

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CABINET  
BY THE HON. PRIME MINISTER

The Civil Defence Corps  
and Civil Defence Measures

The Civil Defence Corps is a body which is primarily intended to function in war-time. In order that the Corps can be ready to go into action immediately in an emergency, Civil Defence training is given to part-time volunteers throughout the year, and Civil Defence posts and equipment are maintained in a state of constant preparedness. By virtue of its training, the Corps has been able to provide valuable assistance, in peacetime, in cases of natural disasters and accidents.

2. The aim of Civil Defence is to preserve life in an emergency, to help the civilian population to live through an emergency and to pick up the threads of a normal existence when an emergency is over. Whether there is any need to have a Civil Defence Organization at all depends on the extent to which Malta is liable to be involved in operations of war. If there is the slightest risk of this happening, then the need for a Civil Defence Organization remains.

3. The question whether Malta does, in fact, run the risk of becoming involved in operations of war, can be answered by saying that as long as there exist two powerful diametrically opposed blocs, and as long as Malta aligns herself with one bloc, and offers the use of military facilities to that bloc to the exclusion of the other, she would automatically be a legitimate military target in the event of hostilities between the two blocs.

4. Whether there is in fact any likelihood of such hostilities occurring is a moot point. Both blocs, from time to time, suffer internal dissension which upset somewhat their unified resolve and sense of determination, though not to an extent which encourages an attempt to take advantage of such temporary weakening by military measures. However, it is fair to say that since the war, events have occurred which have brought the blocs very close to the brink (e.g. the Berlin blockade, Cuba, etc.), and it is doubtful, to say the least, how justified or correct one would be to assume categorically that hostilities in Europe can be ruled out, for ever, completely and absolutely. It should furthermore be remembered that Malta's geographical situation means that she must not only look to the North, but also to the South, for possible danger.

5. The conclusion, therefore, that one must reasonably arrive at is that it would be wrong not to continue to maintain a Civil Defence Organization in Malta, and to take all possible measures to cope with an emergency should it ever arise.

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L-Arkivji Nazzjonali ta' Malta

6. The full-time staff of the Civil Defence Corps is not only small, but is also ageing. There are 7 officers, and 64 other ranks, permanently employed. In an emergency, the Corps would depend on the willingness of the trained part-time volunteers to take up their Civil Defence role and to bring the Corps up to strength operationally. This would be an entirely voluntary contribution, and at present part-time volunteers have no obligation for war-time service. The actual running up to the necessary strength of the organisation depends therefore on a very tenuous basis at present, and whilst there is every reason to expect that volunteers would be forthcoming in the required number, it would clearly be more satisfactory if there were a definite commitment to serve on their part.

7. Other aspects of Civil Defence measures leave much to be desired. The Shelter link-up Scheme started in 1956, was suspended in 1958 owing to lack of funds, and has remained so ever since. The estimated shelter space now available is for only about one-fourth of the population. This is mainly due to the increase in the population since the war, development of new building estates, and the loss of some war-time shelters through road construction and other causes. Completion of the link-up scheme would provide more accommodation for the increased population in those areas where shelters exist. There is also a disconcerting lack of essential operational equipment, unobtainable in Malta at short notice, such as radio telephone sets and specialized rescue equipment. The build-up of the present holdings of Radiac instruments to a war requirement scale is very backward. These instruments are required to provide Island-wide coverage of radio-active fall-out. The need is emphasized by the fact that it is doubtful whether, and if so to what extent, assistance in this field would be forthcoming from the British Armed forces. The underground accommodation at Targa Gap, which is intended to be used as emergency Government Headquarters, housing the Prime Minister, Cabinet and staff, in war-time, is very uncomfortable to work in for protracted periods, and air conditioning is an essential requirement. The emergency flour-mills, seven in Malta and one in Gozo, still lack a number of parts and works to make them operational in war-time. They have to date been maintained by the Civil Defence Corps, but they should, more appropriately, be the responsibility of the Ministry responsible for food supplies in an emergency, and negotiations are in progress for their transfer to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agriculture. However, they would still require to be brought up to a state of operational readiness, if an emergency supply of bread is to be ensured. Finally, whilst not a Civil Defence responsibility, there is a clear need for an underground chamber to house the Rediffusion stand-by equipment, necessary for emergency broadcasts in war-time, when the existing installation is not expected to survive.

8. The estimated cost of making good the above deficiencies is as follows:-

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1. Shelter Link-Up	£35,000
2. Emergency Flour Mills	£41,600
3. Air Conditioning War Headquarters	£ 7,700
4. Underground Rediffusion Chamber	£17,000
5. Radiac Instruments	£ 7,000

9. With regard to 1. Shelter Link-Up, the estimate is based on the assumption that the work would be carried out by Public Works Department labour. However, given the necessary equipment, it could be done by Civil Defence personnel, at a cheaper cost. As to 5. Radiac Instruments, a reorganisation of the existing planned system could bring the cost down to below £5,000.

10. This summarizes the requirements, as far as Civil Defence are concerned, excepting that they have no responsibility for the Flour Mills and the Rediffusion Chamber. However, it should be made clear that this is only part of the picture of emergency measures which would need to be taken by Government in an emergency. Such other measures, briefly, would include stockpiling of food and other essential consumer goods, plans for emergency rationing, evacuation, communal feeding, emergency hospitals, etc. These are the responsibility of the departments concerned.

11. Hon. Ministers are kindly requested to express their views as to whether, as a matter of principle planning for an emergency, insofar as civil requirements are concerned, should be taken in hand, whether in particular the Civil Defence Corps should be maintained at least at its present strength, and whether henceforth some degree of funds be allocated each year for works and equipment which would be required in an emergency.

5th May, 1967.