



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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MO 25/3/4

15 September 1986

Dear Charles,

Prime Minister

This is background material on points which

may be raised during your visit

to BFG, particularly at the press conference & in your interviews with British Forces Broadcasting Services.

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO BRITISH FORCES GERMANY

CDP 15/9

Thank you for your letter of 13th September 1986. I attach below:

- Bull points on the British contribution to the Central Front and the role of British Forces Germany.
- Defensive briefing on military low flying in Germany and Army training in Germany which expands on the material in the Prime Minister's Summit briefing.
- Lines to take and background notes on aspects of conditions of service which may be raised by families;
- A line to take and comment on yesterday's Sunday Telegraph article on overstretch.

These taken together should also cover all the points which may come up in the Prime Minister's interviews with BFBS radio and television.

Please let me know if there is anything more that would be helpful.

I am sending a copy of this to Robert Culshaw (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

Yours sincerely,
Jeremy Wright

(J S WRIGHT)

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PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO BRITISH FORCES GERMANY

- The presence of British Forces Germany (BAOR 55,000, RAF(G) 11,000) is the most tangible manifestation of our commitment to NATO's strategy of forward defence and flexible response.
- A massive contribution. About one third of the British Regular Army. But this is because we recognise that NATO's security is Britain's security. The Central Region is NATO's heartland in Europe. The forward defence of Germany is the forward defence of Britain itself.
- Together with other NATO allies we are responsible for a vital sector of NATO's Central Region.
- Our commitment (under the modified Brussels Treaty) to maintain 55,000 troops and a tactical air force on the mainland of Europe, as previous administrations have done for over 25 years, is beyond doubt. British servicemen and their families will remain in Germany, backed by a very extensive commitment for rapid reinforcement from UK in an emergency. BAOR would have total force of 150,000 on mobilisation. Major equipment programmes are under way (Challenger, Tornado) to maintain the effectiveness of these forces.
- British Forces Germany play a key role in the close bilateral UK/German defence relationship. We also work together in the multilateral fora (WEU, IEPG, Eurogroup) which aim to strengthen the European contribution to the NATO Alliance.
- Our mutual interests are particularly reflected in the equipment field, where we are each other's most important collaborative partners (Tornado, EFA).

D/Sec(AS)33/3/1

BRIEF FOR

PRIME MINISTER'S AND CHANCELLOR KOHL'S VISIT TO BFG 17 SEPTEMBER

MILITARY LOW FLYING IN FRG

LINE TO TAKE (Defensive)

- Given problems experienced by UK population, share your concern about the effect that military low flying may have on the general public.
- RAF have extended their voluntary restrictions on low level operations in FRG.
- But remain concerned about effect restrictions will have on our ability to train effectively.
- Will continue to do all we can in the spirit of our agreement to reduce low level noise burden on local population.

D/Sec(AS)33/3/1

BRIEF FOR

PRIME MINISTER'S AND CHANCELLOR KOHL'S VISIT TO BFG 17 SEPTEMBER

MILITARY LOW FLYING IN FRG

LINE TO TAKE (Defensive)

Given the problems already experienced by our own population, we share your concern about the effect that military low flying may have on the general public. Following the meeting between Mr Younger and Dr Wörner on 17 February and the one between our Chiefs of Staff at Ramstein on 7-11 April the RAF have extended their voluntary restrictions on low level operations in FRG, as have the USAFE. We remain concerned about the effect that the restrictions requested will have on our ability to train effectively, nevertheless we will continue to do all we can in the spirit of our agreement to reduce the low level noise burden on your population.

PRIME MINISTER'S AND CHANCELLOR KOHL'S VISIT TO BFG 17 SEPTEMBER

MILITARY LOW FLYING IN FRG

BACKGROUND NOTE

1. The Prime Minister will be aware of the concern of the West German Government about the impact of training activities, including military low flying, on the local population in the Federal Republic. The extent of the growing domestic political pressures on the West German Government from their own supporters (as well as the 'Greens') to do something about the effects of Army training and low flying has emerged sharply. The German complaints are not simply confined to the activities of the British Forces, but also apply to other visiting forces.

