PREM 19/159

- future of the UK Nuclear Deterrent
Polaris flight trials.

Part 2

DEFENCE

Part 1 : May 1979

Part 2 : December 79

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
~~4.12.79~~		~~19.5.80~~					
~~12.12.79~~		~~28.5.80~~					
~~13.12.79~~		~~30.5.80~~					
~~20-12-79~~		~~4.6.80~~					
~~11-1-80~~		~~9.6.80~~					
~~21-1-80~~		9.6.80					
~~14-2-80~~							
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~~14.5.80~~							

GNDS.

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PART 2 ends:-

MOD BA to Wade-Gery 9/6/80.

PART 3 begins:-

S/S Defence to PM of 10/6/80.

TO BE RETAINED AS TOP ENCLOSURE

Cabinet / Cabinet Committee Documents

Reference	Date
Limited Circulation Annex, MISC 7 (79)	
4th Meeting, Minutes	6.12.79
MISC 7 (80) 1	29.5.80
MISC 7 (80) 1st Meeting, Minutes, and	
Limited Circulation Annexs A and B	2.6.80

The documents listed above, which were enclosed on this file, have been removed and destroyed. Such documents are the responsibility of the Cabinet Office. When released they are available in the appropriate **CAB** (CABINET OFFICE) CLASSES

Signed C Wayland Date 14 January 2011

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OF 3 COPIES

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JS Defence

ccCO

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

MR. WADE-GERY

POLARIS REPLACEMENT

The Prime Minister has seen your minute to me of 5 June on this subject. She has agreed the recommendations in paragraph 7 of that minute. She has also said that she would like her message to President Carter to be delivered, when the time comes, by Sir N. Henderson.

We also agreed earlier today that consideration should be given to the proposal that the emissary (or emissaries) to President Giscard and Chancellor Schmidt should be accompanied by Sir R. Hibbert and Sir O. Wright respectively.

I am sending a copy of this minute to Sir Robert Armstrong.

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

9 June 1980

TCR

Photocopy No. 2

TOP SECRET

Text of a message from Robert Armstrong to David Aaron dated 24th May.

I understand that Harold Brown will be in London on Monday 2nd June and that he is to see the Prime Minister that afternoon.

I hope that it will have been possible by then for Ministers to have considered the points you discussed with Frank Cooper and me on Sunday 18th May. I intend then to send you a message following up our conversation on 18th May. It would be helpful for us to know whether Harold Brown will raise this subject when he sees the Prime Minister, in addition to the other defence and security issues he will no doubt be raising.

I shall be away over the next few days (although I will be back by 2nd June). Perhaps you could send a message to Robert Wade-Gery to let him know what you think about this so that the necessary briefing can be put in hand.

Text of a message from David Aaron to Robert Wade-Gery dated 29th May

This is to confirm that Harold Brown will be prepared to discuss Polaris improvement programme issues when he meets with the Prime Minister next week.

Glad to have you back on deck and hope you are feeling fine.

Warm Regards.

But if it were necessary to inform him in confidence before he went he might find himself in an awkward position while there. The Prime Minister said that Chancellor Schmidt should be told before he went to Moscow. Publication could be delayed until after his return provided that this did not leave Congress without the 50 days necessary for the agreement to be approved. Dr. Brown thought that any publication date in the first week of July should be adequate for this purpose.

(c) Diego Garcia

Dr. Brown said that it would be necessary for the two Governments to reach agreement on the United States plans for extending their facilities in Diego Garcia in 1982-85, and on any changes in the arrangements for joint decisions about the use of Diego Garcia which the British Government might require, before the Exchange of Letters on Polaris replacement could take place.

(d) Attitude of the Labour Party

The Prime Minister said that when the agreement on Polaris replacement was announced the Labour Opposition might threaten to repudiate it if returned to office. Such posturing, in deference to extreme left wing sentiment, need not be taken too seriously. As in the case of the Nassau Agreement a future Labour Government would in practice be likely to behave responsibly and accept the fait accompli.

(e) Confidentiality

The Prime Minister emphasised the extreme narrowness of the circle of Ministers and officials in London who were seized of this issue and the very special restrictions to which the relevant papers were subjected.

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~930 7022~~ 218 2111/3

Prime Minister.

Agree to:-
(i) an in-house document Yes
(ii) the publication of the Exchange of Letters with President Carter as a White Paper? Yes

MT.

MO 18/1/1

2nd June 1980

Dear Clive,

My Secretary of State hopes to circulate next week, after his return from Norway, the draft of a public document on the subject matter discussed at the Prime Minister's 10.00 am meeting this morning. He would propose to circulate the text simply to the Ministers present at that meeting.

One point arising, however, on which he has asked me to seek the Prime Minister's views in advance of the circulation of a text, is the form the public document should take. My Secretary of State would ideally have wished to publish a White Paper, but has concluded that this may not be practicable since he considers that the document should be available on the day of an announcement and he does not think (given the sensitivity of the subject matter) that a White Paper could be safely sent to a printer in advance of the announcement, whereas an "in-house" document - which might be circulated as a departmental memorandum provided under the "Open Government" policy - could be securely reproduced within the Ministry of Defence. If this option were adopted, it is suggested that the proposed Exchange of Letters between the Prime Minister and the President should themselves be printed as a White Paper following upon the Prime Minister's Statement to the House of Commons.

If the Prime Minister feels strongly one way or the other my Secretary of State would be most grateful for advice. What is said in the document will not, of course, be affected by its form.

Yours ever
Brian

(B M NORBURY)

C A Whitmore Esq

CONFIDENTIAL

jfh

Dakree

MR WRIGHT

Thank you for your minute (ref. AO2252) about the timing of MISC 7.

The Prime Minister has now agreed that the meeting should take place at 10 a.m. on Monday 2 June. I would be grateful if you could now confirm this arrangement with the participants.

MAP

30 May 1980

CONFIDENTIAL

TR.

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Ref. A02252

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MR. PATTISON

MISC 7

We spoke about the problems over the timing of MISC 7 in view of the meeting of Cabinet now arranged for Monday, 2nd June at 11.00 am. I attach a copy of the most recent exchange with the White House. You will see that David Aaron says that Harold Brown will be "prepared" to talk about the Polaris replacement In view of this exchange, Harold Brown will no doubt be expecting the Prime Minister to raise the subject and might be surprised if she did not.

2. There are further operational reasons for holding this meeting of MISC 7 before the meeting with Harold Brown. First, it will be difficult to arrange another meeting next week because of Mr. Pym's absence in Norway. Secondly, the timetable proposed by the Americans for dealing with the agreement to replace Polaris is already very tight. They propose, for instance, that this should begin with the Prime Minister giving her letter to President Carter on Sunday, 22nd June at the beginning of the Venice Summit, to be concluded with an announcement on 1st July.

3. We therefore need a MISC 7 decision on policy in the course of next week in order that discussions with the Americans on this may be concluded in the week of 9th June.

D. J. Wright

(D.J. Wright)

30th May, 1980

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Ref: B05957

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Prime Minister
The Foreign Secretary is content with the recommendations in para 7. Agree?
(Is it necessary to send an immediate to Washington? Yes
Could not Sir N. Henderson hand over your letter?) Yes

MR ALEXANDER

Polaris Replacement

In the margins of the quadripartite meeting on political preparations for the Venice Summit à 7 (on which Sir Michael Palliser is reporting separately), I was able to discuss Polaris replacement with Mr Aaron of the White House staff in secure condituons at the American Embassy in Paris on 3rd June and (in suitably guarded language) when he lunched with me the following day.

2. He had had a brief report of Dr Harold Brown's talk with the Prime Minister on 2nd June. I was able to confirm

i. that they had settled the R and D problem on the basis of a firm proposition from Dr Brown, which the Prime Minister accepted, that we should pay only a 5 per cent levy but also carry the agreed cost of manning American Rapiers in the United Kingdom;

ii. that they had agreed on further thought being given to the timetable, in the light of the risks of leakage if action were taken at the Venice Summit à 7 and of the problem posed by the timing of Chancellor Schmidt's visit to Moscow;

iii.

3. I agreed with Mr Aaron that we would aim to finalise the Polaris replacement negotiations in Washington on 10th June.

The upshot of both sets of negotiations would need to be subject to final approval by Ministerial principals.

4. I told Mr Aaron that the draft Exchange of Letters had now been approved by the Prime Minister and her relevant colleagues.

5. On the timetable for the Exchange, I explained the Prime Minister's doubts about using Venice as the occasion either for giving the President her letter or for telling certain others what was afoot. She would prefer to send her letter by emissary just after Venice (the President will be back in Washington by 26th June); to inform President Giscard and Chancellor Schmidt by emissaries at the same time; and to inform the Italian Prime Minister only at the last moment before publication. Mr Aaron agreed to recommend this to the President and let me know the upshot next week. He also made the following points.

? Sir N. Henderson

? accompanied by Sir O. Wright & Sir R. Hibbert.

a. Because of Chancellor Schmidt, who arrives in Moscow on 30th June and leaves on 1st July, the Americans would like to publish the Exchange of Letters on Thursday, 3rd July (rather than 1st July). They are confident, but will confirm, that this will not endanger the Congressional timetable. I said that, provided the Congressional point was confirmed, I would expect the Prime Minister to welcome this, since it would enable her to inform her Cabinet at a routine meeting that morning.

b. The Americans were unable to decide which would be worse: to tell Chancellor Schmidt just before he went to Moscow, or just after. They were inclined to tell him just after, as the lesser evil. I said I thought we would strongly favour telling him before (in strict confidence). He would feel that we had been holding out on him if we waited till after. Mr Aaron seemed ~~inclined~~ to agree with this but will need to consult the President.

c. If President Giscard and Chancellor Schmidt are to be told by emissaries, post-Venice, the Americans would like the British and United States emissaries to co-ordinate the operation closely. Ideally, they should act jointly in each case; or, failing that, on an agreed timetable with the American acting only a few hours after the Briton. I said I thought we would prefer the latter.

d. Since the Americans would want to send the same emissary to both Paris and Bonn, they would want action taken seriatim in the two capitals rather than simultaneously. I said I thought we would prefer to synchronise action in Paris with action in Bonn; otherwise, the one we told first would have rung up the other before we got there. But

if we did agree to seriatim action, I was sure we would prefer to go to Paris first, given France's nuclear status; if President Giscard first heard via Chancellor Schmidt it would be worse than the other way round. Mr Aaron agreed with this order but stuck to his preference for seriatim action.

6. My comments at a - d above were based on, or confirmed by, consultation with Sir Michael Palliser, whom I was able to talk to in Paris between my two meetings with Mr Aaron.

7. I recommend that on these four points my instructions for further negotiations in Washington next week should be as follows.

Agreed

a. We should agree to publication on 3rd July, provided it is confirmed that this poses absolutely no danger to the Congressional timetable, but not otherwise.

Agreed

b. We should insist that Chancellor Schmidt be told shortly before, rather than just after, his visit to Moscow.

Agreed

c. We should continue to press for action vis-a-vis President Giscard and Chancellor Schmidt to be taken by the British and American emissaries separately, although on a closely co-ordinated basis.

Agreed

d. We should continue to argue that the British intention (and subsequently the American intention) should be presented to President Giscard's office at the same time as to Chancellor Schmidt's office; but we should not insist on this if the Americans press strongly for seriatim presentation, although in that case we should insist on Paris coming before Bonn.

MT

8. Perhaps you could kindly let me know whether the Prime Minister agrees with these recommendations.

9. I warned Mr Aaron that, though we were content for detailed technical and financial negotiations to follow publication of the Exchange of Letters, we should want in Washington next week to agree on certain general reassurances relating to the charges which the Americans would make for the missiles,

related equipment, support facilities, administration, special nuclear materials, etc. We needed to be able to deal with potential parliamentary and public criticism that we had put ourselves over a barrel by agreeing to purchase something without knowing ~~aaaa~~ its approximate price. Mr Aaron said that he would need to look into this. But he saw our point; and since it was not in fact the American intention to take us for more than would have been appropriate under the Polaris Sales Agreement (except as regards its much-criticised R and D levy provisions) he thought it should be possible to work out something which would satisfy us. To a considerable extent, indeed, he hoped that in the detailed negotiations it would simply be possible to use the text of the Polaris Sales Agreement, mutatus mutandis, as the basis of the future Trident Sales Agreement.

10. I told Mr Aaron that we might want to publish, on 3rd July, a detailed paper analysing the reasons for our choice. But we had not yet decided on this, so I was not in a position to show him a draft.

11. I am keeping the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office informed.

R L WADE-GERY

5th June 1980

c Sir Robert Armstrong

The National Archives

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SECRET

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Defence

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

4 June 1980

Dear Brian,

Thank you for your letter of 2 June about the draft of a public document which the Ministry of Defence is at present preparing.

I have consulted the Prime Minister, and she agrees that the document should be an "in-house" one which can be securely reproduced within the Ministry of Defence. She also agrees that her Exchange of Letters with President Carter should be published as a White Paper following her statement in the House.

I am sending a copy of this letter to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

Clive Whitmore.

B.M. Norbury, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

SECRET

TCR

of Cab. Office 49a

TOP SECRET ANNEX TO RECORD OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON MONDAY 2 JUNE 1980

Present:-

Prime Minister	Dr. Harold Brown
Secretary of State for Defence	HE Mr. Kingman Brewster
Sir Robert Armstrong	Mr. David McGiffert
Mr. R.L. Wade-Gery	General Carl Smith
Mr. C.A. Whitmore	Assistant Secretary of Defense Mr. T. Ross
Mr. M.O'D.B. Alexander	

Polaris Replacement

The following points were covered.

(a) R and D Levy

The Prime Minister said that the British Government wished to purchase the Trident I missile on the same terms as Polaris, i.e. a 5 per cent levy. Dr. Brown said that the United States Government could not agree to this arrangement, which had been severely criticised in Congress. But they would accept it provided that the British Government carried the cost of manning the Rapier air defence systems the United States Government intended to purchase for United States bases in Britain. The Prime Minister indicated an arrangement including these elements would be acceptable to the British Government.

(b) Timetable

The Prime Minister said that she was doubtful about the suitability of the Venice Economic Summit as an occasion either for her to deliver her formal letter to the President or for her and the President to talk to their principal allies. At Venice the dangers of leaks would be too great. It would be better to deliver her letter through an emissary shortly afterwards and also to use special emissaries for informing President Giscard and Chancellor Schmidt. Dr. Brown agreed that this might be so. There was also a difficult timing problem in relation to Chancellor Schmidt's visit to Moscow on 30 June-1 July. Publication of the Anglo/American agreement could probably be delayed until just after his return.

/But if it

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COPY NO 1 OF 5 COPIES

Ref: B05951

PRIME MINISTER

MISC 7: Future of the United Kingdom Strategic Deterrent: The Present Position

BACKGROUND

1. This meeting was recommended in Sir Robert Armstrong's minute to you of 19th May, which reported on our latest negotiations with the White House; and was authorised in Mr Alexander's reply of 23rd May. The Secretaries' Note (MISC 7(80) 1) outlines developments since MISC 7 last met, on 6th December. That was the last time Mr Whitelaw and Sir Geoffrey Howe were both involved, although the latter also attended your pre-Washington briefing meeting on the subject on 14th December. They have not previously been told of the key fact that President Carter has promised to agree to our request when made, although the Chancellor may have become aware of this during your 14th December meeting. The Note is therefore deliberately ambiguous about when the President's promise was first made. The uninitiated will assume that it was when you were in Washington. Lord Carrington and Mr Pym, on the other hand, are aware that what the President said on that occasion merely confirmed his message to you of 15th October. They have also been kept informed of the course of negotiations. The Defence Secretary, as his minute to you of 29th February made clear, has been worried by American procrastination and is very anxious to see formal and public agreement achieved as rapidly as possible.

2. The Secretaries' Note also seeks, with recommendations, Ministerial decisions on the issues which remain to be finally sewn up in the negotiations: the text of the Exchange of Letters; the timetable for the Exchange, for informing Allies and for publication;

; and the problem of the R and D levy.

3. The United States Defense Secretary is calling on you at 4 pm on 2nd June, ie a few hours after MISC 7 meets. The White House have just told us that he will be "prepared to discuss" both Polaris replacement and will be ready for you to raise the former. This probably means that he will raise the latter. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office are sending you a brief [redacted]. On Polaris replacement, and on the link between the two, you will wish to be guided by MISC 7's decisions.

4. In the light of MISC 7's decisions, and of your talk with Dr Brown, officials will be in a position to finalise the negotiations with the Americans, probably by visiting Washington in the week of 9th June.

5. The draft of your letter to the President, at Annex A to MISC 7(80) 1, differs in one minor respect from the last version you saw, attached to Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 19th May. The opening words "As you are aware" are no longer followed by "from recent exchanges between us". The deleted words originated when we expected to publish the Exchange soon after your Washington visit and are no longer appropriate now. The Americans agree that they should be dropped; and Mr Pym and Lord Carrington (who saw the earlier text) have been informed.

HANDLING

6. You may like to begin by stressing the sensitivity of MISC 7(80) 1. It contains information which, at White House insistence, is known only to a tiny circle of Ministers and officials in London and Washington. This includes neither the American nor the British Chiefs of Staff. The only copies of the paper which have gone outside No. 10 and the Cabinet Office are those which your four colleagues will bring to the meeting. You may wish to ask them to hand these in when the meeting ends. (We have taken steps to ensure that they are not meanwhile shown to anyone not in the secret.)

(1)

7. Turning to substance, you may wish to begin by referring to MISC 7's decision on 6th December that the best weapon system with which to replace Polaris was Trident I. (The minutes of that meeting were not circulated outside the Cabinet Office but are summarised in paragraph 1 of MISC 7(80) 1).

2

You may wish to emphasise that this is a decision which has already been taken and effectively (though not formally) communicated to the Americans. The Chancellor of the Exchequer may seek to reopen the whole question of whether Polaris should be replaced at all and if so by what, on the grounds that the national economic outlook has deteriorated since last December. If so, you may wish to seek the Foreign and Commonwealth and Defence Secretaries' agreement that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan since the last MISC 7 meeting means that the need for effective deterrence has if anything increased. The studies which preceded the December meeting made clear that Trident I was the only successor system which made military or financial sense for the United Kingdom. There is in any case no question of the Defence Budget being enlarged to accommodate Polaris replacement. The Defence Secretary can confirm that the Budget now contains sufficient financial provision for the estimated cost of Trident I procurement, and that since it is an existing United States programme, the estimates ought to prove reliable (as the estimates for Polaris did).

~~This is not~~ to. Sure when?

8. The points to establish in subsequent discussion are -

a. The Proposed Exchange of Letters

Budget

i. The size of the British successor force. Paragraph 2 leaves this open. The Defence Secretary would of course prefer 5 boats. For different reasons the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Chancellor would prefer 4. But they are all likely to agree that the question does not have to be settled yet. Nothing is lost by keeping our options open; and it may help to disarm criticism that this major defence decision has been taken without public discussion if one significant aspect of it is left undecided at the stage when a public announcement is made.

ii. Impact on conventional forces. The wording of the last sentence in paragraph 4 is a matter to which the Americans attach great importance. We have fought hard to keep the drafting as

vague as possible. They are unlikely to accept any further watering down. Are the Chancellor and the Defence Secretary content?

iii. Proposed financial and technical negotiations (paragraph 5) The Chancellor may argue that these ought to precede any public announcement, to avoid the appearance of buying a pig in a poke. But on such a politically sensitive issue the Americans would certainly not agree to detailed negotiations unless some general understanding had already been reached and published. Hence the need for the Exchange of Letters. In any case, detailed negotiations will take many months; and we need to conclude the Exchange of Letters now, given the co-operative attitude of President Carter, which will not necessarily survive the United States elections.

b. Special Nuclear Materials. The Ministry of Defence are content with the terms of the proposed confidential side letter from the President. ("The United States is willing in principle to supply special nuclear materials to the United Kingdom deterrent programme which were beyond your own capacity to provide, subject of course to the United States Government's ability to provide such materials in light of its requirements and availability of supply.") But some of your colleagues may have see a Times article of 20th May suggesting that Aldermaston may not be able to cope with producing the necessary new warhead. If so, the Defence Secretary should be invited to reassure them. The Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office are also satisfied that there is no prospect of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in a timescale short enough to affect our ability to test the new warhead adequately when it is ready.

c. The Proposed Timetable Are your colleagues content with this, subject to a right to think again if the timing turns out to be very bad in European Budget terms? Warning Herr Schmidt, President Giscard and Signor Cossiga clearly involves risks of a leak. But the Americans seem certain to insist on at least the two former.

d.

e. The R and D Levy. The deal suggested in MISC 7(80) 1 is the one which Mr Aaron asked Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Frank Cooper on 18th Ma whether they could accept; they merely undertook to report it, and Mr Aaron made clear that he had no authority to offer it. Could your colleagues accept this as a reasonable compromise? The Defence Secretary is likely to confirm that he could accommodate within the Defence Budget both a 5 per cent levy and the cost of manning the American Rapiers. The Chancellor may argue that the R and D issue should be left over for the detailed financial negotiations. This may seem logical. But the Americans will plainly not agree to it. Nor would it be in our interests. We cannot avoid playing the Diego Garcia card pretty soon. To get full value for it we need first to reach agreement on the R and D levy.

f. Publicity Material. The Defence Secretary should be invited to circulate to MISC 7 in draft, for information, the detailed paper which he plans to publish explaining our choice of successor system. The Chancellor may suggest that no such document should

be published, for fear of weakning our hand for the detailed technical and financial negotiations. If so, the Defence Secretary will argue that publication will be essential in domestic political terms (and that he is in any case publicly committed to it). Your other colleagues seem likely to support him.

