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Looking like the work of Albert Speer — MinDef in Whitehall

NEW WHITEHALL BUNKER

A SECRET NEW BUNKER control centre is now being constructed many floors below the Ministry of Defence (MoD) headquarters building in Whitehall. The new centre is codenamed PINDAR. It will replace both the Cabinet Office's crisis control centre, known as COBRA, and the central military control room, the Defence Situation Centre — at present vulnerably located on the fifth floor above ground at the MoD.

PINDAR is one of three underground war control bunkers now being considered for central London. A second, backup site for PINDAR is to be built 100 feet below ground in London's High Holborn. US military officials have also applied to the Defence Ministry to convert a third deep underground site as a wartime control bunker.

It would replace surface facilities, possibly including the US Navy's Fleet Command Center for the Mediterranean and Eastern Atlantic, which is presently based in Grosvenor Square, Mayfair.

Secrecy about the new bunker has been blown through carelessness by private builders, who have been working at the MoD since the beginning of 1985. Two serious fires were accidentally started during recent cutting and welding operations.

The first fire, on 4 March, occurred in a plant room six floors below ground. The second, early on Saturday 27 April, occurred in one of PINDAR's main control rooms, an underground hall 200 feet long, five storeys deep. Publicity was given to the second fire, but the Ministry managed at the time to avoid unwelcome enquiries about the circumstances and location of the blaze.

But in response to *NS* questions, the Defence Ministry this week admitted that 'Project PINDAR' had been underway since 1984. It 'involves the refurbishment of existing accommodation and

installing some communications equipment.' There had been 'accidental fires'. London Fire Brigade officials said last week that the Ministry had indeed suffered a fire on 27 April, 'deep underground ... The causes of the fire remain confidential, it is a matter for the person concerned ...'

PINDAR was devised in 1980, after the Cabinet had ordered a review of military Home Defence plans, and the Iranian siege had underlined the importance and possible vulnerability of the Cabinet Office's emergency 'briefing room', COBRA. Senior military officials also pointed out that the Ministry of Defence's above ground operations rooms were extremely vulnerable to conventional bombing attack.

New NATO war planning assumptions introduced in 1979 now anticipate a phase of conventional warfare before nuclear attack, during which government and military operations will initially be run from London.

When completed, PINDAR will be used both for civil emergencies, such as major strikes and terrorist hostage-

taking, and for the first phases of a major war. PINDAR and its backup site would first be used to co-ordinate government 'Transition To War' plans, and then to oversee military operations while Britain is under conventional attack.

Before a nuclear attack occurred, however, the War Cabinet, Central Defence Staff and major military commands would all be evacuated and established in protected headquarters far from London.

Plans for PINDAR were held up for two years by a row between then Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine and Defence Secretary John Nott about who would pay for the new bunkers. The issue was whether the cost should be charged to central government as a whole, or just the Defence Ministry on its own. Heseltine, unlike Nott, regarded PINDAR as primarily a military project. He stuck to his guns when he took over at the MoD in 1982, and soon after PINDAR was approved as a secret military project, costing at least an estimated £20 million.

The PINDAR backup site in Holborn until recently contained an A-bomb proof long distance telephone exchange, called 'Kingsway'. It is located in deep-level tunnels below Chancery Lane underground station, first built in 1942 as a civilian bomb shelter.

Kingsway exchange, which is connected to a 12-mile network of deep level tunnels, has now been dismantled, and ownership is believed to have been transferred from BT to the MoD. American officials have made enquiries about a similar deep level World War 2 shelter below Goodge Street underground station.

PINDAR was formerly the 'South Citadel' below the Defence Ministry. Two citadels, South and North, were constructed underneath the MoD's headquarters when it was built during the Second World War.

Improper police erections

METROPOLITAN POLICE officers this week pleaded guilty to the unauthorised erection of three towers and 4 posts outside their New Scotland Yard headquarters.

An application to install the towers and posts arrived at Westminster Council offices months after they had already been put in. Labour Councillors on Westminster Council have complained about the Yard's improper erections, which will soon carry television surveillance cameras.

Westminster's planning officials told the *NS* that the police had indeed failed to notify the council of the development, and hold consultations, as is required. The Council has

condemned the TV towers as a 'visual intrusion', and asked for them to be removed. Scotland Yard were sent a formal refusal by the Council at the beginning of June. But the towers are still there.

Seeking mitigation, the police have offered to paint the towers light grey. And they plan to take them down by the middle of 1987, they claim, when refurbishment of New Scotland Yard is complete. But if the Council choose to serve an enforcement notice, the presence of the camera towers will be illegal. Until then, Scotland Yard can get away with it, since Scotland Yard is officially a 'crown building', and exempt from most official regulations binding on ordinary persons and their businesses.

According to WW2 records, the two citadels will accommodate 550 people, protected from the heaviest of conventional bombing.

If the Ministry of Defence building is flattened by conventional or nuclear attack, staff in PINDAR can escape by a new tunnel under Whitehall, connecting the Ministry to the Cabinet Office and No 10 Downing Street. In emergency, they could use BT's deep level cable tunnel network to escape to secret street exits as widely separated as Bethnal Green in the east of London, or Maida Vale in the west.

Government officials are particularly worried about the likely public reaction if it became known that the Americans had been permitted to build deep bunkers in central London. Details of the PINDAR plan have been suppressed for the same reason. In 1981, the Home Office issued a leaflet which tried to shore up the credibility of its civil defence plans by denying the existence of 'deep bunkers ... to protect the privileged few'.

Under current Home Office plans, the government would expect Londoners to 'stay put' on the grounds that no part of the country is completely safe. Meanwhile, key ministers, military leaders and officials will be evacuated to safe locations or accommodated in centres such as PINDAR.

Mail order war

NUCLEAR missile warheads, recently withdrawn from the European theatre nuclear stockpile, have been offered for sale by mail order in the United States. Readers of a US gun magazine were last year offered delivery of nuclear warheads for a mere \$150. The advertisers were a military surplus parts store, the Barnacle Wharf Trading Company of Newark, Ohio.

They weren't joking. Purchasers were supplied with warheads from the 'Honest John' tactical nuclear missile, which is only now being withdrawn from NATO service in Greece and Turkey. A British missile regiment used Honest John until 1976. Although the conventional explosives and nuclear elements had been taken out, the ten foot long warhead assembly was still significantly radioactive, showing that it had not been a dummy. Fusing and control mechanisms were still intact.

One purchaser had a midnight visit from the FBI three months later, after news of his ownership of an atom bomb had leaked out, the US magazine *Progressive* has reported. But the major obstacle to a A-bomb in every American home is, it seems, that the surplus dealers don't take credit cards.