
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

23 May 1983

N.B. P.N.

M 24/5

Dear John

POLICING OF DEMONSTRATIONS: RAF UPPER HEYFORD

In your letter of 13 May to Richard Mottram you asked to be kept closely in touch with developments in connection with the planned blockade of the Upper Heyford base from 31 May to 3 June.

The latest intelligence is that CND nationally are having no involvement in the planned blockade. Bruce Kent said so over the week-end in conversation with Thames Valley police at Upper Heyford during the Christian CND event. The whole burden of organisation will fall on the shoulders of members of the local peace camp. The organisers have revised their target for a constant attendance of demonstrators from 1,000 to 400-500. The police think that they will be lucky to achieve 200-250. There is no information about plans in other parts of the country for significant numbers of demonstrators to go to Upper Heyford. The police are sure that if there were plans they would know something about them. The police are meeting the organisers on the evening of 24 May and will report to us again on 25 May.

Police planning is proceeding for the moment on the basis that there might be 1,000 demonstrators because it is easier to stand people down than call them up at short notice.

I am copying this letter to Brian Fall (Foreign & Commonwealth Office), Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence), Alex Galloway (Paymaster General's Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely  
  
C. J. WALTERS

A. J. Coles, Esq.

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