CONCLUSION

9. In the light of discussion on these points, you may wish to guide the Meeting to endorse the recommendations in the final paragraph of MISC 7(80) 1.

10. You may also wish to indicate that you will tell the Cabinet shortly before the Exchange is published, ie presumably on 26th June.

R L WADE-GERY

30th May 1980

Whitehall brief: Aldermaston snag on staff and safety

Trident deterrent may be toothless

By Peter Hennessy

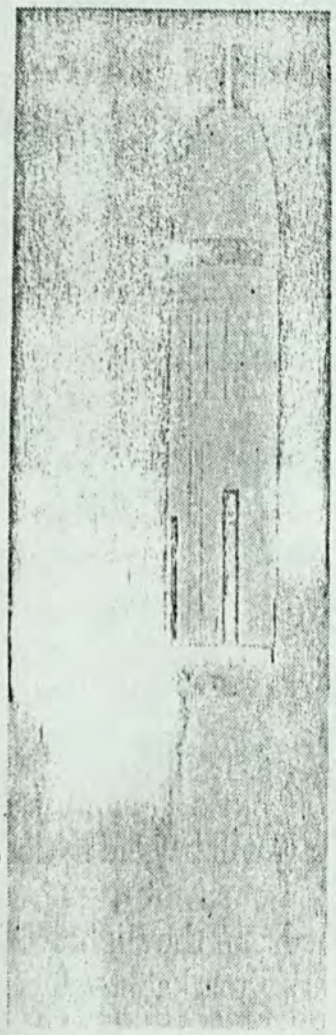
Only the timing needs of President Carter's reelection campaign are delaying the Prime Minister's announcement of a £4,000m-£5,000m spending programme over the next 12 years to replace the Royal Navy's Polaris Submarine Squadron with a fleet of boats fitted with Trident missiles purchased from the United States.

Mrs Margaret Thatcher's top secret nuclear deterrent Cabinet committee, Misc 7, as it is known from its Cabinet Office classification, has finished its work. Technical talks between the Ministry of Defence and the Pentagon are complete.

The Commons Select Committee on Defence will start its investigation into the Polaris replacement in the next few weeks. All that is needed for work to begin is a Commons statement from the Prime Minister and the inevitable eruption from Labour's backbenches; or is it?

The Royal Navy's Trident missiles will carry British warheads which are to be manufactured at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston, Berkshire. Mrs Thatcher may have President Carter's promise that the missiles will be forthcoming, and she also seems confident of finding the money, but will Aldermaston be able to play its part in providing the "front end", as the men on Whitehall's "holocaust desk" call it?

A confidential report prepared by a Ministry of Defence working party chaired by Mr Charles Henn, under-secretary responsible for civilian specialists, discloses that Aldermaston is 59 per cent short of the health physicists required to ensure the safety of its processes and plant. The establishment needs 44 health physicists and only 18 are in post. The report reflects gloomily on the failure of a special Civil Service Commission competition to find more than a handful of suitable scientists to fill the gap.



The Trident missile: Warhead production is in jeopardy.

The report also admits that the prospects of finding health physicists in the near future are dismal and states baldly that, unless they are forthcoming, existing projects, and, most significant of all for Trident, future programmes will be jeopardized.

The shortage, it seems, is common to all defence installations needing health physicists—at the end of last year, the ministry was 55 short of the 110 civilians it needs and six short of the 27 servicemen—but the difficulty is most acute at Aldermaston.

Pay is the general cause of the health physicists gap. Whitehall offers salaries £3,000 to £4,000 less than qualified staff can earn in the private sector or on the nuclear side of the electricity generating industry. But a special Aldermaston factor makes staff in general, and not just health physicists, unwilling to work there.

In 1978 Sir Edward Pochin, a leading radiologist, disclosed in a report prepared for the ministry that some buildings at Aldermaston contained concentrations of plutonium higher than prescribed safety levels. The ministry undertook immediately to put right the deficiency and the recruitment of more health and safety staff was critical to the solution.

Mr Henn's working party suggests, without much hope, a few remedies to make good the continuing shortage. Mr Kenneth Jones, a deputy chief scientific officer, has been appointed to lead a committee to recruit graduates direct from university for a two year health physics training course. The revival of a scheme for cadet health physicists is being discussed, as is the provision of a special course at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich.

One of the first tasks of Mr Douglas Miller, clerk to the Select Committee on Defence, and Dr Lawrence Freedman, its special adviser on the Polaris replacement, should be to secure a copy of the Henn report from the Minist y of Defence for their MPs. Trident missiles without Aldermaston warheads will deter no one.

Times 20/5/80

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CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01-233 8319

From the Secretary of the Cabinet: Sir Robert Armstrong KCB, CVO

Copy No. 4 of 4 Copies 14th May, 1980

Ref. A02174

With his minute of 12th May to the Prime Minister which he copied to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence, Sir Robert Armstrong attached a draft message to Dr. Brzezinski. This draft message was changed somewhat in the light of comments from No. 10 and has now been despatched. I enclose a copy.

I should be grateful if you and Richard Mottram in Sir Frank Cooper's office, to whom I am copying this letter and the enclosure, could ensure that the message is only seen by the very restricted group of people who need to see it.

I am also copying the letter, together with the enclosure, to Michael Alexander in No. 10.

D. J. WRIGHT

(D. J. Wright)
Private Secretary

R. A. Burns, Esq.
Sir M. Palliser's Office

TOP SECRET

T 131200Z MAY 80
FM CABINET OFFICE LONDON
TO WHITE HOUSE
RT
T O P S E C R E T

FROM SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG, CABINET OFFICE LONDON
FOR DR ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI, WHITE HOUSE

THANK YOU FOR THE MESSAGES WHICH DAVID AARON AND YOU SENT TO ROBERT WADE-GERY (WHO IS AT PRESENT ON SICK LEAVE) ON 6 AND 7 MAY REGARDING THE POLARIS FOLLOW-ON ISSUE.

2. WE ARE AT THIS STAGE GENERALLY CONTENT WITH THE GENERAL TIMETABLE AND SCENARIO YOU PROPOSE FOR THE EXCHANGE OF LETTERS AND PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT. THERE MAY BE POINTS OF DETAIL WE NEED TO DISCUSS FURTHER: AND THIS ASSUMES THAT WE HAVE BY THEN SETTLED THE OUTSTANDING +DOMESTIC+ ISSUES IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY.

3. I THINK WE ARE NOW CLOSE TO AGREEMENT ON THE PROPOSED TEXT OF THE EXCHANGE OF LETTERS, SUBJECT ON OUR SIDE TO FINAL MINISTERIAL APPROVAL, THOUGH WE SHOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS FURTHER WITH YOU THE LAST SENTENCE OF THE FOURTH PARAGRAPH OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S LETTER.

4. WE SHARE YOUR WISH TO WRAP UP IN THE SAME TIME SCALE OTHER OUTSTANDING ISSUES. WE WANT TO HELP ON THAT, BUT THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS ARE NOW CONSIDERABLY GREATER FOR US THAN THEY WERE, AND WE SHOULD LIKE TO PURSUE WITH YOU HOW THIS AFFECTS THE WHOLE COMPLEX OF ISSUES.

5. I THINK THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF WE COULD NOW DISCUSS ALL THESE MATTERS WITH YOU, WITH A VIEW TO BRINGING THEM TO A CONCLUSION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE FOR ME TO COME TO WASHINGTON FOR THIS PURPOSE EARLY NEXT WEEK, ACCOMPANIED BY FRANK COOPER, IF YOU COULD FIND TIME FOR A MEETING ON MONDAY, 19 MAY, OR - LESS GOOD FOR ME - TUESDAY, 20 MAY. ALTERNATIVELY I GATHER THAT DAVID AARON MIGHT BE ABLE TO STOP OVER IN LONDON ON HIS WAY BACK FROM VIENNA LATER THIS WEEK: WE SHOULD BE VERY HAPPY TO USE THAT OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH HIM, AND RESERVE THE POSSIBILITY OF A VISIT TO WASHINGTON FOR A LITTLE LATER, IF NEED BE.

RT

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Copy No: 2

of 4 copies

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Defence

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

POLARIS SUCCESSOR SYSTEM

We discussed yesterday your minute of 12 May to the Prime Minister on this subject. You agreed to send a somewhat amended version of the draft message attached to that minute. The Prime Minister has subsequently reviewed the various formulations set out in your minute about the relationship between any "savings" made possible by U.S. cooperation on the Polaris Successor and our subsequent effort in the conventional field. The Prime Minister has approved the final formulation, i.e. that referred to in the original draft of your message to Dr. Brzezinski.

I am copying this minute to George Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Brian Norbury (Ministry of Defence).

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

14 May 1980

TOP SECRET

ABJ

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Prime Minister: I agreed with Sir R. Armstrong to send the letter as amended. You may have therefore to consider the formulation at the end of para 4 a little more carefully. It looks OK to me.

13/5

Ref. A02150

Copy No. 1 of 7 Copies

PRIME MINISTER

Polaris Successor System

Following your meeting this morning I attach a draft message which I propose to send to Dr. Brzezinski, suggesting that Sir Frank Cooper and I should visit him in Washington early next week. Our main aim would be to negotiate on the waiver of the whole of the proposed research and development levy on the Polaris successor and on offset for the cost to us of manning United States-owned Rapiers in the United Kingdom,

on the lines of paragraph 15(iv) of my minute of 9th May, as agreed by Ministers this morning.

2. We should also raise with Dr. Brzezinski the question of the timing of an announcement

We should be emphasising that, while we were prepared to do all we could to meet the United States Government's wishes on this, and would be ready to reach agreement with them in the same timescale as the Polaris successor,

given the recent political exchanges in the House of Commons about its use.

3. We could discuss in detail the timetable for the exchange of letters and announcement on the Polaris successor. We could also discuss the one remaining point on the proposed exchange of letters between you and the President. The only point now outstanding on this relates to the sentence dealing with the implications for our conventional effort.

4. You will remember that the draft letter includes a paragraph on this, which reads (in the latest draft):

> "In particular, I should like to assure you that the United Kingdom continues to give wholehearted support to the NATO long term defence programme, with its emphasis on the strengthening of conventional forces. The United Kingdom has substantially increased its defence spending, in accordance with NATO's collective policy, and plans to

make further such increases in the future in order to improve the effectiveness of its all-round contribution to allied deterrence and defence. In this regard, the United Kingdom intends to use the savings created by the co-operation of the United States Government in making the X missile system available, to expand its efforts to upgrade the United Kingdom's conventional forces."

The first two sentences of this are agreed; it is only the last sentence which is at issue. The last sentence above is an American draft, which is not acceptable to us. We proposed three alternative formulations, as follows:-

First formulation

"The co-operation of the United States Government in making the X missile system available should greatly assist the effort to maximise that effectiveness, in relation to conventional as well as nuclear forces."

Second formulation

"The efficient use of resources made possible by continued close co-operation in the field of strategic nuclear systems on the basis proposed above will play an important part in facilitating United Kingdom measures to maximise that effectiveness in the conventional as well as the nuclear field."

Third formulation

"The economies made possible by the co-operation of the United States Government in making the X missile system available will play a key part in facilitating United Kingdom Government measures to maximise the strength of United Kingdom conventional forces."

The Americans have said that they would strongly prefer to keep the language they originally proposed. They understand that we cannot take a binding commitment about the size and allocation of defence funds far into the future, and it was not their intention to ask for such a commitment; but they view this sentence as a political statement of importance to them and to their public, which would demonstrate forcefully to the Congress, and to any potential critics,

one of the reasons why it is in the interests of the United States to co-operate in the modernisation of the British nuclear force. They would however be reluctantly prepared to agree to the following alternative formulation:

> "In this regard, the objective of the United Kingdom is to take advantage of the savings created by the co-operation of the United States in making the X missile system available in order to expand its efforts to upgrade its conventional forces."

We think that this formulation is still unacceptable to us, particularly because of the use of the word "expand" but that it could be made bearable by two changes, so as to read:

> "In this regard, the objective of the United Kingdom Government is to take advantage of the economies made possible by the co-operation of the United States in making the X missile system available in order to reinforce its efforts to upgrade its conventional forces".

Agreed MT

These amendments are reflected in the draft message to Dr. Brzezinski.

5. May I send the message to Dr. Brzezinski?

6. I am sending copies of this minute and of the draft message to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Defence Secretary.

RCA

(Robert Armstrong)

12th May, 1980

DRAFT MESSAGE FROM SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG, CABINET OFFICE, LONDON, TO DR. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI, WHITE HOUSE

Thank you for the messages which David Aaron and you sent to Robert Wade-Gery (who is at present on sick leave) on 6th and 7th May regarding the Polaris follow-on issue.

2. We are at this stage generally content with the general timetable and scenario you propose for the exchange of letters and public announcement. There may be points of detail we need to discuss further; and this assumes that we have by then settled the outstanding "domestic" issues in the European Community.

3. I think we are now close to agreement on the proposed text of the exchange of letters, subject on our side to final Ministerial approval, [On the Prime Minister's letter, we could accept the proposed wording of the fourth paragraph suggested in paragraph 5 of David Aaron's message of 6th May, provided that we substituted "economies made possible" for "savings created" and "reinforce" for "expand".]

but I shall want to discuss one or two outstanding points

4. We share your wish to wrap up in the same timescale other outstanding issues,

As you will have heard, we see a link between this matter, the political problems of which are now considerably greater for us than they were, and the outstanding difference on R and D costs which was discussed with Bob Komer.

5. I think that it would be useful if we could now discuss all these matters with you, with a view to bringing them to a conclusion as soon as possible. One possibility would be for me to come to Washington for

this purpose early next week, accompanied by Frank Cooper, if you could find time for a meeting on Monday 19 May or - less good for me - Tuesday 20 May. Alternatively I gather that David Aaron might be able to stop over in London on his way back from Vienna later this week.

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May 1980, H/C Def. C'tee Inquiry.

Ref. A02149

Copy No. 2 of 3 Copies

MR. ALEXANDER

House of Commons Defence Committee: Enquiry into Successor Systems

In his minute dated 9th May the Secretary of State for Defence seeks the Prime Minister's agreement that he should "play it long" on the submission of Government evidence to the House of Commons Defence Committee on their enquiry into Polaris successor systems, and avoid an open breach with the Committee as long as possible.

2. At the time he sent his minute the Secretary of State for Defence was not aware of the Polaris successor timetable now proposed by the White House for an exchange of letters in the last week of June and a public announcement on 1st July. If this timetable can be achieved - and in many ways it suits us well - it should not be too difficult to string the Committee along for the next seven weeks, particularly with the Spring Bank Holiday intervening. It will be important to maintain the Committee's goodwill in order to do everything possible to ensure a favourable reception of the public announcement in the House when it is made. This is particularly desirable, because there will probably be complaints that a policy decision of this magnitude should not have been taken before a major Commons debate on the issue.

3. The proposed timetable is at present very sensitive. I therefore recommend that the Prime Minister reply to the Secretary of State for Defence by agreeing to his suggestion to play this long, but accepting the desirability of keeping the Committee happy by meeting their wishes so far as possible, particularly in regard to their proposed visits to Faslane and Rosyth which, as he says, raise no real security problem. It might indeed be usefully suggested to the Committee that they ought to start their enquiry by making these visits in order to improve their understanding of the practical issues involved.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

12th May, 1980

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CONFIDENTIAL

E13

2 PPs

1. Mr Duchamp.
To see.
2. File.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~930 7022~~ 218 2111/3

MO 18/1/1

12v

7th May 1980

Prime Minister.
9.80.

Dear Colin,

The series of Chevaline-related Polaris flight trials, which began in September 1977, is due to continue with the eleventh launch from Cape Canaveral on 19th May.

Publicity arrangements will be the same as for the last launch, which took place on 11th April. Notification will be issued locally to the media two days in advance of the launch but with publication embargoed until the time of the launch; no post-launch release will be issued unless something goes wrong. We shall do the same in the UK.

Our updated Press Office brief will again be used to deal with any subsequent enquiries from the media.

? The No 10 Press Office will again be told of the result of the trial.

I am copying this letter to George Walden (FCO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,
Brian

(B M NORBURY)

C A Whitmore Esq

CONFIDENTIAL

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COPY NO 1 OF 3

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 May 1980

Dear Clive,

POLARIS

After their meeting at the White House on 5 May, Brzezinski drew Lord Carrington aside and raised the subject of the successor to Polaris. Brzezinski said that he hoped to get this settled by the end of June. The deal would however have to be a package, including something on research and development costs.

Moreover, the end of June would not be a perfect time for an announcement because of:

(a) Schmidt's prospective visit to Moscow;

(b) the Belgians and TNF; and

(c) the Venice Summit.

He did not however imply that these were overriding considerations on the question of timing.

The Secretary of State refrained from comment, except to express the hope that early progress could be made.

I am copying this letter to Robert Wade-Gery in the Cabinet Office.

Yours ever
GGH

(G G H Walden)

C A Whitmore Esq
10 Downing Street

Copy No 1 of 9

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No 10. A.R. 31

Prime Minister

MO 18/1/1

PRIME MINISTER

BRITISH UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TEST

The first of our underground nuclear tests of the 1980 series was successfully fired at 18.00 hours BST on Saturday 26th April. This was two days later than planned; the delay was caused by unfavourable meteorological conditions at the US Nevada Test Site on the preceding days.

2. The preliminary indications are that the test device achieved its designed nuclear yield of and that the explosion was fully contained, ie there was no venting of radioactive debris. The full records of the test will be available shortly and the subsequent detailed analysis will allow us to judge how well the device operated and how far we have met our objectives. The initial reactions are all favourable.

3. The agreed Press Releases made by the Americans and ourselves on the evening of 26th April have so far occasioned no comment.

4. I am copying this minute to the Home Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Ministry of Defence

28th April 1980

Defence

10 DOWNING STREET

Mr Whitmore.

The 'event' due to take place in Nevada has had to be postponed because the weather is unfavourable. The P.M. thinks therefore say something along the following lines

"There will probably be a nuclear test in Nevada sometime within the next 48 hours. The precise timing will depend on the weather conditions".

24/4/80

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SECRET

Ref. A02005

PRIME MINISTER

Cabinet: British Nuclear Test Programme

In his minute to you dated 3rd March the Secretary of State for Defence suggested that you might wish to give the Cabinet advance warning on 24th April that later that day an underground nuclear test would be taking place at the Nevada Test site as part of the British Nuclear Test programme. You agreed to this suggestion.

2. You may care to announce this test to the Cabinet during the Foreign Affairs item tomorrow, in the terms set out in the previous paragraph.

3. For your own information, and not for announcement to the Cabinet, you will recall that this test is the first of the programme of five spread over 1980-81 which the Secretary of State for Defence proposed in his minute to you dated 17th December 1979, to which Mr. Whitmore conveyed your agreement in his letter to Mr. Pym's Private Secretary of 11th January 1980.

RWA

(Robert Armstrong)

23rd April, 1980

TOP SECRET

Defence 35

Copy No. 2 of 2 copies

21 April 1980

Polaris Replacement:
Komer Negotiations

The Prime Minister has read your minute to me of 17 April describing the meeting which you and Sir Frank Cooper had had with Mr. Komer the day before.

As I have already told David Wright on the telephone, the Prime Minister has agreed that a message along the lines summarised in paragraph 6 of your minute should now go from you to Mr. Aaron. The Prime Minister however does not wish to send to President Carter a message on this subject at the present time.

