

CCPC

FCS/84/138AR 14/15
L.A.SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCEArmy Manpower

1. Thank you for copying to me your minute of 8 May to the Prime Minister. I very much welcome the new measures for improving the Army's capability which you propose to announce on 14 May. They should enhance the already impressive contribution we make to the common defence effort in the Alliance and, in particular, to forward defence in the FRG.

2. I well understand your wish not to give the impression that your proposed measures contravene the statement in Command 8288 that we would hold BAOR's manpower at 55,000. But it would be a pity, in my view, if the impact of the announcement on our Allies, and in particular on the Germans, were reduced by our having to point out that the figure would not be increased in practical terms. I accept that, at official level, the Germans know full well that 55,000 is an establishment figure. But the figure has achieved a symbolic quality in the FRG and German opinion is sensitive to any suggestion that we might fall below it. I hope, therefore, that in making your announcement you will feel able to avoid drawing particular attention to the fact that the addition of 1,000 men to BAOR's establishment will not involve increasing the 55,000 figure in practical terms and thus, by implication, acknowledging that we do not in fact meet it.

3. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister and other OD colleagues as well as to Sir Robert Armstrong.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

14 May, 1984

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S/S M

Dejeune PTL

Budget

14 MAR 1984

