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QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

8 December 1983

Dear David,

Yes m

Prime Minister

Content? DMS  
8/12

POLICING OF DEMONSTRATIONS: GREENHAM COMMON 10-12 DECEMBER

The Home Secretary believes that the Prime Minister will wish to be aware of information from the Thames Valley Police about major demonstrations planned to take place at Greenham Common on Saturday 10 to Monday 12 December, and the police operational planning to deal with them.

The significance of the week-end is that it is the first anniversary of the first major demonstrations at Greenham and the anniversary of the announcement of the decision to site cruise missiles there. The Greenham Peace Women (GPW) have for some time been canvassing for support from throughout the country for a large scale, all women demonstration. With reluctance, the National Executive of CND have accepted that men should not take part, and have recommended CND members to support a "Women Only Action" to "Refuse Cruise". It appears, however, that many CND groups are unwilling to accept this recommendation and may mount their own, simultaneous demonstrations at Greenham. The prospect is of three separate groups - the GPW, CND Women and other CND supporters - acting independently, with a potential for disorganised and to some extent unpredictable action.

The largest numbers of demonstrators are expected on Sunday, the day specified by the CND. In their discussions with the police, the CND have estimated that about 30,000 people will attend. Estimates from CND organisers of the numbers for previous demonstrations - as opposed to their claims of the size of attendance after those events - have been generally accurate. At present, the intelligence available to the police is that there will be at least 15,000 people, with a strong possibility that that number will be exceeded.

The police expect, however, that demonstrators will begin to arrive on Friday night, with numbers increasing throughout Saturday, either to try to take action then or to camp overnight. On past experience, bad and cold weather will not necessarily deter some thousands of people staying overnight. Similarly, the police are planning for the contingency that appreciable numbers of people may stay on until Monday, and perhaps be joined by new arrivals that day, in order to attempt to blockade traffic on the first day of the working week.

The range of tactics which demonstrators may attempt to employ at various times over the three days include encircling the base, obstructing the highway and blockading the gates. One suggestion which had been made is to attempt to block all major roads to Greenham, including the M4, on Saturday.

It is also likely that attempts will be made to cut the perimeter fence with bolt cutters. In anticipation of this, the police have obtained warrants to search the peace camps in advance, if their sources indicate that the women there have cutting equipment with them. The police will also be alert to the possibility that some demonstrators may bring bolt cutters with them: possession of equipment for committing criminal damage, or with intent to pass the equipment to another person for that purpose, is an arrestable offence.

The police currently plan to have a total of about 600 officers on duty on each of Saturday and Monday which, allowing for shift and off-duty times, will enable some 400 officers to be deployed during the daytime. The comparable numbers for Sunday are a total of upwards of 900, and a deployment capacity of 750. As well as Thames Valley officers, there will be reinforcements from the Metropolitan Police (including mounted officers), Avon and Somerset, Bedfordshire, Hampshire, Surrey and Wiltshire. A police helicopter will be available for use throughout, and nearby Newbury race course will be used as the operational headquarters, and as a charging centre if necessary.

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We understand that there is close and effective liaison between the police and the local military authorities.

The police have undertaken to update us on Friday, and I will let you know if their assessment, and so their plans, change significantly.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

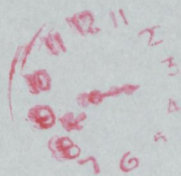
Hugh Taylor

H. H. TAYLOR

David Barclay, Esq.

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9 December 1983

Policing at Greenham Common

Thank you for your letter of 8 December setting out information from the Thames Valley Police about the demonstrations planned at Greenham Common this weekend, and the plans they have made to deal with these.

The Prime Minister has noted these arrangements without comment.

DB

Hugh Taylor, Esq.,  
Home Office.

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