2. Low flying training was one of the subjects discussed by the Defence Secretary and Dr Wörner at their meeting on 17 February 1986 when Dr Wörner asked that HQRAF Germany adopt a number of voluntary measures aimed at reducing disturbance to the German public. These comprised:

- a. limiting the low flying content of each sortie to not more than 50 minutes;
- b. banning all low flying between 1230-1330 hours May-October;

c. flying at the minimum height of 250 feet during the final attack run to targets only.

MILITARY DISCUSSIONS

3. We have accepted the spirit of the 50 minute limitation although we have reserved the right to conduct some longer sorties principally involving the Tornado. To compensate, sorties by some other aircraft will be shorter. At the COMAAFCF Chief of Staff Conference at Ramstein 7-11 April we also accepted the mid-day break even though this will cause some operational problems. However, we maintained our concern about the effect that the 250 foot restriction would have on training but, in the spirit of the requirement, we agreed to reduce the amount of time that RAF aircraft would spend at the lower level. CinC RAFG wrote to General Eimler, the German Chief of Air Staff, accordingly, on 15 April and all RAF units were instructed to reduce the amount of time spent at the lower level. Except for the US our allies appeared to accept the voluntary restrictions.

FORMAL RESTRICTIONS

4. Subsequent to the Ramstein meeting, however, MOD Bonn sought to have a much more specific and detailed 250 foot restriction formally embodied in the AFCENT Low Flying Handbook - the publication which regulates all low flying in the Central Region. We believed

that this was not only not in the spirit of the agreement reached but also was not acceptable if adequate training was to be gained by out aircrew. With the support of USAFE, we proposed an alternative amendment. CinC RAF Germany in a further letter of 12 May proposed to General Eimler that the limitation of the 250 foot element of a low level sortie should be expressed in more general terms. CinC

USAFE wrote to General Eimler in support of this proposal on 16 July which ensured that the UK was not politically isolated or embarrassed. In his signal of 29 July to CinC RAF Germany General Eimler accepted our proposal.

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ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING ISSUES - BRITISH ARMY IN GERMANYLINE TO TAKE (DEFENSIVE)

- Fully recognise the Federal Republic's environmental concerns and the need to reconcile our vital needs for training with them wherever possible.
- As agreed at the last Summit, our officials are seeking ways of easing the problems in the forum of the Anglo-German Coordinating Group. Next meeting is probably scheduled for early November.
- Steps have already been taken towards meeting German concerns at Soltau-Lueneberg.

BACKGROUND

1. The Prime Minister will recall the concerns of the West German Government about the impact of Army training activities there, principally at the Soltau-Lueneberg Training Area to which Chancellor Kohl referred at their meeting on 27 November 1985.
2. Soltau-Lueneberg Training Area, which is a 'dry' training area (ie no live firing), is in the popular tourist area of Lueneberg Heath. Our agreement with the West German Government provides for the permanent use by BAOR of certain areas and imposes various obligations and consultation procedures on the rest. The German Government has focused on a number of restrictions applied by the Bundeswehr which they would wish us also to adopt and which would further restrict our training, particularly at weekends, and stop it altogether.

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3. The Secretary of State agreed with Dr Worner in February that German and British staffs should pursue discussions to try and find a mutually acceptable solution to the problem. An 'Anglo-German Coordinating Group' on Army Training was therefore formed. The Group's first meeting (in Bonn on 15 May) went well. The German side recognised the measures already taken by BAOR and welcomed a number of new measures to be taken by BAOR on Soltau-Lueneberg, including the cessation of all battle simulation on Sundays and public holidays and after 1300 on Saturdays. Both sides were confident that there would be a noticeable diminution in the impact on the population of training during 1986. The second meeting is probably to be held in early November.

4. Environmental questions concerning the Sennelager Training Area may also be raised by the Chancellor. In 1981 we announced our intention to site an Urban Combat Training Installation complex close to an existing range at Sennelager. This aroused little interest at the time but the submission of the planning application in 1983 was badly received locally. The particular point of complaint centred on the proximity of the proposed site to Augustdorf and the unacceptable noise levels to which the inhabitants would be subjected. However, it has not been possible since then to identify an alternative, mutually acceptable site. We are now actively considering how and when we should resubmit our case.

