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BUGS IN THE BASEMENT

NEXT TUESDAY, the Queen will ceremonially open the £50m Queen Elizabeth II International Conference Centre (ICC) in Broad Sanctuary, Westminster. But you won't be hearing that deep below the new centre is a secret government communications and surveillance network

UNDERNEATH everyone's feet at next week's ICC opening ceremony will be the massive and now well-hidden Broad Sanctuary 'citadel', built between 1950 and 1952, and now housing communications centres and telephone exchanges for major Whitehall Ministries. It appears likely to be the site of a top secret GCHQ London monitoring centre, built in 1981.

The Broad Sanctuary citadel is coyly referred to in publicity for the new conference centre as a mere 'substructure'. But plans obtained by the *New Statesman* show that far from being foundation walls for the new centre, the secret 'substructure' extends below most of the site.

The underground citadel is semi-circular in outline, 220 feet in diameter, and has a ten-foot thick concrete roof. It has its own power and water supplies, air inlets and exhausts, and electrical generators — all of which had to be rearranged before the new conference centre could be built on top. There are five entrances and exits to citadel. The main entrance is believed to be concealed inside nearby government offices, known as Central Buildings.

The Broad Sanctuary site was originally bought by the government in the late 1940s. In 1949, a new Colonial Office building was planned for the site, with the bunker as its basement. But the new Colonial Office was, in the end, never built. The bunker was completed, in 1952, and may then have been intended to be an A-Bomb shelter for the Cabinet. Through a deep-level tunnel system, the citadel has escape routes four miles away in east and west London.

In 1958, the government announced a plan for an international conference centre on the site. But nothing happened, and the plan was forgotten for years. By 1970, when the citadel was no longer useful or secure as a government nuclear shelter, some of the space was taken over for official telephone exchanges instead.

The main mystery about Broad Sanctuary concerns what happened between 1979 and 1982, when the citadel was refurbished by Mowlems at a cost of £4.5 million — a large sum for what is claimed (in ICC publicity handouts) only to be a 'diaphragm wall'. When the Mowlem construction company started work on the substructure in 1980, the site was surrounded by high boards and placed under continuous CCTV surveillance. Workers were security vetted. During the Falklands War,

some of the construction work is reported to have been temporarily stopped after official complaints of interference with important communications.

According to one official in the government's Property Services Agency, the plans and 'Phase 1' contracts for the substructure were all classified 'secret'. Other PSA sources say that the only top secret government project in London at that time was a new monitoring centre for GCHQ to tap into telephone calls and cables — suggesting that this was the nature of the work at Broad Sanctuary.

The existence of the Broad Sanctuary citadel was acknowledged in a parliamentary answer three months ago. Tony Banks MP was told that Broad Sanctuary was still in use by the government, and was allocated to the Treasury. In fact the bunker is used by a Treasury sub-department called CCTA — the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency. The exchanges therein — including those for the Cabinet Office, Home Office, and Foreign Office — are part of the government telecommunications network (GTN).

Until last September, the House of Commons telephone exchange was also installed in Broad Sanctuary, and an extension to the Commons' exchange was to have been housed in the ICC's (proper) basement. The apparent close proximity of the new GCHQ centre to the House of Commons exchange has renewed concern about government tapping of MPs' phones, a subject about which the government continues to stonewall.



Buggers may lurk in the basement of the government's new conference centre

Missile manuals for sale

FULL INSTRUCTIONS on how to arm and fire Poseidon multiple warhead submarine-launched nuclear missiles have been found discarded in Scotland, and passed to the *New Statesman*. The Poseidon missile manuals, each several hundred pages long, contain copious diagrams and details about the Poseidon submarines, the missiles and their control mechanisms. The manuals were recently found, in a damp condition, on the beaches of the Holy Loch, Strathclyde, where more than 10 of 31 US Poseidon submarines, and a mother ship, are based.

Questioned about this apparently serious breach of security, US Navy spokespersons at their London headquarters have been uncharacteristically relaxed. After a lengthy period of consultation, public relations officer Lieutenant Commander Alan Doolley advised us last week that the US Government would be happy to sell the *New Statesman* a fresh, dry, new, replacement set of manuals: our edition was out of print, but we could have the new editions instead.

Anyone, officials of the Soviet Embassy not excluded, can buy the manuals for about \$40. They are, however, normally only bought by Poseidon Fire Control Technicians — for whom they are intended as training guides.

Despite being unclassified, they reveal extensive detail about the construction of the submarine, and its navigation and control systems. They are stuffed with blueprints of Poseidon's Mark 88 Fire Control System. Bradford University defence specialist Dr Paul Rogers pointed out this week that details given about launch procedures could enable an adversary to calculate how long it would take to fire all the missiles on a submarine — and thus to see how much time was available to try and destroy the submarine first. Indeed, many procedures described, such as a launch sequence called 'ISQ', are shared by the Royal Navy in operating their Polaris submarines.

The missile manuals reveal alarming and hitherto unknown problems of reliability. No Poseidon submarine is likely to complete a 'deterrent patrol' with its missile hydraulic system intact. Fire Control Technicians are warned that 'this system is a major headache', and that once the submarine is on patrol, 'a number of leaks' will inevitably occur. They can't normally be dealt with. The result is that Missile Technicians 'in the course of their daily rounds and duties' are 'constantly' required for the less than sophisticated task of 'cleaning up [leaking] hydraulic oil', all over the ship.