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

R.L. Wade-Gery, Esq.

TOP SECRET

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COPY NO 1 OF 3 COPIES

Ref: B05939

MR ALEXANDER

Prime Minister: My impression was that you had, in effect, already given Officials discretion to go as far as is envisaged in para 6(a) i.e. to the Polaris level for the R+D levy. You may think therefore that a message could go to Aaron on the lines suggested. But I would not have thought a message to Pres Carter necessary, or desirable, at this stage. CDP 17/4

Polaris Replacement: Komer Negotiations

Sir Frank Cooper and I saw Mr Komer yesterday afternoon. He explained the United States position as follows.

a. "Soft offset" Thanks to American co-operation over the successor to Polaris, Britain would be saving perhaps $4 billion ie the cost of developing our own MIRV capability. In return for this the Americans would want -

i. a satisfactory sentence in the Prime Minister's formal letter to the President indicating that this money would instead be devoted to strengthening our conventional defence effort;

b.

b. "Hard offset" Under United States law (new since Mr Macmillan's day) Britain would have to pay an R and D charge for her Trident missile on a pro rata basis. This would cost about $400 million. Had it still been possible, a Macmillan-type 5 per cent R and D charge would have cost us $100 million, ie $300 million less. The United States Government could reduce this $400 million charge only to the extent that they were compensated elsewhere in hard cash. About $200 million of such compensation would be generated if Britain waived her right to charge the United States for the cost of manning the proposed Rapier defences of American bases here. (Subsequent analysis has shown that the correct figure for the cost of Rapier manning, over 20 years, is $187 million rather than $200 million. Mr Komer suggested no other candidates for "hard offset" and thought the problem over the number of GLCM bases might be soluble by other means.)

2. Under questioning, Mr Komer agreed that legally the United States Government had power to waive R and D charges (without cash compensation). But they only did so, in part or whole, for projects which were strategically imperative for the Alliance. A British replacement for Polaris did not come into that category. Indeed, there were those in Washington who regarded it as positively undesirable.

3. Sir Frank Cooper and I made the following points.

i. The Prime Minister had been appalled by the suggestions which I had brought back from Washington last month. She had been approaching this and other issues on the basis that maximum co-operation was the order of the day where the major security requirements of the Alliance were involved. Hence her robust political support on so many key issues; her willingness in the TNF context to accept an extra 16 GLCMs at almost no notice; [redacted] She thought that the President's approach was the same (despite the continuing and unjustified difficulty over pistols for the RUC). But none of this was compatible with the sort of haggling now being suggested by Mr Aaron and Mr Komer.

ii. If nevertheless we had to think in "offset" terms, [redacted] was by itself more than enough to counter-balance the $400 million R and D charge for Trident missiles, which should accordingly be waived in full. The Trident programme would moreover involve our giving about $2 billion worth of work to American industry, at a time when the procurement balance was already far too heavily weighted in the Americans' favour.

iii. The $4 billion which we were said to "save" by not having to develop our own MIRVs was not extra money. It was money from within future defence budgets which could have been spent either (a) on MIRV development, with considerable emasculation of our conventional forces (cf the French), or (b) on maintaining and strengthening those conventional forces. Thanks to United States co-operation it would now be spent on (b); and the whole Alliance

would gain. By the same token, if the Americans now started loading the bill for Trident, it would be our (and therefore the Alliance's) conventional strength which would suffer.

4. These and other more detailed arguments clearly took Mr Komer considerably aback. He undertook to report to the White House and see that we had a considered reply. But he thought our attitude would call the whole deal into question. The decision to charge us $400 million for R and D, or its equivalent in hard offset, had been the President's personally. We would be most unwise to press for it to be waived totally (there was an interesting implication here that we might do better arguing for a waiver down to the $100 million "Macmillan" level). If we were difficult over R and D, we might find less co-operation over special nuclear materials. At one stage, Mr Komer also suggested that the delay which our attitude would now cause would involve abandoning the whole Rapier deal. Under pressure, however, he seemed to accept that it could go ahead on the basis that the means of repaying Britain for the cost of manning would be settled later.

5. Mr Komer's final come-back was to suggest that our attitude might now cause the June date for the crucial Exchange of Letters to slip to the other side of the Election. In reply we rehearsed the arguments why that was likely to be most unsatisfactory, for both parties; and we added that it would be equally unsatisfactory all round if there were to be slippage to which he had publicly attached very great importance.

6. Mr Komer was at pains to suggest that the White House (and State Department) were less sympathetic to our cause then he was. We do not believe this. Sir Frank Cooper and I therefore recommend that I should now send Mr Aaron a message which, besides seeking to tidy up various points on the text of the proposed Exchange (including the disputed wording on our conventional forces), also offers a means of resolving what is after all a relatively minor disagreement about R and D (we are arguing about £150-200 million in total, out of a 10 year programme costing around £5 billion). We would suggest that the Americans should choose between two possible compromises -

a. We would come up from our present offer of zero for R and D to $100 million; and they would still owe us $187 million for Rapier manning, which we would arrange to collect in some other context (Sir Frank is confident one could be found).

b. We would stick at zero for R and D but would agree to waive (in return) our $187 million claim for Rapier manning (this is a fairly bogus 20 year figure anyway, which probably deserves substantial discounting).

7. The Defence Secretary has been consulted and agrees. He also suggests that the Prime Minister may wish to consider sending President Carter a message, a few days after mine to Mr Aaron; ~~you~~ this would of course avoid getting into the haggle but would seek his broad agreement to proceeding in the overall interests of the Alliance and of Western security.

8. In Lord Carrington's absence, I have informed the Foreign Office at official level.

R L WADE-GERY

17th April 1980

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"Times" - Thursday 17th April 1980.

'Make or break' for UK missile

By Peter Hennessy

The Soviet Union is about to dismantle half of its anti-ballistic-missile system around Moscow just as a £1,000m Ministry of Defence project, code-named "Chevaline", designed to enable British Polaris missiles to penetrate it, is nearing completion.

Western military intelligence analysts are convinced, however, that the Soviet Union is likely to replace all 64 of its anti-ballistic-missile launchers with something equally effective if not better.

The Ministry of Defence in London will not confirm or deny that the Soviet missiles are being dismantled, as the British Government is not a member of the Standing Consultative Commission, the Soviet-American group established to monitor the Anti-ballistic-missile treaty of 1972. It was to the commission that the Russian delegation announced its intention of taking down 32 missile sites last month.

A ministry official said yesterday: "We know that the Soviets are continuing with substantial research and development on anti-ballistic missiles, but we cannot give details or make public predictions. The statement in the defence White Paper about 'Chevaline' being 'designed to respond to Soviet anti-ballistic-missile capabilities, which we know are being improved', remains the position."

Dr Lawrence Friedman, head of policy studies at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London and the author of a book on the British Polaris submarine squadron and its likely successor, to be published in the autumn, confirmed yesterday that he knew from his sources that reports of the Soviet Union informing the United States of the dismantling of 32 of its 64 anti-ballistic-missile launchers were true.

He suggested that defence analysts in Washington and London were still uncertain about the exact meaning of the development.

"It is make or break for 'Chevaline'. Either it is a rather cruel farce, in that as soon as this expensive programme comes into service the

Continued on page 4, col 3

Dilemma on UK missile project

Continued from page 1

Russians remove its *raison d'être*. Or, on the other hand, if this development means the construction of a new and improved Soviet anti-ballistic-missile system, then the expenditure on 'Chevaline' is even more justified, provided one believes it is necessary for the British force to attack Moscow", he said.

Dr Friedman thinks that a dismantling of the Soviet anti-ballistic-missile capability is most unlikely, as it protests Moscow from Chinese as well as American, British and French nuclear missiles.

In the United States Department of Defence report for 1981 Mr Harold Brown, Secretary for Defence, states that the Soviet Union's "main concentration appears to be on improving the performance of their large phased-array detection and tracking radars, and on developing a rapidly deployable anti-ballistic-missile system which includes a new interceptor".

Details of "Chevaline" were given by Mr Francis Pym, Secretary of State for Defence, in a Commons debate on nuclear weapons on January 24. He described it as "a very major and complex development of the missile front end, involving also changes to the fire-control system . . . it includes advanced penetration aids and the ability to manoeuvre the payload in space".

Conversion of Britain's 64 Polaris A3 missiles to the improved "Chevaline" specification was "close to completion", Mr Pym added. Two successful flight trials were completed at Cape Canaveral, Florida, on March 21-22 and April 10.

TOP SECRET

Copy no. 2 of 2 copies

File

Defence 32

MR WADE-GERY

I attach a copy of a note that I have done for our records here of part of the Ministerial discussion about the deterrent which took place on Monday evening. You undertook to ensure that the note was seen by those who needed to see it.

MT

16 April 1980

TOP SECRET

Sole photocopy of

Copy No 1 of 1 copy 31

TOP SECRET

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

MEETING OF MINISTERS: 14 APRIL 1980

The Prime Minister said that she was unhappy with the message from the American Administration about the terms on which they were prepared to supply a successor system to Polaris. It was as much in the interests of the American Government as of HMG that we should have the Trident. President Carter had given her no hint during their talks in Washington before Christmas that he wished to attach conditions of the kind now envisaged to the sale.

In the ensuing discussion of the reasons why the American Administration had put forward conditions, it was argued that:

(a) President Carter might well experience difficulties in persuading Congress of the merits of the proposal. If the Administration were not seen to be extracting a quid pro quo from HMG they might well, particularly in the context of present problems on other fronts, make difficulties;

(b) The US Administration wished to have tangible evidence of UK expenditure on conventional weapons systems. It was probably central to their argument for supplying us with a new generation deterrent system that, failing supply by the US, we would have tried to finance the system ourselves. The savings made possible by US generosity would, the US Administration would argue, be diverted to improving our conventional capability;

(c) Ambassador Komer had a personal interest in securing concessions from HMG in the areas proposed for discussion by the Americans.

The Prime Minister agreed that Sir Frank Cooper should enter into discussions with Mr. Komer on the lines proposed. But she said it was essential that we should drive a very hard bargain indeed. She would prefer that the outcome of the negotiations,

however it was

TOP SECRET

however it was dressed up, would be that HMG effectively paid the net cost of the new system and no more. She accepted that it would probably be necessary to pay a 5 per cent R&D levy, i.e. the same levy as had been paid at the time of the Polaris purchase. As regards the agreement which was nearing completion on Rapier, she was anxious that all the costs should be "netted off" against other costs.

15 April 1980

Defence 30

TOP SECRET

Ref. A01916

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MR. LANKESTER

Polaris Replacement

Thank you for your minute of 10th April.

2. As to the negotiation with Ambassador Komer, I understand that he is due to arrive late on Tuesday. His first appointment will be with the Secretary of State for Defence on the morning of Wednesday, 16th April. This will be followed by detailed negotiations, for which Sir Frank Cooper will be in charge on our side. Ambassador Komer will then meet the Defence Secretary again in the evening. This is perhaps not a bad plan: the Defence Secretary will be able to pitch into Ambassador Komer in the morning, and set a scene in which Sir Frank Cooper will be able to negotiate toughly on detail; and there will be an opportunity in the evening for the Secretary of State to reiterate the tough line that is necessary, if Sir Frank Cooper has run into difficulties during the day.

RTA

(Robert Armstrong)

11th April, 1980

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10 DOWNING STREET

Clive, To note TL 10.4

From the Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

POLARIS REPLACEMENT

The Prime Minister has read your minute of 3 April (ref: A01893), and as you know, she has commented that there must be no further action until she has first had a meeting with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence. We have arranged this for 1530 on Monday, 14 April, and you of course have been invited. I am getting the Prime Minister's clearance to invite Sir Frank Cooper as well.

In addition, she has commented that:-

(i) a Senior Minister ought to be involved in the negotiation with Ambassador Komer;

(ii) she would not wish to follow up the negotiation with Ambassador Komer by taking the matter up directly with President Carter - she would want the matter to be pursued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Defence Secretary in the first instance;

(iii) she does not wish the Chancellor of the Exchequer or his officials to be brought into the picture at this stage.

T. P. LANKESTER

10 April 1980

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Ref: A01893

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PRIME MINISTER

Polaris Replacement

I have now reported the outcome of Mr. Wade-Gery's visit to the White House to the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence, and I have had an opportunity of discussing it with them.

2. The President is clearly committed to a positive response to our request for MIRVed Trident missiles. We are not now discussing whether or not we may have what we are asking for: we are discussing timing, terms and conditions, and above all price.

3. On the question of price, the United States Government is required by law to charge a research and development levy at a standard rate. The President has discretion to charge a lower rate, but needs to be able to show Congress good reason why he should do so. The United States Government is therefore looking to us for favours; but they are favours from which we shall benefit in terms of a reduction of the Trident price tag.

4. The three main items in Ambassador Komer's shopping list are:-

(i) the manning of Rapier defences for United States bases in the United Kingdom;

(ii) the number of bases for United States GLCMS in the United Kingdon

(iii) .

5. The first point is basically settled. The United States Government have agreed to buy the Rapier system from us to defend their air bases in this country; we have agreed to man the Rapier defences and meet the cost of doing so, on the understanding that they will offset that cost somewhere else (e.g. in the Trident programme). All there is to discuss is how much to score.

6. On the GLCM bases, the United States Government would prefer to have all their 160 GLCMS at one base; it will cost more if they have to be deployed over several bases. The Secretary of State for Defence thinks that it is likely to be politically impossible to put all the missiles in one base. Greenham Common, which is probably the only one capable of holding them all, is

particularly unsuitable from the political point of view, because of the fuss over its use as a base for heavy transport aircraft. So he is minded to insist on spreading them over three (or at least 2). If we insist on that, the United States Government will want us to bear - or compensate them for - the extra cost.

I am sure the figure is right above mine.

7.

8. There will also have to be a negotiation about the terms of our commitment to maintain our conventional forces. They are pressing us to agree to a form of words which would commit us to expand our efforts to upgrade our defence effort. This goes too far, and we shall have to revert to a phrase that does not go beyond what we have already said about maintaining our defence effort in NATO. But it should be possible to find a form of words acceptable to us both.

No

9. As to timing of an announcement, the Secretary of State for Defence would have liked not to have to wait until June. But it will take some time to complete the negotiations, and in the end he accepted the Foreign Secretary's argument that in political terms the best time for an announcement would be the last week of June, after the two Venice Summits. It is particularly desirable that we should not be telling Giscard and Schmidt about a decision to commit ourselves to heavy expenditure on Polaris replacement just before what may be the "crunch" meeting of the European Council on our Community Budget contribution. The Secretary of State for Defence recognised that we should not in practice lose much time by going for that date.

We shall not conclude the negotiation in time

10. The Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence agree that the next step is to have the negotiation with Ambassador Komer. That should be conducted toughly - it is likely to be, with Sir Frank Cooper in charge. We will

We shall need a top politician here - otherwise I fear the British negotiator will be too pliant.

No - I will this will Defence Sec for. See grid. N.B. MT.

then report to you; and, if you do not like the outcome, you can then consider taking the matter up direct with President Carter.!!! This would have to be by message in the first instance, though there is always the possibility of an oral exchange of views in the margin of the Venice Summit, if we can find a secure venue for such a discussion.

11. You may like to discuss this with the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence when they are next available in London together.

12. As I warned you in my minute of 28th March, the White House are still insisting that the circle of those in the know should continue to be kept as tight as it has been. We have not hitherto brought the Treasury into that circle. Now that we have a definite commitment by the Americans to an announcement in June, and we are beginning to get down to serious negotiation on questions of money and price, we really need to bring the Treasury into the circle. We will stick to the rule that no documents should pass outside No. 10 and the Cabinet Office; but I should be grateful for your authority to put the Chancellor of the Exchequer and two senior officials - Sir Douglas Wass and Mr. J. E. Hansford - into the picture, so that they can take part in future discussions of the subject.

Not yet MT.

RCA

(Robert Armstrong)

Prime Minister

What has happened since to change matters the earlier Thursday?

3rd April 1980

This suggests that the Americans' bargaining position is not quite as tough as at first appeared.

I think that there might be some advantage in your having a word with both Carrington and Mr Pym, as Sir Robert Armstrong suggests. Agree?

Yes - before any further action is taken.

Content to bring the Treasury in on the very restricted basis proposed at xl above? It is clearly time they knew what is going on. MT 3/4

No MT

TOP SECRET

I have read this paper with dismay. We should never have [illegible] the assurances we were given. I am not prepared to "negotiate" on this basis. MT.

27.

Prime Minister.

The Americans seem to want to drive a fairly hard bargain. I wonder whether they are not over-doing Chancellor Schmidt's likely reaction: he has always been in favour of the British deterrent.

Ref. A01818

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PRIME MINISTER

Polaris Replacement

As you know, Mr. Wade-Gery went to see Dr. Aaron at the White House on 25th and 26th March. You will want to read his record of his discussions, which I attach.

2. Briefly, the President has now committed himself to signing an agreement for the supply of MIRV'd Trident missiles to us. The proposal is that the agreement should be effected by an exchange of letters towards (but not later than) the end of June; and that the exchange of letters should be published within a few days of its being effected. A good deal of stress is laid upon the potential political difficulties for the President, and we are going to be asked to pay a certain price (paragraphs 7-10 of Mr. Wade-Gery's record). Those issues will be pursued with Ambassador Komer next month.

3. The White House insists on prior information being given, shortly before the exchange of letters is effected, to President Giscard, Chancellor Schmidt and the Italian Prime Minister. Other NATO allies should be told only on the date of publication.

4. The White House continues to insist that all communications on this subject should be only between the White House and 10 Downing Street and the Cabinet Office, and that we should not add to the circle of those in the know. I will therefore arrange for the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence, and their Permanent Secretaries, to be told orally the results of Mr. Wade-Gery's mission.

5. We shall of course be advising you more fully in due course about the next steps and the precise arrangements for effecting the exchange of letters and publication.

RGA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

28th March, 1980

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Ref: B05933

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Polaris Replacement

As you know, Dr Aaron finally confirmed late on 23rd March that he would be ready to talk to me on this subject at the White House on 25th March. I had 2½ hours with him (and his assistant Mr Thomson) that afternoon; and at his suggestion a further 1½ hours with him (alone) over a working breakfast yesterday. The essential message is that we shall get the public agreement we want, probably in late June; but that it looks like being more expensive, financially and politically, than we had hoped. The main American worry is now Chancellor Schmidt's reaction.

Timing

2. Dr Aaron said the President had committed himself to the Prime Minister and would honour his commitment. But the President foresaw "plenty on the downside politically" in doing so. In the light of the strong representations about timing which we had made last month he had agreed that we needed to be given a firm date by which our request should be made and affirmatively answered. He suggested that this should be done in June. But he would like to keep the news of this Exchange confidential thereafter for as long as possible. When the news broke, it would create a major international rumpus. The Russians would certainly make a big issue out of it. But the really worrying factor would be the reaction of America's allies, and particularly Chancellor Schmidt, who would accuse the President of doing further wilful damage to detente.

3. Dr Aaron said that in his own view there were two broad choices for when to make the Exchange public: (a) "around the time" it was actually made, ie in the June-August period; or (b) early in 1981. What did I think? I said that I felt very strongly that the interval between Exchange and Publication should be kept to an absolute minimum. All the British reasons for wanting an early Exchange were also arguments for early Publication. But the overriding argument was that both the President and the Prime Minister would be in an impossible situation during any interval between Exchange and Publication; if they wanted to avoid leaks they would have to tell direct

lies in answer to questions about where the matter stood. So I thought (b) would be disastrous; as to (a), Publication should surely follow so closely after the Exchange that it should probably also be in June rather than in July or August. Dr Aaron took careful note of these arguments. At our second meeting, next day, he told me that he had spoken to the President on the matter earlier that morning; and that the President now accepted the need for Publication to take place "within a few days" of the Exchange. (I had the impression that Dr Aaron had been trying for some time to persuade the President of this and had only needed a strong British reaction in order to clinch the argument.)

4. The choice of June for he Exchange was attributed by Dr Aaron to three factors -

i. It should be a reasonable time after the invasion of Afghanistan, so as to minimise charges of Presidential over-reaction.

ii. It should be after a specific date in early June by which both the United States and Soviet Governments were due to complete a round of dismantling under the SALT I agreement (ie the Russians should not be given any excuse for dodging this obligation).

iii. It should be after the deferred Belgian decision on TNF modernisation.

