

# SCRUTINY

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## CONSCRIPTS FOR AMERICAN FORCES PLAN ADMITTED

**Government ministers last week acknowledged that a secret 'US-UK lines of Communication Arrangement' does exist — and provides for food, fuel, hospitals, transport and the services of British workers to be provided to the Americans in a crisis. The US Army is also negotiating to take over an NHS hospital in Surrey, intending to 'mothball' it for wartime US use only**

MINISTERS admitted that Britain's obligations under the Arrangement with the US include 'civilian manpower support', and that revelations in the *New Statesman* last year (6 and 13 September 1985) about extensive plans to hand over British civilian resources to the US in war were accurate.

Details of the US-UK Lines of Communication (USUKLOC) Arrangement, which was secretly set up in 1973, emerged in a series of parliamentary answers to Tony Banks MP. Defence Minister Lord Trefgarne has written to MPs that the Arrangement 'permits the US to establish, operate and maintain lines of communication and ancillary facilities in the UK for use under emergency conditions'.

It is officially described as an 'arrangement', not 'agreement', because otherwise it would have to be an international treaty, and registered (publicly) with the United Nations. Our original report erroneously gave the date the agreement was signed as 1983, not 1973. But agreement on new planning requirements for USUKLOC was reached in 1983, and a Joint Logistic Plan was then agreed.

Trefgarne admitted that 'as part of the Arrangement, the UK has agreed to ensure that requests for transport, medical and other facilities would be considered'. In fact, such 'consideration' has gone as far as

preparing at least 37 detailed joint plans. Questioned about conscript British civilian labour, for example, Employment Minister Kenneth Clarke said that the UK would 'try to ensure that their requirements for civilian manpower support are met. [But] detailed planning in support of the Arrangement is classified'.

Rear-Admiral Eugene Carroll, former Joint Director of Military Operations for the US European Command, told the *NS* last year that highly specific 'quotas' of impressed British labour were required in the plans. Unemployed people as well as skilled workers would be directed



British dole queues will provide conscript labour for the US military in war, according to Rear-Admiral Carroll, formerly of US European Command

into 'what is laughingly called more constructive efforts'.

Junior health minister Ray Whitney told Banks that 'contingency plans for ... NHS resources' did cover 'NATO military casualties'. Such plans would be 'incorporated in those for the NHS as a whole in time of crisis or war'.

The plans in fact provide for about 30 large general hospitals to be emptied of NHS patients and turned over to exclusive US use, according to civil service sources. But the identity of the hospitals to be commandeered has been kept secret from health authorities, who are nevertheless required to make civil defence war plans involving the use

## Secrets Act for animals

**GREATER SECRECY will surround information about animal experiments than now protects human medical tests, if a little-noticed clause in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill is passed as it stands.**

The Bill is now being considered by a House of Commons committee, and is likely to become law this summer. If the secrecy clause is unaltered, anyone leaking private information about the circumstances in which private experiments are conducted on animals would be subject to the same criminal penalties as an official who revealed secret government military plans and was prosecuted under Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

The government currently publishes brief annual statistics about the numbers of animals used in laboratories, differentiated by species, techniques employed, and general type of institution. But information on the conditions in which these tests are carried out is not published. Yet this is the aspect which persistently attracts critical public concern, and to which animal rights activists wish to draw attention.

Clause 24 of the Animals Bill specifies that anyone who discloses 'any information' which they have

'reasonable grounds for believing to have been given in confidence' can face a fine or up to two years imprisonment. This would be in addition to losing their job for committing a breach of confidence.

But a doctor, nurse or hospital clerical worker who hands out confidential personal information, even against a human patient's express wishes, faces no criminal sanctions. Only special psychiatric hospitals like Rampton and Broadmoor are covered by the Official Secrets Act.

The special animal secrecy clause will affect non-civil-servants who are appointed to a proposed new statutory advisory committee, the Animal Procedures Committee, and to members of the Animal Procedures Inspectorate. These inspectors would issue licences to carry out 'regulated procedures' on vertebrate animals.

Animal welfare activists believe the secrecy of Clause 24 is intended to conceal much more information than merely the names and addresses of the animal experimenters and their laboratories — who are personally at risk from some activists. It extends to cover information of legitimate public concern about the treatment of animals. They claim, with some justice, that the bill — which has been presented as a humane reform of the 1876 Cruelty to Animals Act — is in fact only 'intended to protect animal experimenters, not animals'. ●

Authority. The US Army has already provoked a storm in the area, when in September last year it acquired the former RAF hospital at Chessington.

Other government ministers have admitted that their departments have also made joint war plans with the US. Energy Secretary Peter Walker said that plans for the US to obtain the services of workers in the energy supply and distribution industries 'have been laid under [the] Arrangement'.

Transport Secretary Nicholas Ridley acknowledged that similar plans exist for civil aviation, port and shipping and other transport workers. The government had also 'agreed to consider requests' for other 'civil aviation facilities, including airports and aircraft' to be given to the US. Agriculture Minister Peggy Fenner gave a similar answer in respect of food and farming resources.

The government's responses at first appear to contradict our claim last year that the USUKLOC agreement gives 'priority to American military requirements'. Ministers claim that there is a 'proviso that the UK government would always have priority in using national resources'. But what they mean is that the British military would have priority over the US military in the use of British resources — with civilian needs coming not second, but third. ●

Chris Davies/Network