

'Brave Defender'

exercise tests defence plans

CIVIL DEFENCE

Not so very T.
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EXERCISE "Brave Defender," which will take place throughout mainland Britain from Sept. 6 to 13, is a £3 million joint-service military exercise designed to practise Britain's defence against attack from conventional air weapons and from Soviet highly-trained "Spetsnaz" sabotage squads and other specialist troops.

For the first time on British soil, the 34 signatory nations of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 have been invited to send observers to witness it.

The largest conventional exercise to be held in the United Kingdom since the second world war, it will involve more than 65,000 men and women.

They comprise 6,500 from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, 55,000 from the Army and 25,500 from the Royal Air Force, including their Reserve, Territorial and Auxiliary Forces elements and the recently constituted 2,500-strong Home Service Force.

Some 1,000 members of the United States Army, at Burtonwood, Lancs., and of the Third United States Air Force, stationed at Bentwaters, at Woodbridge, will also be taking part for the first time in a British national exercise of this kind.

'Destroy at once'

"Brave Defender" will be the first exercising of a new concept of operations for Britain's defence, previously based solely on a disaster relief-type operation following a nuclear attack and its immediate aftermath.

Now based on the primacy of the civil police, it involves the military guarding of selected key points (KPs) — such as communications centres, radar sites, ammunition depots and sea ports — against the "Spetsnaz" attack, and the provision of mobile helicopter-borne reaction forces at all levels to counter the ground threat to KPs which is beyond the capacity of immediate defenders.

Britain is already divided into military geographical districts, but these have been further sub-divided into Tactical Areas of Responsibility (TAOR), roughly corresponding to county areas, for which a specific

commander is now responsible, and then further down into sectors.

Initially, guards are now allocated for the defence of each Key Point throughout the land, together with its immediate surrounding area of tactical importance in which an enemy could approach or site a "stand-off" weapon, termed its Ground Defence Area (GDA).

The difficult military Home Defence task is first to discourage the enemy from attacking the KP, second, to disrupt any such attack made, and thirdly to defeat him.

Successful action thus depends on the classic features of good early warning of the enemy's intention, first class intelligence, the means to deploy forces quickly and excellent communications. Once the enemy has captured the KP, he will destroy it at once and then vanish, so counter-attack is academic.

For the newly-established Home Service Force, "Brave Defender" will be its first exercise and for some members of it, their first day's training.

The civil police will be co-operating all they can, but because the law-and-order life of the nation must continue day-by-day, such participation is constrained. In Durham, for instance, they will not be able to participate at all.

Britain's civil population are not involved in "Brave Defender" although many have already written in to Lt-Gen. Sir John Akehurst, the UK Army Commander and Exercise Director, asking to be allowed to do so.

All 150 KPs being defended in the exercise will actually be attacked by "enemy forces" at some time or other, but much of the exercise activity will actually take place either on simulated KPs, sited in Defence Ministry training areas, or, with the owner's prior permission, on private land in less populated areas.

As Lt-Gen. Akehurst said yesterday: "We could not have guns going off in cities, possibly causing alarm and despondency."

The "enemy" forces attacking such KPs will wear normal British uniform, but those engaged in reconnaissance may wear civilian clothes, but will carry exercise identification papers.

The assassination role of the Soviet "Spetsnaz" forces will not be practised, nor will any

A ministerial decision has been taken to overrule plans to include a simulation of chemical warfare in next month's war game. The exercise, called Brave Defender, is the biggest to take place since the war, and has the SAS taking the role of Warsaw Pact forces on a massive sabotage mission. The reason for the change of plans was the thought of 65,000 servicemen crawling over the countryside dressed in NBC (nuclear, biological, chemical) suits. Ministers apparently thought that the appearance of cybermen wearing bee-keepers' hats would raise two deep feelings in British citizens: firstly, abject fear and, secondly, a profound desire for everyone to be issued with similar outfits in case of war. The suits will thus be worn only out of the public gaze by RAF ground crews, cleaning aircraft "contaminated" by nerve gas. The decision contrasts with West German war exercises in which NBC suits are regularly donned. Yesterday a MoD spokesman said that the war game differed from the full-scale invasion exercises mounted in Europe. He had "no idea" if the original plans had been modified to exclude chemical war simulation.