At our second meeting I got it established that these were strictly considerations which governed the Publication date, not the Exchange date; but since we had by then agreed that the two should be only days apart, the practical difference was small. Dr Aaron agreed that ii. argued only for a Publication date about 10th June; and that this would also satisfy i. But it would only satisfy iii if the Belgians took their decision in May, as originally planned. They now seemed more likely to decide just before the Nato Ministerial Meeting in late June. But there would be no American objection to a Publication date a day or two after the Belgian decision - and that would apply even if (as seemed possible) the Belgian decision only took the form of further postponement for eg three or six months. I pressed Dr Aaron hard on whether it would really be vital to wait for the Belgians even if they only decided in late June; but he was clear that the President would want to insist on that.

Congress

5. Dr Aaron confirmed that Congressional "ratification" would require 20 informal and 30 formal days of notification. This could start on Publication day. Even if that were as late as August, there would still be time for this process to be complete before Congress broke up for the Elections (probably on 11th October). I said that my advice from the Foreign Office was that the 50 days period could not count days when Congress was temporarily adjourned eg for the Republican and Democrat Conventions and for Labor Day; and that it might therefore need to start as early as mid-June. Dr Aaron said that the law was in fact ambiguous on this point; and since Congress would not oppose the Exchange as a matter of substance they were not likely to take fine legal points against it. (I am arranging to have this checked further; there are a number of variables, but it looks as if we should just be clear of any legal ambiguity provided Publication is not later than the end of June.)

Texts

6. Dr Aaron gave me (attached at Annex A) a United States revision of the draft letter from the Prime Minister which you gave Dr Brzezinski on 20th December. British wording which the Americans want removed is shown crossed out; new American wording is shown underlined; otherwise no changes. He also gave me (Annex B) a draft for the President's reply; and (Annex C) an informal copy of his speaking note for this part of our discussion.

7. As you will see, there are three points of substance.

i. R and D Costs Subject to paragraph 8 below, we are to be charged these on a pro rata basis, which they think will mean $400 million at 1979 prices; not on the old 5 per cent levy basis, which would have meant only $100 million. This will be a major point for Congress.

ii. Conventional Improvements We are asked to promise to use for strengthening our conventional forces the money we save thanks to American co-operation over Polaris replacement. We are also asked to say yes to a number of suggestions for defence co-operation about which Ambassador Komer of the Pentagon has been pursuing the MOD. Both points are said to be very important for Congress.

iii. Special Nuclear Materials We need some help over supplies of plutonium and enriched uranium (HEU). The Americans are not willing to guarantee this or to mention it in the Exchange which is published. But they will give us a confidential side-letter promising to do their best, and they are fairly sure that they can in fact do so (HEU should be no problem, and though their plutonium position is in a mess our needs are so tiny a proportion of theirs as to be wholly marginal).

8. I probed all three points at length. It looks as if iii. should be all right, though I am arranging to check with Professor Mason. But i. and especially ii. are of course much trickier. Dr Aaron made clear that the "Komer projects" in fact relate to both. Although United States law nowadays requires a pro rata basis for R and D costs, there is a let-out clause which the Americans would be prepared to invoke to the extent that we do what Ambassador Komer wants. If we can meet enough of his current requests, the R and D bill will be £100 million; if we can meet none of them, it will be £400 million; if we go some of the way, it will be between the two. What constitutes "enough" for Ambassador Komer will become clearer when he is here in mid-April. His list includes Rapier defences for United States bases in the United Kingdom; one base for the United States GLCMs rather than three bases (or Britain to pay the differential costs);

. Ambassador Komer is one of the very few American officials who is fully aware of the state of play between the White House and No.10/Cabinet Office on Polaris replacement. He will expect to conduct two parallel negotiations in April: an "overt" one with the MOD on what they can do to meet his wishes; and a "covert" one to decide how the results of the overt negotiation should be scored in terms of the Polaris-replacement R and D levy. For the covert negotiation, Ambassador Komer will be the only person on the United States side; and Dr Aaron agreed that the British side might suitably consist of Mr Quinlan, with help from Mr Patrick Moberly and/or me if required.

TOP SECRET

9. Dr Aaron suggested that in the light of the Komer negotiations it should be agreed in writing between the two sides, before the Exchange takes place, that the R and D levy should be at X per cent (X being 5 per cent if Ambassador Komer is fully satisfied, 20 per cent if he is not satisifed at all, and something in between if he is partly satisfied).

10. Dr Aaron suggested that British help over the Komer projects would score brownie points twice over. Once to cut the R and D levy; and once to make the Americans less exigent as regards our conventional forces. On the latter point Dr Aaron made it pretty clear that the Americans' main motive for co-operating over our Polaris replacement was their fear that we would otherwise have insisted on doing it on our own (he did not in this context mention the French) and would thereby have cannibalised our conventional defences. I of course took Dr Aaron through our standard lecture on the virtuousness of Britain's current defence policy (3 per cent real increase a year now firmly pledged up to 1983/4; top of the NATO leage table for GDP percentage; very great difficulty of the economic background; massive cuts elsewhere, etc.). But I warned him that there would be thorns as well as roses - including for example, some minor points on which our critics might fasten in the defence expenditure figures being published on 26th March. We would of course study carefully the wording now proposed by the Americans for the Prime Minister's letter. But I thought it would give us difficulty. Words like "expand our efforts" might suggest that our figures for the period up to 1983/4 would be increased, which they could not. Beyond 1983/4 nothing has been decided; 3 per cent annual increments would still be the NATO target, but what would actually be achieved by NATO countries (including Britain) remained uncertain. Every year there would in any case be the usual mis-match between plans and resources, and much talk of "cuts" when the former had to be tailored to the latter. More generally, while I myself agreed that we would have gone it alone in the absence of American co-operation, and would have robbed our conventional effort to pay for doing so, this was not at all the same thing as saying that the existence of American co-operation would generate savings which could somehow be added to our conventional effort. For all these reasons, I thought that something based on the language of his speaking note might prove more suitable than the language of his draft. But we would let him know.

11. We have long suspected that Ambassador Komer was the nigger in this particular American woodpile. So the important thing may be to agree any revised wording for our draft letter during the covert part of the negotiations with him in April.

12. On the United States draft for the President's reply, Dr Aaron said that the reference to "United States law and procedures" was intended only to safeguard Congress's right under the Arms Export CControl Act to have 50 days in which to object to the Exchange before it became binding.

13. Dr Aaron accepted two minor editorial changes which I suggested in our original wording for the Prime Minister's letter ("nuclear deterrent" rather than just "deterrent" in the fifth line of his draft; and "like the Polaris force" instead of "like Polaris" at the beginning of the third paragraph). We then considered whether there should be a reference to the number of British submarines we had in mind. I said that we would almost certainly need to make clear in public that we were thinking of either four or five. As anticipated, he thought it would be as well to put this into our text, if only because it had important implications for the number of missiles involved; the fact that we were not thinking of 10 or 20 submarines would be helpful on the arms control front. After discussion we agreed (ad referendum) that the Prime Minister's letter might in its second paragraph refer to "a force of four British submarines (or five submarines if the British Government so prefer)"; and Dr Aaron made clear that the Americans would not mind if we decided to invert the figures four and five in this phrase.

Allies

14. Dr Aaron then reverted to the President's worries about Chancellor Schmidt's reaction. He thought that the Prime Minister and the President should, severally and in that order, send a personal emissary to explain to the Bundestagalerant what was coming and why. This should be done before the Exchange, not just before Publication. There would be no question of the Chancellor (or anyone else) being offered a veto; but he would need "lots of stroking". At our first meeting, Dr Aaron flirted with the idea that these approaches to Bonn should be made several weeks ahead of the Exchange (and I even had to ride him off the idea of the Prime Minister mentioning

the matter at this week's bilateral meeting). By our second meeting he was persuaded that the dangers of this would be too great; but he remained firm on it being done a few days before the Exchange, rather than between Exchange and Publication.

15. He was "much less worried" about President Giscard, but agreed that it would be essential to treat him no less well than the Chancellor. Because of Giscard's nuclear status, and because Schmidt would certainly report to Paris about any approach in Bonn, the American and British emissaries should probably be sent to the Elysee just before they went to Bonn. The Italian Prime Minister should also be told in advance of Publication, and possibly in advance of the Exchange; Dr Aaron recognised the security dangers of this but felt it was important for Cossiga (or whoever it was) to be able to say he had been told in advance. The other allies he thought, should only be told early on the day of Publication.

16. I said that nearer the time we might need to consider the exact date of Publication (and therefore of the Exchange and of approaches to major allies) in relation to other national or international events around the same time. If the European budget row had not been settled, for instance, there would be important considerations as regards the June European Council. Dr Aaron agreed.

Procedure

17. Dr Aaron raised the possibility of the Exchange being effected by the Prime Minister and President personally in the margin of the Venice Summit, but concluded against this. Had the President been coming to London on his way home that would have been another possibility; but it was now very unlikely. Signed original texts, both bearing the same date, could perhaps be exchanged at the White House, with Sir N Henderson as our representative.

18. Dr Aaron noted that Publication would at our end probably take the form of the Prime Minister making a statement to Parliament and tabling a White Paper. If this was done at 3.30 pm BST, simultaneous action in Washington at 9.30 am local time would be no problem. The President would probably send the text of the Exchange to Congress under cover of a formal letter from himself; and the press would be briefed. If we wanted the day to be a Thursday, so that the Cabinet could be told that morning, that should be no problem for Washington.

19. Dr Aaron agreed that after Publication work could start at once on two sets of detailed negotiations: one to up-date the Polaris Sales Agreement, which might be done by the existing Project Officers and Joint Committee; and one on Special Nuclear Materials, leading to an amendment of the 1958 Co operation Agreement. Neither process could actually be completed until Congress's 50 days were over.

20. More immediately, Dr Aaron and I agreed on the following steps.

a. We should exchange draft Questions and Answers for parliamentary and press use at the time of Publication. Questions might well be rather different in the two capitals; but the general tenor of answers should clearly be aligned.

b. He would let me have an American first draft of Questions and Answers for the embassies to use when giving advance notice to major allies.

c. I would let him have our considered comments on his drafts for the Exchange (I am getting work in hand; and no doubt a meeting of MISC 7 will also be needed).

d. We might need a further meeting in due course, either a 2 or with Foreign and Defence Ministry colleagues "in the know".

Miscellaneous

21. Dr Aaron was insistent that all communications should continue to be on the direct line between the White House and No.10/Cabinet Office (apart from the "covert" negotiations with Ambassador Homer); and that the circle of those in the know should continue to be kept as tight as it was now (the military in particular should not be told, though I did get his permission to brief Sir N Henderson on a strictly personal basis). Although I did not raise the point specifically, I propose if you agree that we should regard ourselves as free to put the Treasury in the picture (Sir D Wass and Mr Hansford only); we shall need their help, eg over what can be said on conventional forces. But I fear that the "no documents outside No. 10 and the Cabinet Office" procedure will have to continue.

22. Dr Aaron asked that the square brackets round Trident I should remain in all our drafts until final texts are handed over on Exchange day. But he is quite clear that MIRV4 C4 is what we in fact want and will get.

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23. Dr Aaron had no strong views on whether the Exchange should, after Publication, be registered with the United Nations. But he was instinctively against giving any such body a cue to make unkind comments.

24. Finally, Dr Aaron said that, as I might have heard, the White House had at one stage been "exceedingly worried" about our Afghan neutrality proposal. Happily all was now well. I said I had indeed heard. As he would remember, I had mentioned the matter at the quadripartite meeting in Paris on 8th February, though without emphasis since at that early stage it was little more than a gleam in our eye. When it began to be a major element in our thinking the Foreign Office and our Embassy had kept in close and continuous touch with the State Department. Perhaps they had been at fault in not keeping the NSC fully posted in parallel? Dr Aaron ruefully acknowledged that if there had been procedural faults they were all on the American side.

25. We agreed that if the press got hold of my visit (which seemed unlikely) the line should be that it was an example of routine contact between the White House and the Cabinet Office on matters of mutual interest.

27th March 1980

R L WADE-GERY

TOP SECRET

ANNEX · A

US-Proposed Alterations to UK Text of
Draft Letter from Prime Minister to President

As you will know from recent exchanges between us, the United Kingdom Government attaches great importance to the maintenance of a nuclear deterrent capability. It will be necessary to replace the present Polaris force in the early 1990s, and having reviewed the options, the Government has concluded that the [Trident I] weapon system best meets the need to maintain a viable nuclear deterrent capability into the 21st century. I write therefore to ask you whether the United States Government would be prepared, in continuation of the cooperation which has existed between our Governments in this field since the Polaris Sales Agreement of the 6th of April, 1963, to supply on a continuing basis, [Trident I] missiles, equipment and supporting services [,~~in a manner similar to that in which Polaris was supplied~~]; {~~and whether the United States Government would be willing to amend further the Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes of the 3rd of July, 1958, in respect of the supply of special nuclear materials for the United Kingdom deterrent programme.~~}

The United Kingdom Government would wish to purchase sufficient missiles, complete with multiple independently targettable re-entry vehicles and less only the warheads themselves, together with equipment and supporting services, on a continuing basis, to introduce and maintain a force of British submarines, close coordination being maintained between the Executive Agencies of the two Governments in order to assure compatibility of equipment; {~~and would also wish to procure such special nuclear materials as were needed, and were beyond their own capacity to provide, to enable them to produce the warheads.~~}

The successor to the Polaris force will be assigned to NATO, like the Polaris force and, except where the United Kingdom Government may decide that supreme national interests are at stake, the successor force will be used for the purposes of international defence of the Western Alliance in all circumstances. It is my understanding that cooperation in the modernisation of the United Kingdom nuclear deterrent in this way would be consistent with the present and prospective international obligations of both parties.

In particular, I should like to assure you that the United Kingdom continues to give whole-hearted support to the NATO Long-Term Defence Programme, with its emphasis on the strengthening of conventional forces. The United

Kingdom Government has substantially increased its defence spending, in accordance with NATO's collective policy, and plans to make further such increases in the future in order to improve the effectiveness of its all-round contribution to Allied deterrence and defence. In this regard, the United Kingdom Government intends to use the savings created by the cooperation of the United States Government in making the [Trident I] missile system available, to expand its efforts to upgrade the United Kingdom's conventional forces.

If the United States Government is prepared to meet this request, I hope that as the next step the United States Government will be prepared to receive technical and financial missions to pursue these matters, using the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement where appropriate.

ANNEX B

DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Madam Prime Minister:

In reply to your letter of , I am pleased to confirm that the United States attaches significant importance to the nuclear deterrent capability of the United Kingdom and to close cooperation between our two Governments in maintaining and modernizing that capability. To further that objective, the United States is prepared to supply the United Kingdom [TRIDENT I] missiles, equipment and supporting services, as you propose in your letter, subject to and in accordance with applicable United States law and procedures.

I view as important your statements that the POLARIS successor force will be assigned to NATO and that you intend to use savings created by our nuclear cooperation to upgrade the United Kingdom's conventional force. As you know, I regard the strengthening of NATO's conventional and nuclear forces as of highest priority for Western security.

I agree that as the next step in implementing these agreements, our two Governments should initiate negotiations on the technical and financial terms of the sale of [TRIDENT I] missile system from the United States to the United Kingdom.

Sincerely,

The Right Honorable
Margaret R. Thatcher, M.P.
Prime Minister
London

TOP SECRET

ANNEX C

TALKING POINTS

EXCHANGE OF LETTERS

-- We agree with your suggestion that the British request and US reply be embodied in an exchange of letters between the Prime Minister and President.

-- We find the draft letter from the Prime Minister to the President which Sir Robert Armstrong left with Dr. Brzezinski in January to be acceptable on the whole, but suggest three modifications.

-- We have also prepared for your consideration a draft response from the President to the Prime Minister.

POLARIS Sales Agreement -- R&D Costs

-- The first suggested modification is to strike the phrase "in a manner similar to that in which POLARIS was supplied" from the third sentence of the first paragraph.

-- Although we agree with you that we should stick to the framework of the PSA to the maximum extent possible, this phrase would imply that we will follow all aspects of the PSA for the new missile sale.

-- This may not be possible, especially with respect to the financial provisions, in which our Congress will be especially interested.

-- As you know, the PSA accommodated Research and Development costs in a 5 percent surcharge added to the cost of equipment purchased under the PSA.

-- However, current US law and procedure require that we charge a *pro rata* share of our R&D costs. For example, if the UK decided to purchase 100 TRIDENT I missiles and the US planned to purchase roughly 900 for itself, the UK would have to pay roughly 10 percent of our R&D expenditure on TRIDENT I on top of the cost of the missiles themselves and related equipment.

-- The *pro rata* method results in a considerably higher R&D surcharge than the PSA. We currently estimate that the difference is roughly $300 million ($400 million compared to $100 million).

-- We believe that it is important to resolve the issue of R&D surcharge before the exchange of letters between the Prime Minister and President. The Congress will want to know how we propose to handle this matter.

Conventional Improvements

-- The second suggested modification is to add language specifying that the savings created by US - UK cooperation (as opposed to independent development) would be used to strengthen UK conventional forces.

-- We feel that such a statement would be important. While it is by no means the only or paramount reason for our interest in continued US - UK strategic cooperation, the question of financial savings and consequent improvement of UK conventional forces did figure significantly in our consideration of the issue, especially in the case of MIRV. We took special note of your statement that independent development of MIRV, which you said you were prepared to undertake, would cost you $4 billion.

-- We also feel that it is important to be able to point to additional defense projects of mutual interest which you could undertake. Bob Komer will be in London April 16 and can pursue this matter further.

Special Nuclear Materials

-- The third suggested modification is to drop all reference to Special Nuclear Materials (SNM) from the letters.

-- In light of the uncertainties in our own needs and plutonium availability, we are unable at this time to guarantee to you the supply of the plutonium that you need.

-- We are currently engaged in an extensive review of our weapons needs (in both the SALT and no-SALT environments). There are considerable uncertainties in our own requirements and thus in our own needs for supply. Some of the options under study could prove politically controversial because they could provoke an extended environmental debate.

-- We do not believe it would be helpful for either of us to insert British plutonium requirements into this debate.

-- At the same time your plutonium requirements are being considered in our own internal studies. They are dwarfed by the size of the uncertainty in our own requirements.

-- For this reason, we are confident that we will be able to supply you the necessary plutonium whatever the outcome of our internal studies, but you must understand that we are unable to make a firm commitment at this time.

-- We would be willing to arrange for a private statement from the President to the Prime Minister that "the US is willing in principle to supply special nuclear materials to the UK deterrent program which were beyond your own capacity to provide, subject of course to the US government's ability to provide such materials in light of its requirements and availability of supply."

-- So long as you provide uranium feed material as you have in the past, we do not believe that your enriched uranium requirements will pose a problem for us.

CAW(OR)
MJS

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~XXXXXX~~ 218 2111/3

MO 18/1/1

27th March 1980

1. NBPM
2. Mr Duffy
To see
3. PA.
KW
28/3

Dear Michael,

CHEVALINE FLIGHT TRIAL

The series of Chevaline-related Polaris flight trials, which began in September 1977, is due to continue with the tenth launch from Cape Canaveral on 10th April. This is the trial which was originally scheduled for 7th March (Brian Norbury's letter of 14th February) but had to be postponed because of a fault in the missile, unrelated to the Chevaline development.

Publicity arrangements will be the same as for the last launch, which took place on 21st March and was highly successful. Notification will be issued locally to the media two days in advance of the launch but with publication embargoed until the time of the launch; no post-launch release will be issued unless something goes wrong. We shall do the same in the UK.

Our updated Press Office brief will be used to deal with any subsequent enquiries from the media. Your Press Office will again be told of the result of the trial.

I am copying this letter to George Walden (FCO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

David Omand

(D B OMAND)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq

TOP SECRET

22

COPY NO. 6 OF 6 COPIES

2 " " (Treasury)
3 " " (FCO)
4 " " (Home Office)
5 " " (RUSI)

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

4 March 1980

Dear Brian,

POLARIS SUCCESSOR

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 29 February (MO 18/1/1).

She fully shares his regret that this matter is still unsettled and agrees with the reasons he cites. Pressure is being maintained on the White House, and there is to be a further discussion in a fortnight's time. The Prime Minister hopes that this will bring better progress. Meanwhile it remains of the highest importance, in this delicate matter, that no approaches should be made in other channels.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other members of MISC 7 and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever,

Clive Whitmore.

B.M. Norbury, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

TOP SECRET

SECRET

21A

Prime Minister.

Do Cabinet to do X1 today?

If you are, the day to do it will be Thursday 24 April, the day of the test. The firing will not take place until after Cabinet.