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PRIME MINISTER AND CHANCELLOR KOHL'S VISIT TO BRITISH FORCES GERMANY
17TH SEPTEMBER

LOCAL OVERSEAS ALLOWANCE CUTBACKS: LINE TO TAKE

- LOA paid to servicemen to compensate them for additional essential day to day living costs due to living abroad.
- LOA rates revised periodically (up or down) as relative costs between UK and Germany change.
- Reductions in LOA not through arbitrary cuts but because local costs reducing by comparison with UK costs.
- No system perfect but LOA provides best protection to ensure servicemen neither better or worse off than colleagues at home.

If pressed

- Services have enjoyed full pay comparability under this Government which has kept Service pay ahead of UK inflation.

LOCAL OVERSEAS ALLOWANCE (LOA) AND THE FORCES FIXED RATE OF EXCHANGE

(FFR)

BACKGROUND

The FFR system is designed to provide protection to Service personnel overseas. LOA is expressed in £ sterling and is based on an assumption that approximately 65-70% of net pay will be spent in country. Changes in exchange rates will cause the £ sterling LOA sum to increase or decrease correspondingly. Thus personnel who save more money in the UK than allowed for in the LOA expenditure assumption will lose money when the £ sterling strengthens. When the £ sterling loses value, LOA will be increased in sterling terms to maintain local purchasing power eg the same number of DMs. This latter situation is currently the trend and LOA rates have been increased accordingly.

UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS OF SERVICE DEPENDANTS IN GERMANY - BACKGROUND

A common source of complaint among Service personnel in BFG is the limited range of opportunities available for Service wives to find work there. The problem is exacerbated because under present regulations dependants (including older children) are not generally eligible for DHSS or unemployment benefits when in Germany. This issue has been under consideration by MOD and DHSS Ministers for some time though no solution is yet in sight. There are particular problems in relation to EEC reciprocal agreements. MOD is also considering what action might be taken to increase the employment opportunities for dependants in *British* Service organisations in Germany.

LEAVE TRAVEL SCHEME - BACKGROUND

Like all Service personnel overseas, those in British Forces Germany benefit from a scheme which provides leave travel at public expense. The BFG scheme was designed to reflect the need to get away from war-torn Germany in the 1940s and has recently attracted some criticism from the Treasury who would like to see it updated. MOD is carrying out a comprehensive review of all overseas leave schemes as part of a wider review of Armed Forces allowances. The views of BFG on what they would like from a leave scheme have been sought and will be taken into account during the review.

LINE TO TAKE

OVERSTRETCH IN BAOR? ^{SUNDAY} (TELEGRAPH ARTICLE)

1. BAOR is one of the key elements of our defence policy: the forward defence of the Federal Republic is the forward defence of Britain itself. We therefore intend not only fully to stand by our Brussels Treaty to maintain the strength BAOR numbers at 55,000, but substantially to improve our contribution. Thus we are planning major enhancements including a new armoured regiment in 1988, a new air defence regiment and new generations of equipments, not least a 7th regiment of Challenger tanks. This means more manpower is needed. We intend that Army numbers in BAOR will rise from 55,000 to 56,000 by the end of the decade. Of course we expect a great deal of our soldiers in Germany and elsewhere, but we are taking steps to ensure that our units in BAOR continue to be properly equipped and manned for their task.

OVERSTRETCH IN BAOR

BACKGROUND

1. The Sunday Telegraph of 14 September (copy annexed) refers to views in HQ BAOR that numbers should be increased from 55,000 to 58,000 to relieve overstretch.
2. Cmnd 8288 (the 1981 Defence Review) announced that BAOR numbers, previously planned to increase, would be held at 55,000. It subsequently became clear that essential improvements to BAOR's capabilities in the 1980s (the introduction of new equipments such as the CHALLENGER tank, the WARRIOR armoured personnel carrier and the Multiple Launch Rocket System, the creation of an extra in-theatre armoured regiment and a new air defence regiment) could not be managed within that ceiling. Two solutions were adopted:
 - a. Exercise Lean Look identified 4,000 posts in the support area that could be redeployed to the front line by 1990; and
 - b. Following Ministerial correspondence in May 1984, it was agreed that the ceiling would rise to 56,000 by the end of the decade. This was made public in the 1985 Defence White Paper.
3. Thus on the basis of current establishment figures, BAOR's forward manpower plans are in balance up to 1990 (though beyond that date new requirements are apparent for which compensating manpower savings have not yet been identified). However, HQ BAOR believe that current unit establishments are in many cases too tightly drawn, disguising real overstretch. In addition, some 1,000 soldiers are

