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COPY NO. 5929th June, 1965CABINETHOME DEFENCE AND THE TERRITORIAL ARMYMemorandum by the Secretary of State for the Home DepartmentIntroduction

In the course of considering what home defence measures are required in the period up to 1971-72, the Ministerial Committee on Civil Defence have reviewed the usefulness of the reserve Army (Territorial Army and Army Emergency Reserve II) for home defence, in connection with the study which is being made by the Ministry of Defence of the future requirement for reserve forces. The purpose of this memorandum is to report our views, which are not unanimous, on this question.

The Reserve Forces

2. The Reserve Army as at present constituted would provide about 161,000 men for home defence on mobilisation; this number includes about 84,000 reservists, most of whom are ex-national servicemen who, under the Army Reserves Act 1964, will be available only until 1969. About 152,000 are in units of the Territorial Army divisions which under existing arrangements will be at the disposal of the civil authorities. They are not earmarked in advance for any particular tasks, except for 12-13 units (9,000 men) for fire-fighting and about 1,000 men for signal and administrative tasks at the regional seats of government.

3. The Territorial Army divisions would be prepared to perform a wide variety of tasks in support of the civil authorities; their primary role would be likely to be helping the police to maintain law and order in circumstances which might involve a widespread breakdown of civil authority.

4. The Territorial Army costs about £35 million a year. The Army Emergency Reserve costs a further £3 million, making a total annual cost for the non-regular Army reserves of £38 million. If the Reserve Army were reorganised on the assumption that no units were to be retained for home defence purposes, there would be a saving of about £20 million a year.

5. In addition to the Reserve Army, up to 20,000 Royal Air Force reservists are earmarked for support of the fire service. The need for this commitment to continue is under separate review. These reservists are also ex-national servicemen whose liability under existing legislation will expire in 1969.



Regular Forces

6. Under present plans some personnel from the following regular forces might be available to support the civil authorities after an attack, although home defence would not be their primary role:-

(a) Royal Navy. All naval personnel not required for conduct of active operations. The numbers available would be small.

(b) Army.

(i) personnel of regular field Army units remaining in the United Kingdom after overseas reinforcement: these would not at present exceed 15,000;

(ii) any personnel of static base units who could be made available (present strength approximately 40,000).

(c) Royal Air Force. All personnel not required for air operations, or for the transport of forces or for communications. The total strength of the Royal Air Force in the United Kingdom is about 16,000 officers and 78,000 airmen and airwomen.

7. Although the total numbers of all three Services available might be substantial, any estimate must be speculative, and in any event there are large areas of the United Kingdom, particularly the west and north, where no regular Army forces are located. Only a small proportion of the Army personnel would be in field force units and upon these there might be prior calls.

Home Defence Review Committee

8. The general approach of the Committee of officials currently examining home defence requirements has been that the reduced threat of attack provides scope, in the period up to 1970-71, for cutting down the existing programme, with emphasis being given to measures which could be expected to make a really significant contribution to national survival and to those which could be valuable in an emergency, but require little or no expenditure in peace. The Committee recognised that the reserve forces could give much valuable assistance to the civil authorities after an attack, but, on the basis of their general approach, which the Ministerial Committee subsequently endorsed, they did not consider that the expenditure of a large annual sum on an organisation which did not appear to them to be of the first importance for national survival could be supported on home defence grounds.

9. There was considerable support for this view when the first report of the Committee of officials was recently considered by the Ministerial Committee on Civil Defence. The reduced threat of attack, particularly in Europe, and the fact that reliance is placed on the deterrent policy for the defence of the United Kingdom, were thought to be very relevant. If further steps were necessary for the preservation of law and order in an emergency, the best course, it was suggested, might be to put further emphasis on police plans and perhaps to secure the support of other regular peace-time services. It should prove possible for the Post Office to take over the work of the 1,000 Territorials allocated to signal work.



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10. The Ministry of Defence support the conclusion of the Home Defence Review Committee and have proposals under consideration for reorganising the Reserve Army for military duties overseas on the assumption that no units are retained for home defence purposes, with consequent savings of up to £20 million a year. If it were decided that a home defence role for the Reserve Army must be retained, these plans would need to be completely recast, with consequent further delay in settling the future of the Reserve Army and at the cost of forgoing a substantial part of the savings which might otherwise be achieved. The primary advantages of military forces for home defence purposes, namely discipline and a cohesive organisation, would be difficult to secure if reserve units were raised purely for assistance to the civil defence services. Their main role would still have to be, ostensibly at least, combat duties, although lower standards could be set for recruitment, equipment and training. However, the Ministry of Defence see serious objections to trying to raise a "second class" force of this nature, which might adversely affect volunteering for Reserve Army units required for purely military duties. Furthermore, any savings that might result would be very much less than could be achieved by dropping the home defence role. For example, if, as has been suggested, a home defence force of 40,000 men, with a war establishment of 80,000, were to be raised, the expected annual savings on the Reserve Army of £20 million would reduce to about £8-10 million. The Ministry of Defence would be unwilling to forgo the larger saving, and would wish the cost of maintaining reservists for home defence purposes, if required, to be met outside the defence budget.

11. But some members of the Ministerial Committee urged the retention of the Territorial Army, primarily for home defence purposes, on the ground that the possibility of preserving public order would be seriously imperilled if it were disbanded. Existing plans for police man-power in war provide for 160,000 persons with full police powers (regular police, special constabulary, recalled ex-police officers and cadets). Even with the reinforcement of the 150,000 soldiers in the Territorial Army, and with assistance from the regular forces of all three Armed Services (paragraph 5), the police assess that they would be gravely short of man-power. Without Territorial Army support the difficulties facing the police in an emergency would be extremely grave and the possibility of preserving public order greatly reduced. There appears to be little prospect of providing from other sources comparable reserves of active, trained and disciplined man-power. In all recent assessments of the measures to be taken in the aftermath of a nuclear attack, a high priority has been shown to be necessary for the maintenance of law and order. Failure to check lawlessness and disorder would increase the likelihood of a breakdown in public control and administration, which would prejudice the distribution of food and essential resources to survivors and put in jeopardy the survival of the nation as an organised entity.

### Conclusion

12. We were not able to resolve these issues and we accordingly agreed to report the opposing views for a decision, which is urgently required by the Ministry of Defence to enable future requirements for reserve forces to be formulated. The alternative courses which appear to be open are:-



- (a) to accept that expenditure on the reserve forces of the Army cannot be justified solely on home defence grounds and to examine the possibility of making other arrangements which would not involve the use of the Reserve Army to assist the police in the event of nuclear attack on the United Kingdom (paragraphs 8 and 9);
- (b) to retain the home defence role of the reserve forces of the Army, with the consequent loss of a saving of up to £20 million a year, depending on the scale of forces to be provided (paragraph 10).

F.S.

Home Office, S. W. 1.

28th June, 1965