MO 18/1/1

PRIME MINISTER

BRITISH NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAMME

BGC to MOD

on Pt 2 with Clive

You earlier agreed (Mr Whitmore's letters of 13th July 1979 and 11th January 1980) to a programme of three UK underground nuclear tests in 1980.

2. Preparations at the Nevada Test Site for the first of these tests are now well advanced. Some parts of the test device have already been dispatched to the United States and the remainder will follow shortly. The assembled device is scheduled to be moved to the emplacement hole by 21st March 1980 in readiness for firing on or about 24th April, and I would now propose to give final clearance for this.

X1

3. You may wish to give the Cabinet advance warning of the test shortly before it takes place. As regards publicity, I propose that we should give no public notice of our intentions but make a Press Announcement simultaneously in the United States and London, immediately after the test has been carried out.

4. I am sending copies of this minute to the Home Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Ministry of Defence

3rd March 1980

SECRET

TOP SECRET

Prime Minister

21

Agree that we should proceed as proposed by Sir Robert Armstrong and that I should reply to Mr Pym's minute generally on the lines of the draft attached?

Ref. A01581

Copy No. 1 of 3 Copies

PRIME MINISTER

Yes MT

3/3

Polaris Successor

The Secretary of State for Defence's minute to you of 29th February (MO 18/1/1) understandably complains about the lack of progress towards an Anglo-American agreement on the provision of the C4 missile as Polaris's successor, and asks you to consider taking the matter up again with the President.

2. Although no papers on the subject have been allowed outside No. 10 and the Cabinet Office, Mr. Pym is aware that the President promised you in writing last October to agree to provide the C4 missile if and when we asked for it; that he reaffirmed this to you in Washington on 17th December; and that we have since been pressing the White House to lift the President's request to you to delay making our application. My letter to Mr. Whitmore of 21st January and my minute to you of 11th February recorded my talk with Dr. Brzezinski and Mr. Wade-Gery's longer talk with Dr. Aaron. We have left them in no doubt that the continued delay is seriously worrying us, for many reasons, including those now cited by Mr. Pym. We sent Dr. Aaron a reminder when we had not heard further from him by 28th February. In reply he has now proposed that Mr. Wade-Gery should visit Washington in mid-March. I think we should agree to this, although it is still a slower timetable than we should wish.

3. In theory, you could send our formal request to the President at any time. He cannot stop you, and he has already promised that the answer will be Yes. But this would clearly be unwise, when he has so clearly asked you not to do so until he is ready.

4. A written message from you to the President may well be necessary if his staff continue to prevaricate. But I am inclined to keep this in reserve while there is still hope that lower-level pressure may do the trick.

5. I therefore suggest a temporising reply to Mr. Pym, on the lines of the attached draft.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

3rd March, 1980

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

DRAFT LETTER FROM C.A. WHITMORE TO B.M. NORBURY, ESQ., PS TO SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE

Polaris Successor

The Prime Minister has seen the Secretary of State for Defence's minute of 29th February (MO 18/1/1). She fully shares his regret that this matter is still unsettled, and agrees with the reasons he cites. Pressure is being maintained on the White House, and there is to be a further discussion in a fortnight's time. The Prime Minister hopes that this will bring better progress. Meanwhile it remains of the highest importance, in this delicate matter, that no approaches should be made in other channels.

TOP SECRET

20

Copy No 1 of 6 copies.
Page 1 of 2 pages.

MO 18/1/1

PRIME MINISTER

POLARIS SUCCESSOR

1. When, during your talks with President Carter in Washington last December, you broached the subject of UK/US co-operation on a successor to UK Polaris you were met with a favourable general response but a clear reluctance to receive and respond to a specific request in the immediate future. This reluctance related mainly to calculations over SALT II ratification. I gather that the Cabinet Office has been probing White House attitudes on whether, post-Afghanistan, there could be a decision, but I understand that no clear view has yet emerged. I recognise that there are international problems (there always will be!), but we do, I consider, now need to determine a course of action.

2. I regard the present position as increasingly uncomfortable, both politically and practically. Domestically, we have so far managed to fend off pressure to explain the successor system we have in mind but we find this line less easy to sustain as we move into the Defence White Paper/ Defence Debate season. There is great interest in this whole subject and an increasing air of bewilderment and mystery about it, Further publications are appearing. The Select Committee on Defence wish to start work on it. The media will be in full cry in April.

3. My more immediate concern, however, is with mounting practical difficulty. I would not claim that there are instant deadlines in a project for the 1990s. But there are areas of work - notably the submarine design, and preparations for the immensely complex works needed at the Coulport depot for the missiles - where we may later much regret delay now, especially if the approach of the US Presidential campaign were to push off decisions into 1981.

4. Moreover, we know that production of the C4 missile for the US is due to cease in 1986, and we shall want to add our own requirement to the end of the US production run. It is in our practical interests to place orders as soon as we can for long lead materials, for which US contracts are placed well in advance of the main production; the longer it is before the way is clear for us to do this, the greater is the risk that we shall face increased costs and technical problems.

/5.

5. We also face a practical problem over the whole impact of a Polaris successor on our defence programme. As I shall shortly be reporting to OD, the reconciliation of our future programme with the resource levels now set by PESC decisions is a formidable and involved task. The Polaris successor will be our biggest single future project, with wide repercussions upon other parts of the programme in terms not only of money but also of many other resources such as shipbuilding capacity, nuclear support, and Service and civilian manpower. The sooner I can give my Department firm and visible planning assumptions and guidance, the better.

6. For all these reasons I believe that further delay will be increasingly harmful to our interests and to the efficient conduct of business. I suggest that we should bring all reasonable pressure to bear upon the US to move forward quickly to a satisfactory decision; and I should be very grateful if you would consider taking the matter up again with President Carter.

7. I am sending copies of this minute to our MISC 7 colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

FH

Ministry of Defence

29th February 1980

CONFIDENTIAL

Defence

10 DOWNING STREET

22 February 1980

Dear Ian.

CHEVALINE TRIAL FLIGHTS

Maybe I have read it wrong, but Norbury's letter to Clive Whitemore of 14 February (copy enclosed) looks a little as if this Press Office will be told of the results of the next series of trials automatically.

I wrote to John Ledlie on 23 October saying that, in future, we only wish to be informed of the results of these trials during silent hours when there is a serious mishap.

I would be grateful for a reassurance from you that your up-dated Press Office briefing, mentioned in Norbury's letter, includes this particular revision.

Yours ever
Charles Anson

C V ANSON

I S McDonald Esq
Deputy Chief of Public Relations
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2HB

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Duchamp
To see.
MW
18/2

2

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~930 7022~~ 218 2111/3

MO 18/1/1

14th February 1980

Prime Minister,
To see.
MW.
14/2

Dear Clive,

CHEVALINE TRIAL FLIGHTS

My Secretary of State has asked me to let you know that the series of Chevaline-related Polaris flight trials, which began in September 1977, is due to continue with the ninth and tenth launches from Cape Canaveral on 7th and 20th March.

Publicity arrangements will be the same as for the last launch on 8th November. A notification (updated to take account of my Secretary of State's recent announcement in the House) will be issued locally to the media two days in advance of each launch but with publication embargoed until the time of the launch; no post-launch release will be issued unless something goes wrong.

Our Press Office brief, which has also been updated, will be used to deal with any subsequent enquiries from the media.

Your Press Office will again be told of the results of the trials.

I am copying this letter to George Walden (FCO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

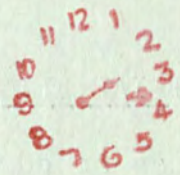
Yours ever,
Brian

(B M NORBURY)

C A Whitmore Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

14 FEB 1980



SECRET

19

Defence

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

POLARIS REPLACEMENT

The Prime Minister has seen your minute A01384 of 11 February 1980. She was grateful for this report of Mr. Wade-Gery's meeting with Dr. Aaron.

C. A. WHITMORE

KRB

14 February 1980

SECRET

Prime Minister 18

12th

TOP SECRET

Ref. A01384 Copy No. 1 of 3 Copies

PRIME MINISTER

MO

Polaris Replacement

I submit for your information the attached note reporting our latest contact with the White House. As you know, we are keeping all written material on this subject in the Cabinet Office and No. 10. But I am arranging for Mr. Pym and Lord Carrington to be informed orally.

RTA

(Robert Armstrong)

11th February, 1980

SECRET

c.c. CO
HMT
FCO
HO

26

Defence

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

20 March, 1980.

Chevaline

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 18 March, 1980, about progress on the Chevaline programme over the last twelve months.

She was glad to learn that the development programme is continuing satisfactorily, though she has noted that there remain a number of potential difficulties.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Members of MISC 7, and to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

C. A. WHITMORE

B.M. Norbury, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

SECRET

GB

25

Copy No 1 of 6 copies

MO 18/1/1

Prime Minister.

On the whole an encouraging progress report, though there remain a number of potential problems.

PRIME MINISTER

Agreed MT

19 iii

CHEVALINE

This minute reports on progress on the Chevaline programme over the last twelve months.

2. The period has been one of solid technical achievement, particularly in the development programme, which is now nearing completion. The flight trials programme is now well advanced and has gone satisfactorily; there were four flight trials during 1979 from a pad at Cape Canaveral, and although one of these was a "non test" owing to failure of the US second stage motor (a failure unrelated to the Chevaline modifications), the overall results are most encouraging. We are about to embark on the next stage of the flight trials programme - a series of three firings of tactical standard missiles at Cape Canaveral; these are planned for March and May 1980.

3. Despite the complexity of the system most of the technical problems of the development programme have now been overcome. The basic concept of the design is sound and there is every confidence that the accuracy and penetration requirements will be met. There is also confidence in the basic safety features. The emphasis of the work has now largely shifted from development to production and preparation for in-Service operation. It is in these areas that the consequences of the industrial disputes and staff shortages which have beset us are principally felt. The schedule for working up the depot at Coulport, where missiles are assembled and stored, has been disrupted by industrial disputes and delay in the completion of buildings, but special measures have been taken to meet the requirements of the trial firings from a submarine (scheduled for November 1980) and the Acceptance firings (in early 1981). Provided that there are no unforeseen setbacks the first operational deployment, initially with a partial outload, will proceed on schedule in mid-1981.

4. Although the production of in-Service hardware has been disrupted by industrial disputes, the present assessment is that extramural production will not be a holding factor.

Production of re-entry bodies and decoys at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston, and the Royal Ordnance Factory Burghfield, remains an area of concern. Since I minuted you (on 1st November last year) about this, there has been some improvement in the staffing situation. Provided that this improvement is sustained; that there are no further technical or industrial problems to hold up production; that arrangements now in hand for the loan of fissile materials by the US are confirmed; and that the Plutonium component manufacturing line at Aldermaston is brought back on stream by the end of this year, the programme for initial outload and continuous deployment should be met. The provisos are, however, of critical importance and I am keeping a close eye on the situation.

5. A new factor is the need to extend the refit of HMS REVENGE (the second submarine to deploy with Chevaline, thus achieving a continuous patrol capability) in order to deal with problems over the levels of radio-activity in her reactor system. It is now unlikely that REVENGE will be available to deploy with modified missiles before February 1983. Provided that the intramural production programme is met, a full outload of missiles should be available by then.

6. We have continued to monitor closely developments in the ABM defences that Chevaline is designed to penetrate. it remains the Ministry of Defence assessment that Chevaline will have an acceptable penetration capability during its Service life.

7. So far a total of £720M has been spent or committed. There is likely to be little contingency in hand because inflation in the high technology sector of the engineering industry is much higher than the national rate and the backlog of work caused by industrial disputes will have to be caught up at the new higher pay rates. Nevertheless we are on target to remain within the approved project cost of £935M at 1979 Survey Prices, which is the sum our predecessors agreed as the basis for the project to be funded to completion. This sum will become just over £1000M after adjustment to 1980 Survey Prices.

8. As you know I revealed in general terms the main features of the Chevaline project in the House of Commons on 24th January. I believe the public impact has been favourable to perceptions of our deterrent capability and resolve.

9. In summary, therefore, the development programme continues satisfactorily. Production and preparation for in-service use are advancing and provided there is no major unforeseen setback a system with acceptable performance and capability will be available for service within the cost authorised. Possible delay to the programme, principally because of intramural production difficulties remains a source of concern but present indications are that the timetable for initial outload and continuous deployment should be met. I will inform you if there is any significant change in this position.

10. I am copying this to our MISC 7 colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Ministry of Defence

18 March 1980

SECRET

Defence 24

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

5 March 1980

BF for Cabinet
23.4.80

BRITISH NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAMME

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 3 March about the next British underground nuclear test.

She agrees with Mr. Pym's suggestion that she should give the Cabinet advance warning of the test and she will do this on Thursday 24 April, the day of the firing (which you confirmed on the telephone yesterday was not expected to take place until after Cabinet was over).

I am sending a copy of this letter to John Chilcot, George Walden, John Wiggins and David Wright.

C. A. WHITMORE

Brian Norbury, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

SECRET

GB

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

Defence 23

COPY NO. 2 OF 2 COPIES

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

POLARIS SUCCESSOR

The Prime Minister has seen your minute A01581 of 3 March 1980 and agrees that we should proceed with the Americans as you propose.

I attach a copy of the letter which I have now sent to Mr. Pym's Private Secretary.

fcs.

4 March 1980

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

Photocopy No. 1

COPY 1 OF 2 COPIES

Ref: B05909

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Polaris Replacement

Dr Aaron and I were able to have a long talk à 2 on the evening of 8th February, in the secure-speech room of the British Embassy in Paris, which is believed to be proof against even the most sophisticated eaves-dropping.

2. He said that he had discussed "our problem" with the President, Mr Vance, Dr Brown and Dr Brzezinski, in the light of your 15th January meeting with the last-named and in preparation for his own talk with me. The President's commitment to us remained total. They all accepted that as things had worked out there could no longer be any link between the timing of our request and SALT II ratification, which (as we knew) was what they would have preferred. But they did not think the present moment was the right one, with the Afghanistan crisis in its present stage. The Administration were already being accused, domestically and internationally, of over-reacting to the crisis. If they now announced a decision to help us over Polaris replacement, that would be seen as a further and extreme example of over-reaction. It might also be divisive of the Alliance, which was quite badly enough divided as it was (Dr Aaron had just come from having his head washed at the Elysee over the United States leak about the proposed meeting of the 5 Foreign Ministers in Bonn which the French had in consequence refused to attend).

3. I said that we had also considered the problem carefully, in the post-Afghanistan context, and had reached an opposite conclusion. The present juncture seemed almost ideal for an announcement of what many would see as a welcome sign of resolution; and it would be harder than it might otherwise have been for our critics within or our enemies without to attack the decision convincingly. The Administration were no doubt the best judges of their own public opinion. But we had heard nothing to suggest that the Alliance would be divided on the issue. The French in particular were taking a robust tone, at least in private, as he and I had heard earlier that day; and since they would so clearly not be associated with the decision they would not feel doctrinally obliged to attack it, in the way they were currently attacking the idea of a Foreign Ministers' meeting à 5.

The French have complained for some time now that we are going to replace Polaris with US help.

4. I then took Dr Aaron carefully through our own reasons for disliking further delay. We had been lucky to have been able to damp down public speculation in Britain, and it had been skilful of Mr Pym to divert immediate public attention onto Chevaline at the recent debate in Parliament. But a climate of expectation was inevitably building up, as the debate had showed; and it was getting harder and harder for our Ministers to claim that, after nearly a year in office, they were still unable to make up their minds what they wanted. Delay also increased the danger of inaccurate but damaging rumours that we were getting cold feet about staying nuclear or that the Americans were getting cold feet about helping us. We needed in any case to get ahead with the matter, not only for technical and lead-time reasons but also because we had now reached the point where the lack of a decision was casting "planning blight" over all our forward thinking about defence plans and budgets, and was making it almost impossible to explain the situation convincingly to the Chiefs of Staff and others who had legitimate questions but could not be told the true facts.

4. For these reasons, I explained, we felt strongly that the two Governments should now be actively seeking to identify the "window" to which Dr Brzezinski had referred in talking to you. Dr Aaron asked if we had reached a point where a fixed date (for our request to be put in) was more important than an early one. I said that, in the sense in which I thought he intended the question, our answer could only be yes. An early date was very important too. But a fixed date would be an enormous help, even if it had to be more than a week or so ahead. In any case there was presumably no question of a trade-off between the two. The date would not be later for being fixed now; and since all we would be fixing would in effect be a deadline there would presumably be no difficulty in advancing it if developments made that feasible from the American point of view. He agreed, and after making careful notes on our arguments promised to do his best to get the President to agree to a fixed date (in this sense) as soon as possible.

5. With suitable apologies for trespassing on American domestic matters, I then asked about the influence on timing of the Presidential Election. Did there not come a moment later this year when it would be too near the Election for the President to propose, or Congress to approve, such a far-reaching step?

To my surprise he said no. In all the White House's many discussions of the President's strategy and tactics for securing renomination and re-election, this issue had never been mentioned. The Republicans would certainly not be able to criticise the President for a step they would themselves favour. Senator Kennedy might; but they were not too worried about him any more. When I pressed the point that Congress would surely beyond a certain date feel that the decisions should be taken or ratified by the next President and next Congress, Dr Aaron said he thought not. Under the procedural rules Congress could not prevaricate. The proposal would be automatically ratified unless Congress within 50 days specifically threw it out; and it was inconceivable that they would be willing to do that. But he promised to double-check the point, which he said had not been previously thought about, and let me know whether all the experts agreed with what he had said.

Before the Maine primary.

6. Going back to his starting point, Dr Aaron said that in order to damp down charges of over-reaction to Afghanistan the President would want to make clear in public that his agreement to our request stood on its own and was in no way a consequence of the crisis. He hoped that the Prime Minister would take the same public line about the request itself. I said I did not foresee difficulty over this. The Washington communique of 17th/18th December made clear that both sides had made a decision in principle on the matter before the crisis broke (if only by a whisker). But I thought the Prime Minister might well wish to say in public that Afghanistan helped to show how right this decision had been. If so, I assumed that would cause no embarrassment in Washington. Dr Aaron did not demur.

The outside world doesn't know this.

7. Dr Aaron then proposed, and I accepted, the following campaign plan:

a. He would send me an early message confirming the point about Congress.

b. He would report our position to the President and seek his agreement to the idea of fixing a date or deadline as soon as possible.

c. He would then ask me to make a quick visit to Washington, to consider the outcome of b. and hopefully tie up all the details.

He implied, without actually saying so, that my visit would take place before the end of February; and that I should come without acolytes.

8. I undertook to report accordingly to the Prime Minister and yourself.

R L WADE-GERY

11th February 1980

SECRET

Defence 17

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

22 January 1980

Polaris Successor

I have shown the Prime Minister your letter of 21 January 1980 to me.

She was grateful to be told of your discussion with Dr. Brzezinski on this subject when you were in Paris last week and she has noted the action you are now taking to follow up the conversation.

I am sending copies of this letter to George Walden and Brian Norbury.

letters recalled as per Cabinet Office request 22.1.80

C. A. WHITMORE

Destroyed 24.1.80 RC. ABS

Sir Robert Armstrong, KCB CVO

SECRET

TOP SECRET

Prime Minister. 16

To see.

MT.

AWL 21.

CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01-233 8319

From the Secretary of the Cabinet: Sir Robert Armstrong KCB, CVO

Copy No. 1 of 4 Copies

21st January, 1980

Ref. A01181

Dear Clive,

Polaris Successor

I had a brief discussion with Dr. Brzezinski on this subject, in the margins of our meeting in Paris on 15th January.

I recalled that, at the time when the President had asked the Prime Minister to postpone her request until after the Congress had approved - or rejected - the ratification of SALT II, the expectation had been that that process would be completed one way or the other in the first three months of 1980. The decision to defer Congressional consideration of this subject in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had upset his timetable. It might now be a year or more before SALT II could be ratified. We could not possibly wait that long for a decision. To do so would create a delay in the programme which could have unacceptable consequences in the early 1990s, when our present submarines would be at the end of their useful life. There was considerable interest in this matter in Britain: indeed, there was shortly to be a debate in the House of Commons on the nuclear deterrent. The Government could no doubt survive that debate without making an announcement, but extended delay could raise questions both about the British Government's intentions and about the reality of the United States Government's commitment. The climate in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan seemed to us to provide a good opportunity for announcing a decision on this matter.

Dr. Brzezinski said that he had not yet had an opportunity to discuss the matter with the President, since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. He was at pains to repeat and confirm the President's commitment to a positive reply to the request, when it was received. He agreed that it was unthinkable for us to wait for a year. The only question in his mind was the tactical one, of finding the right moment (or "window") for the announcement. He had two considerations particularly in mind:

/(1)

C.A. Whitmore, Esq.

