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REFERENCE STAFF
[illegible] MINISTRY
84
- 8 MAY 1984
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

DUS(P)276/84

4 May 84

PS/SofS

Copy to:
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Sec/ACDS(P)
PA/AUS(D Staff)
Head of DIS(OS)
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1. SO/DG I
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3. AD/DI(RG)
4. AG I

SOVIET CONCERN ABOUT A SURPRISE NATO ATTACK

1. Earlier this month, the Secretary of State discussed a recent JIC Report (JIC(84)(N)45) about Soviet reactions to Exercise Able Archer 83 with the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. At the conclusion of the meeting the Prime Minister said that officials should urgently consider how to approach the Americans on the question of possible Soviet misapprehensions about a surprise NATO attack.

2. [redacted] has now had a preliminary discussion with [redacted] who confirmed that [redacted] the unusual Soviet reactions to Able Archer 83. [redacted] about the conclusions reached in JIC Report (JIC(84)(N)45), and we need to ensure that we are not perceived in Washington as [redacted] However, it may be significant that, as a consequence of the JIC report, [redacted]

3. We now need to put the discussion on to a more political level. Whatever the reliability of the specific JIC assessment, its paper has served as a catalyst for consideration of the inherent advantages of agreeing some confidence building measures relating to nuclear command post exercises along lines similar to those which already cover some nuclear and conventional field exercises. FCO and MOD have therefore agreed the attached paper setting out a number of themes which would serve as a basis for more detailed discussion with the Americans.

4. If the Prime Minister agrees, it is our intention to pass this paper urgently to the Americans and to aim at a detailed discussion with US officials in mid-May, ideally before the Foreign Secretary

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raises the matter himself with [redacted] during the NATO Ministerial meeting in Washington at the end of the month.

5. I would be grateful for the Secretary of State's agreement for the paper to go forward.

[redacted]

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