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9/12PRIME MINISTERGREENHAM COMMON SECURITY: DEMONSTRATIONS 10TH/11TH DECEMBER 1983

You will wish to know of our plans to maintain security at Greenham Common during the expected anti-nuclear demonstrations over the weekend of 10th/11th December 1983.

2. Events last weekend, when we had some minor incursions, have once again demonstrated - despite our programme of physical security improvements - how difficult it is to secure the entire nine mile perimeter against every attempted incursion, even with over 200 MOD and RAF Police who were on base supplementing the USAF guards. I personally reviewed the situation on Monday. Further UK reinforcements have been deployed and a very large operation is planned for next weekend, as I describe below. There will be a further review of all our arrangements, including physical security measures in the light of experience over the weekend. Our long term aim remains to avoid playing into the womens peace movement's hands by tying down large manpower numbers against the threat of minor trespass of no real security significance. The women's claim last weekend to have penetrated sensitive areas of the base was totally unfounded; key points are well defended and while we cannot afford to see large scale trespass onto the remainder of the base, we should make it clear by our attitudes and our reaction that minor incursions are an empty gesture. What is important is to be on top of the major demonstrations and to ensure that key installations on the base are secure at all times.

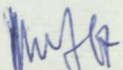


3. The information currently available to my Department suggests that over the period 10th/11th December we can expect a demonstration by women supporters of CND very similar in type and scale to that which occurred last December when some 16,000 women encircled the base. They are expected to be peaceful and law abiding in the main. In addition, however, we expect a parallel demonstration by the womens peace movement itself perhaps involving anything up to 1,000 women who are likely to be well equipped with bolt cutters etc, and to use the opportunity of the major demonstration to attempt incursions. There could also be an attempt by the latter group, to blockade the base on Monday 12th December after the CND demonstration has dispersed.

4. In the light of this threat assessment, we plan to mount an operation very similar in scale to that recently executed during the GLCM delivery programme, involving MOD police, RAF personnel and the deployment of 2 infantry battalions with helicopters in support. Both these battalions will be in place by tomorrow morning. For the period of the major CND demonstration on Sunday 11th December, a third infantry battalion will be ready to be deployed on base if required to strengthen perimeter security. These arrangements should suffice to contain any incursions which the civil police are unable to prevent, to keep demonstrators away from sensitive areas and to prevent confrontations with armed USAF personnel.

5. The operational staffs concern with this planning have been in close touch at local level with the Thames Valley Police. I should, however, like to take this opportunity of emphasising the importance which I attach to what we understand to be the intentions of the Thames Valley Police themselves to mount a substantial operation outside the base. This is, of course, the only means by which demonstrators can effectively be prevented from cutting the fence from the outside.

6. I am copying this letter to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, to the Home Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

  
Ministry of Defence

8th December 1983

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