TOP SECRET

(1) The decision should be announced at a time when it would be least likely to have adverse effects on the Belgian decision on TNF.

(2) Though SALT II had not been ratified, the Russians were observing it, and he would be anxious to make the announcement at a time when it would be least likely to change that situation, or to cause the Russians to try to impose new conditions for their own confirmation of SALT II.

I agreed with Dr. Brzezinski that I would let him have our observations on these tactical considerations at an early date; thereafter the matter could be taken further by a visit to Washington either by me to him or by Wade-Gery to Aaron. I made it clear that we should be wanting to pursue this without prolonged delay.

I have asked Robert Wade-Gery, in consultation with his contacts in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence, to prepare a draft message for me to send to Dr. Brzezinski; I will submit that for the Prime Minister's approval. We shall then have to consider how to follow it up. It is arguable that the scope for dilatory manoeuvres might be less if I went to see Dr. Brzezinski; on the other hand discussion with Aaron may prove to be more constructive, and it may therefore be better for Robert Wade-Gery to undertake the mission.

Deleted at Cabinet Office request 22.1.80

~~I am sending copies of this letter to George Walden and Brian Norbury.~~

Yours ever

Robert Armstrong

SECRET

10 DOWNING STREET

Defence

From the Principal Private Secretary

11 January 1980

BRITISH NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAMME

The Prime Minister has seen the Defence Secretary's minutes of 17 December 1979 and 8 January 1980 about the British nuclear test programme for 1980 and 1981. She has also seen the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute of 3 January and Martin Hall's letter of 2 January to you recording the agreement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to Mr. Pym's proposals.

The Prime Minister is content for the Defence Secretary to go ahead on the basis of paragraphs 1 and 2 of his minute of 8 January.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Chilcot (Home Office), George Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), John Wiggins (H.M. Treasury) and to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

C. A. WHITMORE

B. M. Norbury, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

SECRET

TOP SECRET ATOMIC

14

PRIME MINISTER

Agree 1980 test programme and suggested 'in principle' basis for 1981 programme. Personally I would be prepared to go firmer on the 1981 programme.

MT

No 10 A.R.30

British Nuclear Test Programme

The attached papers deal with proposals by the Defence Secretary for British nuclear tests in 1980 and 1981.

The present position as regards tests is that President Carter has agreed that we should have three tests in the course of 1980. All the necessary approvals have been given for the first two of these tests and the practical preparations are in hand. Ministers earlier reserved their position, however, on the third test until we had the results of the test carried out last August. Mr. Pym is now proposing in his minute of 17 December (Flag A) that we should go ahead with the third test in 1980 in order to evaluate a possible warhead for the system to replace Polaris. He also recommends two tests in 1981, one to develop an alternative warhead for the Polaris successor and the other to test a theatre nuclear warhead. His proposals for all three tests for 1980 and for the two in 1981 are summarised in paragraph 7 of his minute.

There is advice from the Cabinet Office at Flag B recommending that you agree to the Defence Secretary's proposals; and at Flag C there is a letter from the Treasury saying that the Chancellor has no objection to the proposed programme.

The Foreign Secretary has minuted you, however, saying that while he is content to go along with the Defence Secretary's proposals for the 1980 tests, he believes that we should be less firm about the tests proposed for 1981 and only proceed with the Americans on these on the basis that we are not committed to them until the need for them is clearer (Flag D). Lord Carrington's reservations turn partly on possible progress in the comprehensive test ban negotiations and partly on his doubts about whether we need to pursue two alternative warheads for the Polaris successor system.

The Defence Secretary has now submitted a further minute (Flag E) commenting on Lord Carrington's reservations. Mr. Pym acknowledges, as he did in his earlier minute on 17 December, that the successful conclusion of the CTB negotiations might affect his nuclear test plans, and in paragraph 4 of his minute he

/explains

explains why he thinks it advisable to develop two options for the warhead for Trident. He proposes accordingly that we should go ahead with the 1980 test programme as he has submitted it and that for the 1981 programme we should seek the President's approval in principle for two tests but on the basis that we are not committed to them until it is clearer that they do not conflict either with CTB developments or with American policy. This should take care of the Foreign Secretary's points. Are you content for the Defence Secretary to proceed as he proposes in paragraphs 1 and 2 of his minute (Flag E)?

AWL.

9 January 1980

13

Copy No 1 of 6 copies

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

TELEPHONE 01-218 9000
DIRECT DIALLING 01-218 2111/3

MO 18/1/1

PRIME MINISTER

BRITISH NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAMME

I am glad to note from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute to you of 3rd January commenting on mine of 17th December 1979 that there is little difference between us. We are agreed on the scope of the 1980 test programme and I should like to advise the Americans of this immediately.

2. As for the 1981 programme, I should like to ask American officials to seek President Carter's approval, in principle, to providing facilities for the two further UK tests in the summer and autumn of that year, as I described in my earlier minute. But I am content to do so on the basis that we are not committed to them until it is clearer that they do not conflict either with our test ban requirements or, for that matter, with American policy.

3. I should like to take this course for a number of reasons. First, it provides the US with reasonable (but not over-long) notice of our potential requirements so that they may plan to accommodate our needs within their own much larger test programme. Secondly, it will serve as a valuable indicator of our intention to maintain a viable nuclear warhead development programme and hence encourage still further American willingness to cooperate with us. Thirdly, it avoids having to take a premature decision on the warhead we shall eventually need for Trident. It does not preclude any of the options for international agreement on test ban arrangements.

/4. ...

4. I confirm that a successful test programme in 1980 would allow us to develop a warhead for Trident but it might not fully satisfy our strategic requirements. These strategic requirements are not the same as the Americans set for their Trident force not least because they have a much wider range of strategic nuclear capabilities and much larger forces at their disposal; thus we cannot assume that the yield of the US Trident warhead would be adequate for our purposes. Nor, at this stage, would it be safe to concentrate exclusively on the type warhead, the successful development of which is less certain than for a type. As I indicated in my earlier minute, our eventual choice of warhead will depend on balancing a number of factors, some of which we cannot assess until we are able to hold detailed technical talks with the Americans about the Trident missile and have been able to obtain some components thereof for experimental purposes. Beyond our immediate requirements, it is of great importance that our nuclear weapon laboratory continues to be engaged on advanced warhead developments especially if there is going to be a period during which tests are prohibited. The approaches to our strategic needs bring us to the forefront of nuclear weapon technology and will not only cement Anglo/US nuclear relations but also stand us in good stead if we have to survive a test ban period.

5. I should be most grateful, therefore, for agreement that I should proceed as indicated in paragraphs 1 and 2 above. American officials are already enquiring about the availability of funds for the initial work on our third 1980 test, and I should like to be able to tell them very shortly that we have decided to proceed.

6. I am copying this minute to the Home Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Sir Robert Armstrong.

8th January 1980

12

No 10. A.R. 29.

PM/80/2

PRIME MINISTER

British Nuclear Test Programme

A 1. Francis Pym has sent me a copy of his minute of 17 December.

2. I agree that we should plan our nuclear testing programme in good time to tell the Americans of our requirements. But as Francis Pym points out, we cannot assume that a CTB will not come into force during the period in question. Our recent discussions in Washington suggest that the US Administration would still like to push these negotiations forward in the coming months; and the Americans do not want to penalise arms control negotiations in reacting to the Soviet moves in Afghanistan. If either Mr Carter or Senator Kennedy wins the Presidential election, the American objective may well be a treaty to enter into force before the end
B of 1981. As I pointed out in my minute of 17 July, it is also possible that the Americans will decide to stop testing once a treaty is initialled without waiting for it to be ratified.

3. The last time we considered the future test programme the
C requirement was for three tests in 1980 (Francis Pym's minute to you of 6 July). This was on the basis that at least two more tests were needed after the one in August 1979, which I am glad to see was highly successful. As I understand it, therefore, there is no question of a CTB preventing us from having our own warhead for a Polaris successor.

4. I find it hard to judge how important it may be for our warheads to have a higher yield than the Americans will have for their own Trident missiles. But I wonder whether we really need to contemplate embarking on modifications to the delivery systems as suggested for the warhead which is not earmarked for testing before the summer of 1981? Might it not be preferable to /concentrate on the

concentrate on the warhead which should be available after the third 1980 test, thus reducing the risk of any clash with a test ban? Obviously we should do our best to ensure as little conflict as possible between CTB and Polaris successor requirements.

5. In short, I gladly go along with plans for the 1980 tests as Francis Pym has proposed. If it is decided to tell the Americans now of the tests suggested for 1981, I believe this should be on the understanding that we will not be committed to them until it is clearer that they are essential.

6. I am sending copies of this minute to the Home Secretary, the Defence Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Sir Robert Armstrong.

C

(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

3 January 1980

TOP SECRET

11

CH/EX. REF. NO. MAH(80) 1

COPY NO. 2 OF 9 COPIES

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG
01-233 3000

2nd January 1980

Dear Brian,

BRITISH NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAMME

The Chancellor has seen a copy of the Defence Secretary's minute of 17th December to the Prime Minister, has noted that the costs of the proposed nuclear tests would be met from within the Defence Budget (Treasury approval being sought seriatim for expenditure on each test), and has asked me to say that he has no objection to the proposed programme.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Prime Minister, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong. A copy also goes to the Private Secretary to the Home Secretary.

Yours ever,

MH

(M.A. HALL)

B. Norbury, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence

TOP SECRET

10

Ref: A01005

SECRET

MR. WHITMORE

British Nuclear Test Programme

attached

In his minute to the Prime Minister of 17th December the Secretary of State for Defence seeks political clearance to approach the United States with a proposed underground nuclear test programme involving five tests spread over the period April 1980 - autumn 1981. The United States have already approved the first three tests of the series which will all take place in 1980.

2. This proposal follows the one put to the Prime Minister on 6th July to which Mr. Cartledge conveyed the Prime Minister's agreement on 28th July. These tests form an important part of the British warhead development programme, both in relation to the strategic deterrent and any future theatre weapon warhead programme. They will also strengthen our hand in exchanging technical information with the United States and demonstrate the firmness of our intention to remain a nuclear power.

3. The main potential difficulty relates to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty on which there are signs of movement as Washington telegram no. 4255 of 18th December indicates (copy attached). This movement seems unlikely to interfere with any of the tests planned for 1980, but the position in 1981 is more uncertain. This is likely to be the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's main comment on this proposal. The Secretary of State for Defence has already said in his minute of 26th July to the Prime Minister that these nuclear tests are difficult to accelerate. This fact coupled with the attendant circumstances suggest that the latter part of this proposed test programme may be at risk. The Ministry of Defence recognise this. Subject to this qualification, the balance of advantage seems to lie in agreeing that these proposals should be put to the United States as the Secretary of State for Defence recommends.

4. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is unlikely to raise any objection to the proposal subject to an assurance that the costs will be met from within whatever level of defence cash provision may be finally agreed. The Secretary of State for Defence's statement in the latter part of paragraph 7 that the "costs will be met from the defence budget subject to Treasury approval in each case" meets this point.

MJV

(M. J. Vile)

20th December 1979

130

SECRET

FM WASHINGTON 180700Z

TO PRIORITY FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE
TEL. NO. 4255 OF 18 DECEMBER 1979
INFO PRIORITY UKDEL VIENNA, MOSCOW AND UKDEL NATO.

FOLLOWING FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY.

CTB.

1. MR VANCE RAISED THE CTB NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE THIS EVENING. HE ASKED WHETHER THE U.K. COULD ACCEPT THREE ADDITIONAL NSS STATIONS, IF THE U.S. COULD PROVIDE THE FUNDS, IN ORDER TO BREAK THE DEAD-LOCK IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE AFFAIR OF THE SUSPECTED SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR EXPLOSION HAD SHOWN THAT THERE WAS A SHORTAGE OF FACILITIES IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC. LORD CARRINGTON SAID THAT OUR DIFFICULTY HAD BEEN IN JUSTIFYING TO PARLIAMENT EXPENDITURE ON REDUNDANT NSS. BUT HE THOUGHT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO FIND PLACES, SUCH AS ASCENCION ISLAND, FOR THREE ADDITIONAL STATIONS. STRESSING THAT HE HAD NO AUTHORITY YET FOR FUNDING, MR VANCE SAID THAT HE WOULD LOOK AT FINANCE IF WE WOULD LOOK AT LOCATIONS.

2. UKDEL VIENNA SHOULD NOT MENTION THIS TO THEIR AMERICAN COLLEAGUES AT THIS STAGE.

HENDERSON

F I L E S
ACDD
ES & SD
N AM D
EESD
DEFENCE D
NEWS D
LEGAL ADVISERS
PLANNING STAFF
PS
PS/SIR I GILMOUR
PS/MR HURD

PS/MR BLAKER
PS/PUS
SIR A DUFF

MR BULLARD
MR P H MOBERLY
MR FERGUSSON

CABINET OFFICE

COPIES TO:
MR CARTLEDGE
NO 10 DOWNING STREET
DR R PRESS, CABINET OFFICE

MRS ALEXANDER, TREASURY

9

POLARIS SUCCESSOR - MEETING WITH PRESIDENT

Grateful for President's letter of 15 October in which he said that question of "modernising your strategic forces - including the option of the C-4 missile system will be affirmative and fully in keeping with our traditional relationship in the strategic nuclear field". In passing comment that NASSAU meeting took place from 18-21 December 1962.

2. Note President's reservations in his letter about LRTNF and timing of successor. Point out that LRTNF now agreed and we have worked hard to secure it!

3. Inquire how President sees relationship of Polaris successor with SALT II? Point out you have worries of your own about timing - Parliamentary and practical.

4. Ask President to confirm now that when you ask - and subject to detailed negotiation - he will:-

a. Supply Trident C-4 including MIRV

b. Agree to updating POLARIS SALES AGREEMENT for this purpose

c. Allow the necessary technical negotiations and drafting to proceed

d. Accept that some amendment to the 1958 US/UK Mutual Defence Agreement will be needed particularly to cover supply of plutonium and highly enriched uranium.

5. Suggest it would be useful if officials could discuss text of exchange of letters that would take place when you put your request to him. Mention need for suitable communique language now.

6. Lastly, stress your whole-hearted support for NATO Long Term Defence Programme - with emphasis on strengthening conventional forces - and point to increase in defence spending in UK.

TOP SECRET

1. Mr Alexander. 2. File.

8

20 xii

Ref. A01003

Copy No. 2 of 2 Copies

NOTE of a Meeting in the Oval Office, The White House, Washington DC, on Monday, 17th December, 1979

PRESENT

President of the United States	Prime Minister
Secretary of State	Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary
Dr. Brzezinski	Sir Robert Armstrong

THE SUCCESSOR TO POLARIS

THE PRESIDENT said that, as he had already warned the Prime Minister, if and when she put a request to him on a successor to Polaris, he was committed to a positive response. He hoped, however, that no such request would be put to him until SALT II had been ratified by the Congress. He feared lest, if a request was made and answered before then, that would give rise to new Soviet demands or conditions for the conclusion of SALT II. He had made it clear privately that agreement in SALT II left the United States at liberty to help the United Kingdom with the successor to Polaris. He understood that the delay could create timing problems for the British Government; the United States Government could, he thought, alleviate those. In the meantime he hoped that no proposals would be put to the British Cabinet. He would wish to be in a position to say, if asked, that no request had been received from the British Government.

THE PRIME MINISTER expressed her gratitude to the President for his positive commitment, and her understanding of his wish to delay a formal request. She asked whether in the meantime contingency planning would proceed on the drafting of the exchange of letters that would be required.

DR. BRZEZINSKI indicated that this would be negotiable, provided that discussion was confined to the same restricted group of people as had been involved hitherto. It would not, however, be possible for technical discussions to proceed without extending the circle of those involved, which the President did not wish to do.

THE PRESIDENT said that he understood that we were concerned at the possibility that in the interval before a request was made a production line for certain long-lead items for the missile concerned would close. He said that there would be no problem on this score. He understood that there was a problem about supplies of plutonium: this could be discussed with the Secretary for Defense.

TOP SECRET

In answer to a question from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, THE PRESIDENT said that, if the Congress failed to ratify SALT II, there would then be no obstacle to his acceding to a request from the United Kingdom Government on a successor to Polaris.

Cabinet Office

19 December 1979

Copy No. 1 - Mr. Wade-Gery

The National Archives

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7

Ref: B05877

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

c Mr Whitmore

Briefing Meeting on the Deterrent

I attach an addendum to Annex C of the Prime Minister's brief on the deterrent, which I will show with the brief to participants in this afternoon's meeting. The acceptability of the new American wording, subject to the one change noted, has been cleared with the Ministry of Defence and Treasury at official level this morning.

R. L WADE-GERY

14th December 1979

R L WADE-GERY

COPY NO 2 OF 10 COPIES

Addendum to Annex C of the Prime Minister's Washington Brief of 12th December 1979 on the Future of the United Kingdom Nuclear Deterrent

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The Americans have now (14th December) suggested revised wording for the communique passage on the conventional defence effort. We propose to reply that this is acceptable subject to one re-revision.

2. The following text of the earlier British draft, as in Annex C, shows in footnotes the changes proposed. Note d is the only major point.

Note a — The President and Prime Minister discussed the importance of increased efforts to strengthen NATO's defences, both nuclear
Note b — and conventional. The President reviewed the outlines of the US Five Year Defense Plan, noting that in order to carry out that plan the US will be increasing defence spending, in real
Note c — terms, steadily over the next five years. The Prime Minister reaffirmed the UK's strong support for the NATO Long Term
Note d — Defence Programme and noted that the UK had increased its defence spending in recent years, and planned to make further increases to improve the effectiveness of UK conventional forces, including
Note e — provision of modernised equipment and war reserves.

NOTES

a. US revised draft proposes to start "In this connection [referring to the immediately preceding paragraph on the deterrent] the President and .... ". This is acceptable.

b. US revised draft proposes "... reviewed the new US Five Year ..." Acceptable.

c. US revised draft proposes "The President and Prime Minister reaffirmed their strong support for the NATO Long Term Defence Programme ...." Acceptable.

d. US revised draft proposes "and for the NATO commitment to a 3 per cent real growth in defence spending. The Prime Minister noted plans for further significant increases in the UK defence budget to improve .....". Acceptable subject to one British counter-amendment to the first part of the new text, designed to remove the inaccurate reference to a NATO commitment, as follows: "and for the NATO aim of a 3 per cent real growth in annual defence spending".

e. US revised draft adds a new final sentence as follows: "The Prime Minister agreed that America's European Allies must share equitably in any collective defence build-up to meet the needs of the common defence." Acceptable; this is a paraphrase of something the US Defense Secretary said recently at a NATO meeting, on which he received full British support.

Cabinet Office
14 December 1979

ANNEX D

DRAFT LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT

At our meeting in Washington on the 17th of December, 1979, I pointed out that the United Kingdom Government attached great importance to the maintenance of a nuclear deterrent capability. It will be necessary to replace the present Polaris force in the early 1990s and I explained that, having reviewed the options, the Government had concluded that the Trident 1 weapon system best meets the need to maintain a viable deterrent capability into the 21st century. I therefore asked you if the United States Government would be prepared, in continuation of the cooperation which has existed between our Governments in this field since the Polaris Sales Agreement of the 6th of April, 1963, to supply, on a continuing basis, Trident 1 missiles, equipment and supporting services, in a manner similar to that in which Polaris was supplied. In addition I asked if the United States Government would be willing to amend further the Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes of the 3rd of July, 1958, in respect of the supply of special nuclear materials for the United Kingdom deterrent programme.

I further explained that the United Kingdom Government would wish to purchase sufficient missiles, complete with multiple independently targettable re-entry vehicles and less only the warheads themselves, together with equipment and supporting services, on a continuing basis, to introduce and maintain a force of British submarines, close coordination being maintained between the Executive Agencies of the two Governments in order to assure compatibility of equipment; and would also wish to procure such special nuclear materials as were needed, and were beyond their own capacity to provide, to enable them to produce the warheads.

I made it clear that the successor to the Polaris force will be assigned to NATO, like Polaris; and that, except where the United Kingdom Government may decide that supreme national interests are at stake, the successor force will be used for the purposes of international defence of the Western Alliance in all circumstances. In our discussions we agreed that cooperation in the modernisation of the United Kingdom nuclear deterrent in this way would be consistent with the present and prospective international obligations of both parties.

