

Secret Whitehall plans for emergency 'involve extensive use of US troops'

By Richard Norton-Taylor

Whitehall officials have secretly drawn up bills which would give the Government, police and military authorities sweeping new powers and hand over parts of the country to control by US forces in the event of an international crisis.

Some of the proposed emergency powers, including creation of extensive ground defence areas where the military would be able to move residents and commandeer their homes, are now being tested in the army exercise, 'Brave Defender',

Three separate bills were approved in 1983 by the Cabinet's home defence committee, chaired by the Home Secretary and including junior ministers from most Whitehall departments. Details of the proposed legislation—whereby MPs would be asked to give up all

their powers in the event of an emergency—appear for the first time in the latest issue of the New Statesman.

Under the Emergency Powers (No 1) Bill, the Government would have the power to designate any suitable part of the country as a ground defence area (GDA). People in these areas could be detained without trial or charge on an order from the Home Secretary.

Under the Emergency Powers (No 2) Bill, these powers would be extended to cover the whole country. Stocks of food, petrol and other goods would be requisitioned, British Rail would be taken over, strikes in major industries would be outlawed, and there would be strict censorship.

These powers would be extended in turn by the Emergency Powers (No. 3) Bill, which would probably be made

law through an Order in Council. Central government would have complete power, with 11 junior ministers appointed by royal warrant as regional commissioners. They could make permanent internment orders against critics or subversives.

The draft legislation would give American forces and military planners new facilities in Britain, part of a secret agreement called the Joint Logistic Plan, signed with the US in 1983.

In the second phase of Brave Defender next week some 5,000 "hostile" forces, including SAS and Royal Marine troops, will attempt to infiltrate "key points," including sea ports, airports, RAF airfields, army bases and radio and TV transmitters. These points will be defended by 65,000 troops.

The New Statesman reports

that some Government emergency planners wanted to hold the exercise as though full emergency powers had been granted, but were successfully opposed.

The Home Office last night did not deny the existence of the new planned emergency legislation. It said in a statement: "As part of their overall emergency planning, successive governments have worked on possible necessary legislation for wartime emergencies. But what is actually introduced would depend on the circumstances and the wishes of Parliament and of the government of the time."

Mr Denzil Davies, Labour front bench spokesman on defence, attacked the Government for not allowing the emergency bills or Brave Defender to be debated in the Commons.

Sea-going war game tackles the Soviet sub

By David Fairhall, Defence Correspondent

While the army is out this weekend practising the defence of Britain's key military installations against Soviet saboteurs the navy will be tackling the menace — as Nato military planners see it — of the Soviet nuclear powered submarine.

Nato's exercise Ocean Safari, which, like the controversial home defence exercise, Brave Defender, is the biggest of its kind ever mounted, has moved into the Eastern Atlantic area commanded by Admiral Sir Nicholas Hunt of the Royal Navy from an underground bunker at Northwood, Middlesex.

There is a sort of link between these two war games in that one obvious way of infiltrating saboteurs in a premeditated war would be to land them from the dozens of Soviet merchant ships and fishing vessels which regularly use British ports.

The declared purpose of Ocean Safari is to practise defending the north Atlantic convoy routes along which 500 merchant ships a month would have to pass if Nato were ever involved in a prolonged East/West conflict

In this second phase of the exercise, convoys of chartered freighters will be converging on the south-west approaches from Iceland, Scapa Flow and Lisbon, under attack from "Orange" submarines, aircraft and surface warships. The convoys will be defended by a US carrier striking force, which itself will be protected by an anti-submarine group led by the Royal Navy's HMS Illustrious, and a surface battle group assembled round the refurbished American second world war battleship, Iowa.

As far as these training exercises reflect changes in naval thinking and ultimately in Nato's politico-military strategy, the important emphasis here is on the "forward defence"—a term the sailors have shrewdly borrowed from soldiers in Germany—of the Norwegian Sea.

Once the main convoy that started out from Boston, Massachusetts, last month, has safely been delivered to this side of the Atlantic, the US carrier, America, and her escorts will move through the Iceland-UK gap, where their wartime job would be to prevent Soviet submarines reaching the deep ocean seelanes from their bases round Murmansk.

Men of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, notably Marines of Conachio Company — the force set up to guard Faslane and provide oil rig security — will also be taking part

Ocean Safari will end with a bang on September 19, when the Iowa looses off a demonstration broadside from her 16-inch guns somewhere off Land's End before steaming up the Channel to give her crew a run ashore in Amsterdam.

Acknowledging yesterday that it might seem surprising to bring such an old lady back into the front line, Admiral Hunt pointed out that the Iowa still possessed powerful communications and firepower, immensely augmented by the ship-launched version of the Tomahawk nuclear cruise missile based at Greenham Common.

"We would be mad not to use her", he said

ately, would include some of our own countrymen. "But the main threat comes from the Russian special forces, the Spetsnaz. They would work in small teams and aim to knock out radar sites and assassinate key individuals in the command chain a few hours before the outbreak of full-scale fighting. Some of these operatives could already have visited the UK as tourists or posing as lorry drivers to receive targets." He added that some caches of weapons and equipment would be ready for collection by teams landing from boats or submarines or parachuting. For the purpose of exercise Brave Defender, about 1,000 regular soldiers form 24th Infantry Brigade in England will play the role of Soviet commandos. Opposing them in Scotland will be 400 men and women from a variety of regular, reserve, and Territorial units, including some from the newly formed Home Service Force.

By IAN BRUCE
Defence Correspondent

SOVIET commandos who would be used to attack key targets in Britain in advance of a major war may already have carried out reconnaissance missions here while posing as tourists or long-distance lorry drivers. It was claimed yesterday by Brigadier Rory Walker, the intelligence and staff officer at Army headquarters in Scotland, said the Spetsnaz troops — Russia's equivalent of the SAS — could already have visited the UK to gain first-hand knowledge of the areas in which they would be expected to operate in wartime.

In a briefing on the biggest home defence exercise to be held on British soil since the Second World War, codenamed Brave Defender, Brigadier Walker outlined the threat posed by teams of highly trained saboteurs and assassins.

During the next two weeks, more than 65,000 British Servicemen and women will test their ability to defend key points such as military bases, command centres, and radar installations against Spetsnaz raids.

Scotland, with its nuclear submarine bases, communications, and naval facilities, would be a prime target area. More than 70 such "key points" north of the Border will be involved in the exercise.

Brigadier Walker said: "In the run-up to conflict, we could expect saboteurs from high-grade people infiltrated into the country and from 'sleeper' networks which, unfortunately, would be a prime target for chains, and naval facilities, airfields, radar installations, centres, submarine bases, command centres, and Spetsnaz raids.

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