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reckoned to be "misemployed" on fatigues and domestic duties which would more properly be performed by civilian labour, if funds were available. Lean Look redeployments will provide some relief; but though the savings half of the Lean Look equation is on course, some of the countervailing enhancements have had to be cancelled to allow financial savings to be made from reducing manpower.

4. Quite separate from the requirement for BAOR to be adequately manned for its wartime role is the problem of peacetime overstretch. The demands of the various peacetime commitments, notably the provision of battalions for emergency tours in Northern Ireland, have meant that the intervals between tours for some units is as low as 10 months, compared with the 24 months assessed as the minimum required for adequate training for the wartime role.

5. This situation is undoubtedly increasing the pressure on individual soldiers on the ground, though management action is in hand - eg reducing the level of exercise activity - to alleviate the situation.

Oslo demo puts Bonn on alert

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SECURITY chiefs fear that the pro-IRA demonstrations which marred Mrs Thatcher's visit to Oslo last week may herald a new campaign against British politicians in foreign capitals.

As a result, elaborate security precautions will be taken to protect the British Prime Minister when she visits West Germany this week for talks with Chancellor Kohl in Bonn.

The serious rioting in Norway, which led to a formal apology to Mrs Thatcher from the Norwegian Premier, is believed to have been sparked by a demonstration organised by IRA sympathisers and addressed by Mr Danny Morrison, a leading member of Sinn Féin, the political wing of the provisional IRA.

The incidents in Oslo have increased concern that pro-IRA groups are planning a "road-show" of protests and violent demonstrations against Mrs Thatcher and other British public figures.

Television and newspaper pictures of the violence in Oslo are already being seen as a propaganda triumph for the IRA, and something that the terrorist organisation will try to repeat elsewhere.

Mr Morrison is the subject of an exclusion order under

By ALAN COCHRANE

Britain's anti-terrorist laws and cannot enter mainland UK—but this does not prevent him travelling to other parts of Europe.

British intelligence chiefs will be trying to keep abreast of Mr Morrison's movements this week and will tip off their West German counterparts if they think he is heading for Bonn.

Security for Mrs Thatcher's visit would have been formidable even without the new concern, given the IRA's close links with German terrorist groups such as the Baader Meinhof gang.

Before reaching Bonn, Mrs Thatcher faces a different set of problems when she visits the British Army of the Rhine.

At BAOR headquarters she will hear complaints from senior officers about what they call "unacceptable overstretch problems" within the 55,000-strong Rhine Army.

Manpower cuts combined with increasing commitments, such as a battalion for service in Cyprus now being drawn from within BAOR, have all served to increase pressure on the three armoured divisions which make up Britain's military presence in West Germany.

The amount of time that

front-line units spend away from their home bases in Germany on exercise, combined with rotational duties outside the country has reportedly led to an increase in soldiers and officers choosing to leave the Army rather than extend their term of service.

Senior officers, it is understood, will make the point to Mrs Thatcher that by increasing the manpower available to BAOR by only 3,000 to a total of 58,000, these welfare and operational problems caused by overstretching could be largely solved.

The Army's tendency has been to "put up and make do" according to one cavalry regiment commander in Germany, who gives the warning that "goodwill and thorough professionalism can only go so far to rectify the simple fact that we do not have enough of most things we need."

Mrs Thatcher will be told of the success during a three-year trial of the Army's 6 Airmobile Brigade. It has been working on the concept of a helicopter-borne force able to block Soviet armoured thrusts with anti-tank "screens." The Airmobile Brigade is due to be re-rolled in 1988 as an armoured brigade and Army chiefs are anxious that a replacement should be found from one of the infantry brigades based in England.

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