In particular, I emphasised that the United Kingdom continued to give whole-hearted support to the NATO Long-Term Defence Programme, with its emphasis on the strengthening of conventional forces. I noted that the United Kingdom Government had substantially increased its defence spending, in accordance with NATO's collective policy, and planned to make further such increases in the future in order to improve the effectiveness of its all-round contribution to Alliance deterrence and defence.

You indicated that the United States Government was prepared to meet this request and you agreed that as the next step the United States Government would receive technical and financial missions to pursue these matters, using the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement where appropriate.

DRAFT LETTER FROM PRESIDENT TO PRIME MINISTER

Thank you for your letter of recording our discussions in Washington about a successor to the United Kingdom's Polaris force.

I confirm that the United States Government is prepared to meet your request to purchase the Trident 1 weapon system on the basis you describe, and to receive technical and financial missions to pursue these matters, using the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement where appropriate.

I also confirm that the United States Government is prepared to consider proposals for the further amendment of the Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes of the 3rd of July, 1958, in respect of the supply of special nuclear materials for the United Kingdom deterrent programme.

SECRET

Top copy of letter on USA: Nov 79: Visit to US Policy 6A

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 01-218 2119 (Direct Dialling)
01-218 9000 (Switchboard)

PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
SIR FRANK COOPER GCB CMG

PUS/79/1149
61/1/38

14 December 1979

C A Whitmore Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Dear Clive

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON

At the Prime Minister's briefing meeting this afternoon the question was raised of the timetable for procurement of any successor system. I attach a note on this. Also attached is a note on defence equipment trade with America.

Yours ever

Frank Cooper

FRANK COOPER

On Defence: Pt 2: Future of UK Nuclear Deterrent

SECRET

SUCCESSOR TO POLARIS: TIMESCALE

No-one would expect to have a successor system operational in less than 10 years. Detailed technical discussions and negotiations with the US and with Industry will be necessary before we can produce a detailed programme and a critical path. An informed judgment, on the basis of present information, is that it will take at least 11 years from a political decision to proceed with the programme, to the deployment of the first submarine. The main factors are:

a. The submarine

There will need to be a major feasibility study in the US, lasting a year, before we can decide which kind of submarine mid section (the missile compartment) to select. This will be followed by a detailed design stage and the placing of an order in 1983. Building is estimated to take 6½ years, to be followed by trials and work up, leading to first deployment in 1991. This time-table will no doubt be refined but it is unlikely to be compressed. The submarine design will be very much more complex than for the original Polaris boats (the first of which was deployed in just under 7 years), and moreover, intramural and extramural design and building resources are more limited.

b. The warhead

This will be a major programme involving project definition study, a detailed engineering definition phase, a 4 year development programme, and some 3 years production (during which the production rate would be built up) before the first outload of re-entry vehicles is available. The total programme will amount to 10 years.

c. Depot facilities

The technical complexity and explosive content of the C4 missiles will demand a new depot adjacent to Coulport (Loch Long). The construction work will be very extensive, demanding and expensive and the site itself is on difficult terrain and remote. A planning inquiry might be needed. Detailed survey and design work will need to be done before construction starts, and before the building can be started a road network will need to be built. The programme must also allow for a period of workup after construction is complete. Assuming an immediate decision to proceed with a successor system, road construction would start in 1981 and building construction in 1983; construction could be completed in 1990 at best.

2. Currently planning is stalled (though "technical" relations with the US are extremely good). There is an urgent need for detailed technical discussions. An initial exchange of letters between the US and the UK Governments would need to be followed by 50 days notice being given to Congress. The details of a revised Polaris Sales Agreement will need to be examined but it might be possible for such discussions to proceed in parallel with the "laying". In short, we are faced with planning blight.

Defence
6

TOP SECRET

Ref. A0946

Copy No. 1 of 3 Copies

MR. WHITMORE

Future of the United Kingdom Nuclear Deterrent

Sir Frank Cooper wrote to you on this subject on 10th December, copying his letter to Sir Robert Armstrong and enclosing "a piece of paper" dealing with the problem of the timing of an announcement about a 'successor' system, in relation to the decisions now being taken about the modernisation of NATO's long range theatre nuclear forces, and the current Congressional debate on SALT II ratification. You may like to have some comments on it.

2. The handling of this problem is the central theme of the brief on the future of the United Kingdom nuclear deterrent which Sir Robert Armstrong sent you on 13th December for the use of the Prime Minister when she meets President Carter on 17th December in Washington. Sir Frank Cooper approved that brief in substance on 11th December, and so I think that you should regard it as overtaking the contents of his "piece of paper", particularly as regards the 'line to take' for the purposes of the oral briefing on Friday, 14th December, and the subsequent meeting with the President.

3. On points of detail, our main brief points out the obscurity of the real relationship between the decision we are seeking, and SALT II ratification. But it may obviously be difficult for the Prime Minister to press the argument. The practical arguments for an early decision in paragraphs 6 and 7 are real enough from a Ministry of Defence point of view, but they seem unlikely to carry much weight with the United States who will say that a delay of perhaps 2-3 months will not make much difference. Similarly a reference to the increasing risk of leakage may not be very persuasive, however true.

4. British domestic pressures apart, the most powerful (and usable) argument against delay is the danger that the Russians will make Polaris replacement the subject of their next major international propaganda campaign, following their success over the neutron bomb and failure (or success) over LRTNF.

MJV.

(M.J. Vile)

13th December, 1979

5D

Covering **TOP SECRET**

Ref. A0945

PRIME MINISTER

Visit to Washington - 17th December 1979

Future of the United Kingdom Nuclear Deterrent

I attach a brief on this subject for your meeting with President Carter on 17th December. The draft exchange of letters and communique have been discussed with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Treasury and Ministry of Defence.

RTA

(Robert Armstrong)

13th December, 1979

Ld Carrington. 5c

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COPY NO 5

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON

17 DECEMBER 1979

FUTURE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM NUCLEAR DETERRENT

This will be the most important matter which you will wish to discuss with President Carter.

LINE TO TAKE

2. Most grateful for your message of 15 October and the assurance it contained. Would like to discuss the timing of the UK request and US response as you suggested.

Understand that you would prefer not to have a substantive request until SALT II is ratified. Prepared to hold back for this reason for a while.

Fully sympathise with your difficulties. But there are dangers either way. From my point of view, there will be strong pressure for an announceable decision by end January.

Failing that, can we agree now that matter should not be allowed to slip beyond February or (if necessary) March at the latest?

In any event, may need to consult you again in early 1980, in light of developments both in US (progress of SALT ratification) and in UK (public pressure for a decision). Things will get steadily more difficult as time passes.

Meanwhile there are two things it would be helpful to settle now. First, in the light of the welcome affirmation of your intentions in your October message, may I take it that, when I do make a formal request to you for the MIRV'd Trident C4 system (less warhead) and related assistance, your answer will be affirmative? Second, pending the time when such a request is actually put, can the drafting of a formal exchange of letters be discussed between the senior officials concerned? Finally, suitable language needed to cover this subject in communiqué on my present visit. Drafts have been considered between White House and Cabinet Office. Suggest Brzezinski and Armstrong finalise.

BACKGROUND

3. Although it is not possible to specify a single date when the United Kingdom Polaris force will cease to be effective, the increasing risk of various forms of equipment failure point firmly towards starting to replace the force soon after 1990. Exhaustive studies of the problem suggest that the best replacement would be the Trident I (C4) (Multiple Independently Targettable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV)) ballistic missile system already in production in the United States. We would of course provide our own warheads. The necessary submarines would be built by us with United States assistance, as we did with Polaris.

4. President Carter wrote to you on 15 October (copy at Annex A) assuring you that his approach to modernising the United Kingdom strategic nuclear forces including the C4 option "will be affirmative". You replied to his message on 22 October (copy at Annex B).

5. President Carter laid great stress in his message to you on the delicate question of timing of the decisions. Subsequent discussions with Dr Aaron,

Dr Brzezinski's assistant, suggest that this may be the main point at issue when you meet the President. From his point of view a Polaris replacement deal with Britain must be carefully timed in relation to two other issues. The first issue is the NATO decision on Theatre Nuclear Forces. Although this may be taken at the NATO meetings on 10/13 December, there will still be problems of parliamentary approval in some countries and possibly also of linkage with SALT II ratification. The second issue is SALT II ratification itself which he believes the Russians might link with any announced decision on a UK Polaris force replacement prior to ratification. He regards successful ratification as the "mainspring" of his Presidency; if it fails, he believes that he is significantly less likely to be re-elected. But the ratification process may drag on for months, and this could present you with a real problem on timing: the longer the decision is put off, the nearer will be the US Presidential election, and the greater the pressures on the President to postpone a decision until after the election.

6. From your point of view it would be highly desirable to obtain from President Carter on 17 December his clear-cut consent to your specific request, which can be publicly announced thereafter within a matter of weeks rather than months. He would prefer you to come to Washington without a formal request in your pocket and to discuss with him there how the whole issue should be handled, including the timing both of your formal request and of his reply.

PROPOSED HANDLING

7. You may care to start with the proposed 'Line to Take'. Thereafter your discussion might conveniently take the following shape:-

a. The importance which the United Kingdom attaches to maintaining a credible strategic deterrent force

Your exchanges of messages suggests that this point can be taken for granted.

But you will wish to express appreciation for his positive attitude towards helping us.

b. Assignment to NATO

As we have made clear to the President's officials, who attached great importance to the point, the British successor force will be fully assigned to NATO on the same terms as Polaris, ie subject only to a "supreme national interest" clause.

c. Why the United Kingdom wants to replace Polaris with the Trident C4 (MIRV) system

Our studies have convinced us that the successor to the Polaris system should be another submarine force. The Trident C4 (MIRV) has a clear advantage over other possible systems; in range (so reducing anti-submarine warfare vulnerability);

; in ability to deliver the number of warheads required; and in cost. As a system in service with the United States Navy, it would bring great technological, operational and logistic advantages. It seems highly probable that the President's advisers will confirm the validity, in technical terms, of the United Kingdom's assessment of its needs.

d. Size of the replacement force

It is unlikely that President Carter will wish to get to this degree of detail, but if he does you may care to say that you have not yet reached a final decision on this point.

e. Effect on United Kingdom conventional force levels of replacing Polaris

This is a matter on which the United States are showing great sensitivity

at official level, although President Carter did not mention it specifically in his message to you of 15 October. Ideally he would like from you a categoric assurance that you will make such further increases in defence spending as are necessary to maintain the size and improve the effectiveness of United Kingdom conventional forces for the future. This is more than any NATO country could be expected to promise; but you will certainly wish to reaffirm the United Kingdom's strong support for the NATO long term defence programme, and to point to the general robustness of your Government's approach to matters of defence and the Alliance. You could also refer to the United Kingdom's absolute determination to replace Polaris as the top priority in our defence policy, with the corollary that our conventional forces are likely to benefit most if we can obtain the most cost effective replacement system available.

TIMING

8. This is likely to be the most difficult part of the discussion. President Carter almost certainly will wish to postpone a decision to an unsettled date possibly some months in the future. It is in the United Kingdom's interest to obtain firm United States agreement as soon as possible, not least because Presidential agreement some months hence when he may be nearer to ending his term of office will be of diminished value. How far you can press him must be a matter of political judgement but some of the arguments which you can use are as follows.

i. With the passing weeks there is a strengthening domestic interest in the United Kingdom. We should all get the worst of several worlds if an impression gained ground that, although the United Kingdom wanted Trident C4, the United States were equivocating.

ii. The indications are that the Russians want to see SALT II ratified. Brezhnev certainly seems personally committed. If this is so, the Russians are unlikely to use an announced United States decision to help the United Kingdom over replacing Polaris as a reason for backing away from the SALT II agreement. Conversely if the Russians now believe that the ratification of SALT II is not in their interest they will have no difficulty in finding some excuse or other for not going through with the agreement, however the United States respond to the United Kingdom's request.

iii. Until a decision has been announced the Soviet Union may regard the situation as still susceptible to their influence and seek in the process of SALT II ratification to make the position more difficult. They are less likely to seek to reverse an announced decision.

iv. Within the Senate itself things might be more difficult if it was felt that precedence was being given to SALT II ratification over the interests of one of the main allies of the United States.

UPSHOT

9. Communique As you know (Mr Wade-Gery's minute of 30 November) the Americans have suggested two passages for the communique on your visit, covering both Polaris replacement and our attitude to conventional defence. We are sending them in advance of your visit slightly modified versions of these, as attached at Annex C. You should agree with the President that this should be finalised between Dr Brzezinski and myself in the course of 17/18 December.

10. Exchange of Letters We should like to start negotiating the documents which will enshrine the Anglo-American decision when it is reached and will

thereafter be published on an agreed date. We took informal soundings of Dr Aaron last month. A draft of what we would like, not yet communicated to the Americans, is at Annex D. If possible you should agree with the President that I should give this to Dr Brzezinski and follow up as appropriate, without prejudice to your and his final decision on when the actual Exchange should take place.

TIME-TABLE

11. The formal agreement should clearly not be made and dated until just before it can be published; otherwise Parliament and Congress would ask why it was held back. It would be ideal if you could get the President to agree on 17 December to a reasonably early date, eg in the second half of January. A fall back would be to agree on a date beyond which it ought not to be allowed to slip; eg the end of February or (at a pinch) March. It is very desirable to get the President committed, as firmly as possible, to a date which is not too far in the future. If that proves impossible, you will need to reserve the right to return to the charge in early 1980, in the light of how slowly SALT ratification moves and how quickly domestic pressure for a decision builds up in Britain.

FOLLOW-UP

12. Details could be delegated to Dr Brzezinski on his side and myself on yours; with a minimum number of departmental advisers being involved, by agreement if appropriate. As soon as formal agreement is reached, detailed work should urgently begin between the relevant experts. We hope the President will agree to two parallel operations here:

a. Polaris Sales Agreement This should be up-dated, by the Project Officers designated under its provisions, to cover our purchase of Trident C4. Technical discussions should be referred to the Joint

Steering Task Group established under the Polaris Sales Agreement.

b. Nuclear Materials We shall need to negotiate separately for our needs, of which the President's advisers are already aware; for an appropriate amendment to the 1958 United Kingdom/United States Defence Agreement, on the model of the amendment already agreed to cover our needs under the current Polaris Improvement Programme (CHEVALINE).

Cabinet Office

12 December 1979

THE WHITE HOUSE

TOP SECRET

WASHINGTON

October 15, 1979

Dear Madame Prime Minister:

As we go forward in the North Atlantic Alliance toward a decision on Theater Nuclear Forces, I want to share with you my views on the decisions which you and I will make concerning cooperation in the future modernization of the British nuclear deterrent.

First, I can assure you that my approach to the question of modernizing your strategic forces -- including the option of the C-4 Missile system -- will be affirmative and fully in keeping with our traditional relationship of close cooperation in the strategic nuclear field.

Second, with respect to the delicate question of timing of the decisions, I believe it is extremely important to avoid providing any pretext which either the Soviets or some of our more reluctant friends could seize upon to damage the prospects of an Alliance consensus on long-range theater nuclear deployments by the end of the year. I believe that too early an exposure of our plans regarding the British deterrent would provide an excuse for some of our friends not to assume their fair share both of LRTNF deployments and of the responsibility for the corresponding decisions.

Therefore, I suggest we discuss this issue, including the timing of any British request and American response, when we meet in December. I would also propose that to minimize the possibility of inadvertent disclosure, we keep to a minimum discussions between our respective officials, civilian and military.

I know I can count on your understanding of these timing considerations just as you can be confident

of my appreciation of the contribution of the British deterrent to the security of the Alliance and of the need for its modernization.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Carter

The Right Honorable
Margaret R. Thatcher, M.P.
Prime Minister
London

TOP SECRET

ANNEX B

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER

Thank you for your message of 15 October, about military nuclear matters, which David Aaron delivered to John Hunt during his very useful visit to London last week.

2. I warmly welcome what you say about your affirmative approach to the modernisation of the British strategic deterrent. As you know, my colleagues and I have not yet decided which system we would wish to go for. But it is very good to know that any of the alternatives under consideration could in practice be made available to us; and that in particular this would (if we so decide) cover the complete C4 missile system including its MIRV capability.

3. Thank you also for your frank explanation of your concern about the delicate issues of timing involved in the interaction between decisions in this field and the important decisions which the North Atlantic Alliance needs to reach on Long Range Theatre Nuclear Forces. Your point is well taken. As you know we are giving you full support on the LRTNF question and I shall be glad to co-operate with you in seeking to avert the dangers you identify.

4. Against this background I am happy to agree that no British request on the strategic deterrent should be put to you before we meet in Washington in December, and that we should discuss the matter then. To avoid any misunderstanding, and in the same spirit of frankness, I should make clear that at that meeting I shall need to discuss the substance of the strategic modernisation issue, as well as procedure and timing. I am confident that we shall then be able to settle both the substantive question and the problem of the timing of any announcement. The latter will clearly depend on how other matters, including LRTNF decision-taking, have progressed in the interval.

5. Meanwhile, I fully agree that knowledge of your message to me and of my present reply should be confined to a very narrow circle indeed. On our side I shall tell Peter Carrington and Francis Pym (but not the Chiefs of Staff). The documents themselves will be seen by no-one outside No 10 Downing Street and the Cabinet Office; and I suggest that any communications on the subject should be confined to the direct White House/Cabinet Office link.

22 October 1979

ANNEX C

DRAFT LANGUAGE FOR
US/UK DECEMBER 17 COMMUNIQUE

The two leaders agreed on the importance of maintaining a credible British strategic deterrent force and US/UK strategic co-operation. The leaders agreed that their governments should continue their discussions of the most appropriate means of achieving these objectives for the future.

The President and Prime Minister discussed the importance of increased efforts to strengthen NATO's defences, both nuclear and conventional. The President reviewed the outlines of the US five year defense plan, noting that in order to carry out that plan the US will be increasing defence spending, in real terms, steadily over the next five years. * The Prime Minister reaffirmed the UK's strong support for the NATO long term defence programme and noted that the United Kingdom had increased its defence spending in recent years, and planned to make further increases to improve the effectiveness of United Kingdom conventional forces, including provision of modernised equipment and war reserves.

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* See addendum attached

ANNEX D

DRAFT LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT

At our meeting in Washington on the 17th of December, 1979, I pointed out that the United Kingdom Government attached great importance to the maintenance of a nuclear deterrent capability. It will be necessary to replace the present Polaris force in the early 1990s and I explained that, having reviewed the options, the Government had concluded that the Trident 1 weapon system best meets the need to maintain a viable deterrent capability into the 21st century. I therefore asked you if the United States Government would be prepared, in continuation of the cooperation which has existed between our Governments in this field since the Polaris Sales Agreement of the 6th of April, 1963, to supply, on a continuing basis, Trident 1 missiles, equipment and supporting services, in a manner similar to that in which Polaris was supplied. In addition I asked if the United States Government would be willing to amend further the Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes of the 3rd of July, 1958, in respect of the supply of special nuclear materials for the United Kingdom deterrent programme.

I further explained that the United Kingdom Government would wish to purchase sufficient missiles, complete with multiple independently targettable re-entry vehicles and less only the warheads themselves, together with equipment and supporting services, on a continuing basis, to introduce and maintain a force of British submarines, close coordination being maintained between the Executive Agencies of the two Governments in order to assure compatibility of equipment; and would also wish to procure such special nuclear materials as were needed, and were beyond their own capacity to provide, to enable them to produce the warheads.

I made it clear that the successor to the Polaris force will be assigned to NATO, like Polaris; and that, except where the United Kingdom Government may decide that supreme national interests are at stake, the successor force will be used for the purposes of international defence of the Western Alliance in all circumstances. In our discussions we agreed that cooperation in the modernisation of the United Kingdom nuclear deterrent in this way would be consistent with the present and prospective international obligations of both parties.

In particular, I emphasised that the United Kingdom continued to give whole-hearted support to the NATO Long-Term Defence Programme, with its emphasis on the strengthening of conventional forces. I noted that the United Kingdom Government had substantially increased its defence spending, in accordance with NATO's collective policy, and planned to make further such increases in the future in order to improve the effectiveness of its all-round contribution to Alliance deterrence and defence.

You indicated that the United States Government was prepared to meet this request and you agreed that as the next step the United States Government would receive technical and financial missions to pursue these matters, using the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement where appropriate.

DRAFT LETTER FROM PRESIDENT TO PRIME MINISTER

Thank you for your letter of recording our discussions in Washington about a successor to the United Kingdom's Polaris force.

I confirm that the United States Government is prepared to meet your request to purchase the Trident 1 weapon system on the basis you describe, and to receive technical and financial missions to pursue these matters, using the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement where appropriate.

