



SCOTTISH CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT
420 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow G2. Tel: 041-3312878

3.4 3rd September 1985

BACKGROUND MEDIA BRIEFING

CND'S CRITIQUE OF EXERCISE BRAVE DEFENDER

CND's critique of this latest Home Defence Exercise is based on four main objections: 1. The selective choice of 'key points'; 2. The fact that the exercise ignores the probability of escalation to a nuclear exchange; 3. The effect of Home Defence measures on the civil liberties of British citizens; 4. The use of the Spetsnaz as the most likely military threat.

1. The Choice of 'Key Points'

A nationwide list of key points is approved and maintained by a Cabinet Key Points sub-committee - the list includes strategic and tactical nuclear bases, command, control, communication and intelligence centres, essential industrial plant, as well as key Government sites. Although details of the list are classified, War Plan UK (by Duncan Campbell) lists the locations of such sites.

According to Michael Heseltine "a representative selection of installations will be chosen as key points for exercise purposes." (Hansard 21/3/85). However, it is known that the key points selected for Brave Defender do not include major nuclear bases such as Greenham Common - which would of course be vital targets in a real war.

2. Escalation to Nuclear War

Brave Defender will divert attention away from the overriding threat facing Britain - that of nuclear war. The exercise assumes a non-nuclear conflict and does not consider escalation to nuclear exchange. The exercise, with its emphasis on the 'Spetsnaz threat', will have the effect of helping to shift popular perception of the threat away from nuclear war to that of conventional attack by the Soviet Union.

Even if we accept the Government's claim that the Spatsnaz pose a serious threat to Britain - which is open to debate - as soon as they are used, we will be on course for a full-scale military conflict, with the likelihood of escalation to nuclear war.

It is widely believed that the Spatsnaz would be deployed at most only hours before the launch of a full-scale military offensive, so as not to alert the defenders. If a major conventional conflict broke out in Europe, it is likely to escalate to nuclear war for a number of reasons:

- * The facilities providing the military chain of command in Britain are shared by conventional and nuclear weapons - there is no possibility of any selectively conventional target attack.
- * Any attack on British or American nuclear weapon bases and facilities based in Britain would bring enormous pressure to bear upon the nuclear weapon controllers to 'use them or lose them'.
- * NATO refuses to adopt a policy of 'no first use'. NATO insists on the option of using nuclear weapons first if losing a conventional conflict in Europe.

3. The Nature of Home Defence

The priority of Home Defence is to keep Britain going as a NATO forward base, with police and military units ensuring the smooth transition to war. In this period, Home Defence forces will be focussing on controlling a public panicking as supplies run out, fleeing obvious target areas, and organising resistance to holocaust. Home Defence forces would have four key tasks:

- * the internment of potential 'subversives'
- * the requisitioning of supplies
- * controlling Essential Service Routes
- * guarding key points

According to the Ministry of Defence, the aim of Brave Defender is to test "plans and procedures for the ground defence of vital installations" (Hansard 21/3/85). A key aim, in other words, is to

practise measures involved in the guarding of vital airbases and ports, through which US Forces and supplies would pass into Europe in a time of crisis. Such measures will involve drastic infringements of the civil liberties of the British public.

4. The Spetsnaz Threat?

There is very little published information about the Spetsnaz. The only major published article was written by a Soviet army officer, who has defected to the West and writes under the pseudonym Viktor Suvorov. Suvorov argues that Spetsnaz agents live behind enemy lines in peacetime - finding jobs or living close to transport and power installations and waiting for the order to put them out of action. Additional Spetsnaz units are to be dropped behind enemy lines on a massive scale in the early stages of war. According to Suvorov, "the main Spetsnaz forces will be dropped simultaneously on all fighting fronts."

Duncan Campbell's view (War Plan UK p.135), is that although there is some chance of Soviet Special Forces making raids on Britain, their impact would be minor. Other researchers question the extent to which Spetsnaz are a genuine worry for Britain (see, e.g. 'Defining the Spetsnaz Threat' by Gerard Holden, ADIU Report, July - August 1985).

However, the shadowy, elusive 'Spetsnaz threat' is an ideal way of maintaining people's faith in the 'Soviet threat', which is a major justification for maintaining the arms race.

For further information contact:

Keith Bovey
041 339 8474