

REVIEW OF HOME PREPAREDNESS IN THE LIGHT OF THE CUBA
CRISIS AND OF EXERCISE FELSTEAD

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H.D.C.(62) 3rd Meeting

COPY NO.

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CABINET
HOME DEFENCE COMMITTEEMINUTES of a Meeting of the Committee
held in Conference Room 'D', Cabinet Office,
Great George Street, S.W.1., on
MONDAY, 26th NOVEMBER, 1962, at 11.00 a.m.PRESENT:Sir Burke Trend,
Treasury (In the Chair)Sir Charles Cunningham,
Home OfficeSir Robert Scott,
Ministry of DefenceSir John Winnifrith,
Ministry of Agriculture,
Fisheries and FoodSir Thomas Padmore,
Ministry of TransportGeneral D.S.S. O'Connor,
Deputy Chief of the
Defence StaffVice-Admiral Sir Varyl Begg,
Vice-Chief of Naval StaffLt.Gen. Sir William Pike,
Vice-Chief of the
Imperial General StaffAir Vice-Marshal
T.O. Prickett,
Assistant Chief of the
Air Staff (Operations)THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:

THE CHAIRMAN said that, in the light of the Cuba crisis in the previous month, the Prime Minister had asked for an assurance that Government War Book planning was sufficiently flexible to enable us to respond quickly and appropriately both to a threat of war not immediately involving the United Kingdom or NATO, and to a sudden emergency in which we might have not more than two or three days' warning of the outbreak of war. In considering these questions, the Committee would wish to take into account the lessons learned in Exercise FELSTEAD, a preliminary report on which (H.D.C.(62) 12) was before them, and certain proposals put forward by the Home Office (H.D.C.(62) 13).

The following were the main points made in discussion -

Phasing of Government War Book Measures

(a) It would be useful to identify Government War Book measures which could be effective within two to three days and to assess the additional cost in peace-time of having these "two day" measures ready. It might then be possible to phase action in the Precautionary Stage in such a way as to ensure that at least a minimum of essential action could be completed quickly. This would not, however, affect the need in a Precautionary Stage to put in hand simultaneously other measures which would take longer to complete.

(b) It would be useful to identify measures which could, if required, be ordered before the formal institution of the Precautionary Stage, distinguishing between those which were unlikely to attract attention and those which were bound to become public knowledge. It should not be forgotten, however, that the purposes of instituting the Precautionary Stage (a decision which would not be made public) were to ensure that departments were organised and ready to carry out whatever Government War Book measures might be ordered, and that collective official advice on the selection of such measures was available to Ministers, through the Transition to War Committee. It was arguable that in a crisis calling for the ordering of any Government War Book measures, the institution of the Precautionary Stage for these purposes would be a logical first step.