

SCRUTINY

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CONSCRIPTS FOR AMERICAN FORCES PLAN ADMITTED

Government ministers last week acknowledged that a secret 'US-UK lines of Communication Arrangement' does exist — and provides for food, fuel, hospitals, transport and the services of British workers to be provided to the Americans in a crisis. The US Army is also negotiating to take over an NHS hospital in Surrey, intending to 'mothball' it for wartime US use only

preparing at least 37 detailed joint plans. Questioned about conscript British civilian labour, for example, Employment Minister Kenneth Clarke said that the UK would 'try to ensure that their requirements for civilian manpower support are met. [But] detailed planning in support of the Arrangement is classified'.

Rear-Admiral Eugene Carroll, former Joint Director of Military Operations for the US European Command, told the NS last year that highly specific 'quotas' of impressed British labour were required in the plans. Unemployed people as well as skilled workers would be directed

MINISTERS admitted that Britain's obligations under the Arrangement with the US include 'civilian manpower support', and that revelations in the *New Statesman* last year (6 and 13 September 1985) about extensive plans to hand over British civilian resources to the US in war were accurate.

Details of the US-UK Lines of Communication (USUKLOC) Arrangement, which was secretly set up in 1973, emerged in a series of parliamentary answers to Tony Banks MP. Defence Minister Lord Trefgarne has written to MPs that the Arrangement 'permits the US to establish, operate and maintain lines of communication and ancillary facilities in the UK for use under emergency conditions'.

It is officially described as an 'arrangement', not 'agreement', because otherwise it would have to be an international treaty, and registered (publicly) with the United Nations. Our original report erroneously gave the date the agreement was signed as 1983, not 1973. But agreement on new planning requirements for USUKLOC was reached in 1983, and a Joint Logistic Plan was then agreed.

Trefgarne admitted that 'as part of the Arrangement, the UK has agreed to ensure that requests for transport, medical and other facilities would be considered'. In fact, such 'consideration' has gone as far as



British dole queues will provide conscript labour for the US military in war, according to Rear-Admiral Carroll, formerly of US European Command

into 'what is laughingly called more constructive efforts'.

Junior health minister Ray Whitney told Banks that 'contingency plans for ... NHS resources' did cover 'NATO military casualties'. Such plans would be 'incorporated in those for the NHS as a whole in time of crisis or war'.

The plans in fact provide for about 30 large general hospitals to be emptied of NHS patients and turned over to exclusive US use, according to civil service sources. But the identity of the hospitals to be commandeered has been kept secret from health authorities, who are nevertheless required to make civil defence war plans involving the use

of the same hospitals by ordinary British casualties. The DHSS does not dispute that estimates of US requirements in the event of war have not been shown to health authorities.

The health minister also claimed that the US is trying to reduce this 'burden on the NHS' by establishing its own hospitals — although 'detailed planning is classified'. But reporters on a Surrey newspaper have just discovered that the Army is thinking of acquiring a 'contingency' hospital at Banstead. US officials admitted last week that they 'have some interest' in taking over the 600-bed Banstead hospital, which will be closed in September by North West Thames Regional Health

Authority. The US Army has also provoked a storm in the area, when in September last year it acquired a former RAF hospital at Chessington.

Other government ministers have also admitted that their departments have also made joint war plans with the US. Energy Secretary Peter Walker said that plans for the US to obtain the services of workers in the energy supply and distribution industries 'have been laid under the Arrangement'.

Transport Secretary Nicholas Ridley acknowledged that similar plans exist for civil aviation, port shipping and other transport workers. The government had 'agreed to consider requests' from other 'civil aviation facilities including airports and aircraft' to be given to the US. Agriculture Minister Peggy Fenner gave a similar answer in respect of food and farm resources.

The government's responses first appear to contradict our claim last year that the USUKLOC agreement gives 'priority' to American military requirements. Ministers claim that there is 'proviso that the UK government would always have priority in its national resources'. But what that means is that the British military would have priority over the military in the use of British resources — with civilian needs coming not second, but third.

Chris Davies/Network