I also confirm that the United States Government is prepared to consider proposals for the further amendment of the Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes of the 3rd of July, 1958, in respect of the supply of special nuclear materials for the United Kingdom deterrent programme.

5B

COPY NO 7 OF 10 COPIES

Addendum to Annex C of the Prime Minister's Washington Brief of 12th December 1979 on the Future of the United Kingdom Nuclear Deterrent

The Americans have now (14th December) suggested revised wording for the communique passage on the conventional defence effort. We propose to reply that this is acceptable subject to one re-revision.

2. The following text of the earlier British draft, as in Annex C, shows in footnotes the changes proposed. Note d is the only major point.

Note a — The President and Prime Minister discussed the importance of increased efforts to strengthen NATO's defences, both nuclear
Note b — and conventional. The President reviewed the outlines of the US Five Year Defense Plan, noting that in order to carry out that plan the US will be increasing defence spending, in real
Note c — terms, steadily over the next five years. The Prime Minister reaffirmed the UK's strong support for the NATO Long Term
Note d — Defence Programme and noted that the UK had increased its defence spending in recent years, and planned to make further increases to improve the effectiveness of UK conventional forces, including
Note e — provision of modernised equipment and war reserves.

NOTES

a. US revised draft proposes to start "In this connection [referring to the immediately preceding paragraph on the deterrent] the President and .... ". This is acceptable.

b. US revised draft proposes "... reviewed the new US Five Year ..." Acceptable.

c. US revised draft proposes "The President and Prime Minister reaffirmed their strong support for the NATO Long Term Defence Programme ...." Acceptable.

d. US revised draft proposes "and for the NATO commitment to a 3 per cent real growth in defence spending. The Prime Minister noted plans for further significant increases in the UK defence budget to improve .....". Acceptable subject to one British counter-amendment to the first part of the new text, designed to remove the inaccurate reference to a NATO commitment, as follows: "and for the NATO aim of a 3 per cent real growth in annual defence spending".

e. US revised draft adds a new final sentence as follows: "The Prime Minister agreed that America's European Allies must share equitably in any collective defence build-up to meet the needs of the common defence." Acceptable; this is a paraphrase of something the US Defense Secretary said recently at a NATO meeting, on which he received full British support.

Cabinet Office
14 December 1979

5A

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

COPY NO 1

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON

17 DECEMBER 1979

FUTURE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM NUCLEAR DETERRENT

This will be the most important matter which you will wish to discuss with President Carter.

LINE TO TAKE

2. Most grateful for your message of 15 October and the assurance it contained. Would like to discuss the timing of the UK request and US response as you suggested.

Understand that you would prefer not to have a substantive request until SALT II is ratified. Prepared to hold back for this reason for a while.

Fully sympathise with your difficulties. But there are dangers either way. From my point of view, there will be strong pressure for an announceable decision by end January.

Failing that, can we agree now that matter should not be allowed to slip beyond February or (if necessary) March at the latest?

In any event, may need to consult you again in early 1980, in light of developments both in US (progress of SALT ratification) and in UK (public pressure for a decision). Things will get steadily more difficult as time passes.

Meanwhile there are two things it would be helpful to settle now. First, in the light of the welcome affirmation of your intentions in your October message, may I take it that, when I do make a formal request to you for the MIRV'd Trident C4 system (less warhead) and related assistance, your answer will be affirmative? Second, pending the time when such a request is actually put, can the drafting of a formal exchange of letters be discussed between the senior officials concerned? Finally, suitable language needed to cover this subject in communiqué on my present visit. Drafts have been considered between White House and Cabinet Office. Suggest Brzezinski and Armstrong finalise.

BACKGROUND

3. Although it is not possible to specify a single date when the United Kingdom Polaris force will cease to be effective, the increasing risk of various forms of equipment failure point firmly towards starting to replace the force soon after 1990. Exhaustive studies of the problem suggest that the best replacement would be the Trident I (C4) (Multiple Independently Targettable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV)) ballistic missile system already in production in the United States. We would of course provide our own warheads. The necessary submarines would be built by us with United States assistance, as we did with Polaris.

4. President Carter wrote to you on 15 October (copy at Annex A) assuring you that his approach to modernising the United Kingdom strategic nuclear forces including the C4 option "will be affirmative". You replied to his message on 22 October (copy at Annex B).

5. President Carter laid great stress in his message to you on the delicate question of timing of the decisions. Subsequent discussions with Dr Aaron,

Dr Brzezinski's assistant, suggest that this may be the main point at issue when you meet the President. From his point of view a Polaris replacement deal with Britain must be carefully timed in relation to two other issues. The first issue is the NATO decision on Theatre Nuclear Forces. Although this may be taken at the NATO meetings on 10/13 December, there will still be problems of parliamentary approval in some countries and possibly also of linkage with SALT II ratification. The second issue is SALT II ratification itself which he believes the Russians might link with any announced decision on a UK Polaris force replacement prior to ratification. He regards successful ratification as the "mainspring" of his Presidency; if it fails, he believes that he is significantly less likely to be re-elected. But the ratification process may drag on for months, and this could present you with a real problem on timing: the longer the decision is put off, the nearer will be the US Presidential election, and the greater the pressures on the President to postpone a decision until after the election.

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a. The importance which the United Kingdom attaches to maintaining a credible strategic deterrent force

Your exchanges of messages suggests that this point can be taken for granted.

But you will wish to express appreciation for his positive attitude towards helping us.

b. Assignment to NATO

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c. Why the United Kingdom wants to replace Polaris with the Trident C4 (MIRV) system

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i. With the passing weeks there is a strengthening domestic interest in the United Kingdom. We should all get the worst of several worlds if an impression gained ground that, although the United Kingdom wanted Trident C4, the United States were equivocating.

ii. The indications are that the Russians want to see SALT II ratified. Brezhnev certainly seems personally committed. If this is so, the Russians are unlikely to use an announced United States decision to help the United Kingdom over replacing Polaris as a reason for backing away from the SALT II agreement. Conversely if the Russians now believe that the ratification of SALT II is not in their interest they will have no difficulty in finding some excuse or other for not going through with the agreement, however the United States respond to the United Kingdom's request.

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FOLLOW-UP

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Cabinet Office

12 December 1979

THE WHITE HOUSE

TOP SECRET

WASHINGTON

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I know I can count on your understanding of these timing considerations just as you can be confident

of my appreciation of the contribution of the British deterrent to the security of the Alliance and of the need for its modernization.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Carter

The Right Honorable
Margaret R. Thatcher, M.P.
Prime Minister
London

ANNEX B

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER

Thank you for your message of 15 October, about military nuclear matters, which David Aaron delivered to John Hunt during his very useful visit to London last week.

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22 October 1979

ANNEX C

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US/UK DECEMBER 17 COMMUNIQUE

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TOP SECRET - Copy 1 of 4 copies.

Copy 2 filed on TNF (Defence Mtg 79)

Ref. A0940

PRIME MINISTER

Modernisation of NATO's Long Range Theatre Nuclear Forces and the replacement of Polaris

As agreed at the MISC 7 meeting on 6th December, the Defence Secretary will make a statement at Cabinet on 13th December under Foreign Affairs on the outcome of the NATO Ministerial meeting on 12th December on the proposals to modernise NATO's theatre nuclear weapons, and the parallel arms control proposals.

2. Following his statement you may care to inform Cabinet that, at your meeting with President Carter on 17th December in Washington, you will be exploring the possibilities of a suitable replacement for the U.K. Polaris force in the early 1990s. The Americans are very anxious that, at this stage, you should not be specific about which particular possibility you may have in mind.

RCA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

12th December 1979

Covering

PERSONAL TOP SECRET UK EYES A

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 01-218 2392 (Direct Dialling)
01-218 9000 (Switchboard)

PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
SIR FRANK COOPER GCB CMG

PERSONAL

PUS/79/1131

10 December 1979

NBPM wi this letter & MV
Vice's minute A0946 &
13 December.

13 xii

Clive Whitmore Esq
No. 10 Downing Street

Dear Clive.

During a discussion last week my Secretary of State - who is now in Brussels - said to the Prime Minister that he would like to give her "a piece of paper". This I enclose.

A copy goes to Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever

Frank Cooper

FRANK COOPER

PERSONAL

Copy No. 1 of 4
Page 1 of 2

Problem

1 Relationship of any announcement about a "successor" system with LRTNF and SALT II ratification.

Considerations

2 Waiting for LRTNF decision is no great problem and makes sense, barring unforeseen snags, in Brussels this week. SALT II is a different matter. Ratification could well take until late February (optimistically) April (more likely).

3 Meanwhile, subject increasingly high interest and high profile in UK - eg major Panorama programme 10 December (we have told US of this).

4 Inescapable risk of leakage as more people come to know, question or guess about decision either taken or apparently not taken. This will increase after Prime Minister's visit to Washington. Risk of confused position - wide open to critical exploitation (next target for Russian propaganda, SALT opponents, anti-nuclear lobby etc).

5 Can UK domestic, especially Parliamentary, interest be reined in? Perhaps all right until early in New Year but increasingly difficult, after Parliament resumes in January (middle or late)? How long can a nuclear debate be held off?

6 UK has been pressed (subject to White House confirmation which is being sought) to commit money very soon on long lead items (this is quite normal for sub contractors in projects of this kind). Difficult to justify without firm decision and impossible without political agreement. Difficulty compounded by need for President's proposal to supply weaponry to lie before Congress for 50 days.

7 Difficult to argue that we can yet identify crucial programme deadline in UK but difficulty increases sharply if we cannot plan and prepare with US experts. 1990 seems distant but much to be done, and other programme resources to be moulded around this one - eg submarine building; PSA effort at Coulport. There is also "planning blight" on rest of defence programme.

8 Relationship with SALT II obscure. What is it? Does it offer options? Danger in leaving situation open for indeterminate period. Russians given clear field for disruptive propaganda and action (though we can avoid upsetting them). On other hand, Senate anti-SALT lobby may make trouble if they get wind of concealment, temporising or apparent weakness in helping Allies. Supply of "Successor" could also help to convince waverers in Senate if announced at judicious time.

Possible Action

9 The Prime Minister might perhaps let the President know in advance of her visit that shecould agree to distance announcement from LRTNF decision in December but indicate that there are political and practical

/problems..

for UK in delay for more than a relatively short period. She might add that she would wish to discuss position carefully during her visit, indicating that it would be very hard for her to hold position at this end for a long time, that nature of linkage with SALT II is not immediately clear to her, and that it would be necessary for her to achieve as positive an outcome as possible.

10 This positive outcome should include reaffirmation of President's previous statements; confirmation about the supply of MIRVs; no precise timing linkage to the ratification of SALT II; and conditional agreement to an exchange of letters.

3

Ref: A0846

Copy No. 1 of 5 copies

Defence

TOP SECRET

PRIME MINISTER

Future of the Strategic Deterrent
(MISC 7)

I attach a brief for the discussion in MISC 7 on 5th December.

2. The handling of this discussion presents peculiar difficulty. You had a message from President Carter on 15th October, to which you replied on 22nd October. In his message the President made it clear that we could have whatever we wanted, including MIRV'D C4s, but he also asked us to go a little slow with our approach to the Americans, because of their sensitivities in relation to the ratification of SALT II and TNF modernisation. His emissary (Dr. Aaron) suggested at that stage that we should not take our decision about what we wanted until just before you saw the President in December. You promised the President not to approach him formally until you saw him.

3. You will have to handle the meeting without disclosing the existence of President Carter's message. He specifically asked that it should not be made known to the Chiefs of Staff; so that you would in any case be unable to refer to it, if you acceded to the request by the Secretary of State for Defence that he should be accompanied at the meeting both by the Chief of the Defence Staff and by Professor Mason. You told the President that you would tell the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence of his message, and Sir John Hunt showed the exchange to them both. By implication this excludes the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and you will therefore be unable to refer to the message or disclose its existence to them.

4. All this means that the meeting need not in fact speculate on American willingness to help us with this or that technical or logistic support; but you cannot disclose the reasons for this. You will have to handle the meeting on the basis of an assumption, for the purposes of debate, that there are no limitations on American willingness to help us - except possibly as regards timing.

5. Although the most sensitive aspects of what Dr. Aaron said in his latest visit on 29th November have not been circulated to your colleagues, there is no reason why you should not say that the latest indications from the White House suggest that you will face a difficulty with the President over the timing of the announcement about any new agreement (and therefore of its formal conclusion). He is likely to want to see SALT II ratified by both parties first. Since ~~But~~ that may well not be until February or later, you seek your colleagues' agreement that you should do all you can to change his mind. That is later than we should wish. Delay will be dangerous in offering the Russians time to try to wreck the agreement; it will expose you to domestic pressures; and (though you clearly cannot say so in Washington) the nearer we get to the American elections the less we shall be able to rely on the President to help us effectively. You will therefore need to invite your colleagues to agree that you should urge the President to accept the earliest possible announcement - preferably soon after the House of Commons resumes after the Christmas recess.

6. The attached brief, unlike the above, can be drawn on fully in discussion with your colleagues. As you will see, it suggests that you inform the Cabinet on 13th December of what MISC 7 decides on 5th December. You will remember that Dr. Aaron made clear on 29th November that the Americans are worried about leaks and would prefer you to be less specific in talking to your colleagues. You may wish to consider not revealing to the Cabinet which system MISC 7 has decided we should go for, at least until after your visit to Washington and perhaps not until just before you are ready to make an announcement.

RTA

(Robert Armstrong)

4th December 1979

Ref: A0830

Copy No. 1 of 3 copies

2

TOP SECRET

PRIME MINISTER

Replacement of Polaris

You will wish to see the two attached minutes of 29th and 30th November recording a visit from Dr. David Aaron of the White House. The second of these is marked Top Secret and has not been copied elsewhere because of the references to your exchange of messages with the President in October.

2. We will cover relevant points from these records in briefing you for MISC 7 on 5th December. But you will not be able to refer there to the Top Secret Aaron record, since as you will remember your exchange with the President has not been revealed to two members of MISC 7 (the Home Secretary and the Chancellor) or to the Chiefs of Staff.

3. Your brief for Washington, which I will be putting forward outside the main series, will need to cover the following points.

4. The President will want you to avoid asking formally for the Trident system on 17th December, and to be content to wait for a formal and publishable answer until SALT II has been ratified by both parties. From our point of view this is disappointing and unsatisfactory. We want a definite decision and agreement as soon as possible, so that the Polaris replacement programme can gather momentum; and we want to get the President firmly and formally committed sooner rather than later; the longer we leave it, the closer we get to the United States election, and the greater is likely to become his reluctance to commit himself. You will therefore want to apply pressure upon the President on the timing. Given the state of opinion here, you can hardly leave Washington without making clear what we want; or without pressing for a very early answer.

5. One point which you could perhaps make to the President is that the American argument about Soviet reactions can and should be stood on its head. The Russians must already know that an Anglo-American deal on a successor to Polaris is in the offing. If they want to wreck it by attaching a condition to

SALT II ratification, they are much more likely to try to do so before it is announced, in the hope of scaring the Americans off it. Once it has been signed and published, they will recognise that the President has committed himself publicly to a major ally and cannot possibly draw back. So they will not demand that he does so unless they merely want an excuse for wrecking SALT II; and they will only decide to wreck SALT II if Senate riders have made it unacceptable to them, in which case they will find some excuse whatever precautions the Americans take.

6. Nonetheless, however good the argument, we cannot expect that it will persuade the President to the sort of timing we want. He clearly regards the ratification of SALT II as crucial to his re-election; and he certainly will not do anything that he believes or is advised will put that at risk. So I fear that we shall have to settle for as firm a private commitment as you can get, both to a favourable decision on substance and to the earliest possible formal commitment, agreement and announcement.

7. We can accept the communique language suggested by Dr. Aaron subject to two amendments -

(i) In the main passage on the deterrent, the second sentence should begin -

"The leaders agreed that their Governments should continue their discussions to ascertain ..."

We must make clear that the process has already started.

(ii) In the passage on the defence budget the final sentence should begin -

"The Prime Minister reaffirmed the United Kingdom's strong support for the NATO Long Term Defence Programme; and noted that the United Kingdom has increased its defence spending in recent years and was determined to make further increases to improve the effectiveness of United Kingdom conventional defence ..."

We cannot agree to "maintain the size" of our forces in all circumstances.

We shall not want to discuss this communique language outside the Cabinet Office, since it would provoke too many questions about why we were not aiming at something more conclusive, which we cannot reveal without referring to your exchanges with the President.

8. We will have ready for your visit a considered draft for an Exchange of Letters, which will contain a strengthened passage on our conventional defence effort on the lines of the proposed communique passage. We can and will agree this with Departments concerned, including the Treasury.

RGA

(Robert Armstrong)

4th December 1979

SECRET covering TOP SECRET 2A

Ref: B05858

Copy 196

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

cc Mr Quinlan, MOD
Mr Moberly, FCO
Mr Hastie-Smith

Polaris Replacement

Dr Aaron called to see me this morning as arranged. No one else was present, apart from his NSC assistant Mr Jim Thomson. ~~for part of the time~~.

Congress

2. Dr Aaron said that, once agreement had been reached between the President and the Prime Minister, the Administration would need to notify Congress formally under clause 36b of the Arms Export Control Act. They had considered but rejected the idea of avoiding this by claiming that the new deal was merely a continuation of activity under the Polaris Sales Agreement of 1962/3 (as was done in the case of the Chevaline agreement). Extensive congressional consultation would be politically necessary even if the 36b procedure was not used; and an attempt to evade 36b would stir up procedural controversy unrelated to the substance of the issue. In any case, 36b notification was not expected to cause any difficulties. It involved only 20 informal followed by 30 formal days during which the new Agreement would lie before Congress and be open for discussion there. No affirmative resolution would be needed, although a debate would be unavoidable. The United States would not be legally bound by the Agreement until the 50 days were up. But the delay need not slow things up in practice, since the detailed terms of the proposed sale did not have to be worked out before notification was sent to Congress and negotiations on these could therefore take place during the 50 days. Management and administration of the co-operation programme, once agreed, would be through the established Polaris Sales Agreement mechanism and the United States Navy; not through the Foreign Military Sales mechanism and the Defence Security Assistance Agency.

Effect on United Kingdom Conventional Defence Effort

3. The Administration would need to assure Congress (and themselves) that the British conventional defence effort would not be adversely affected by the proposed deal. They did not want to be attacked in Congress for

undermining the conventional defence of Western Europe and thus exposing the United States to having to foot nationally a larger conventional bill than would otherwise have been necessary. This was the one area in which Dr Aaron's team had found the British team's statements at our 18th October meeting less than fully satisfactory. Our reasons for offering only general assurances were understood. But the President might feel he had to ask us, at least privately, to "put some figures on it". There was no clear reply when I queried how any private assurances could help the President with Congress. But the clear implication was that the Administration would like us to commit ourselves to something beyond the NATO formula of an extra 3 per cent of real GDP annually up to 1986 - since it is only after 1986 that the cost of the Polaris replacement programme will become significant. Dr Aaron suggested that I should personally discuss this whole aspect of the matter with Ambassador Komer during his visit here on 5th December. I infer that Mr Komer is the main American worrier in this area; that it was he who did not like our 18th October performance; and that it is him we shall have to convince of our inability to give post-PESC figures.

Exchange of Letters

4. Dr Aaron said that he had given no thought to the mechanics of the agreement. But he agreed that an Exchange of Letters might be appropriate; and that this should take place just before we went public. He noted that going public on our side would probably mean a statement in Parliament; on the United States side congressional notification might not be the first public step though it would certainly be an early one. On an unofficial basis I then showed him (by previous agreement with the Ministry of Defence) the preliminary draft for an exchange of letters attached at Annex A to this minute. I explained that it had not yet been properly considered even at official level here and therefore had no status; that its reference to Trident was purely illustrative, since as he knew we had not yet made any decision on our system preference; and that I was not proposing to give him a copy. He confirmed that he did not want a copy, but commented that something like this draft might in practice serve well, subject to two points -

a. the paragraph (4) on our conventional defence effort could usefully be strengthened;

b. the Americans would need to satisfy themselves that they could in fact meet our requirements for Special Nuclear Materials; he still thought this might be difficult, though less so than when he was here on 18th October since it now looked as if the United States supply position might be somewhat eased by the proposed recall of 1,000 warheads from Europe.

Timing

5. Dr Aaron envisaged a broadly satisfactory NATO decision on Theatre Nuclear Forces on 12th December; the Alliance would probably have to go ahead without the Danes, and the problem of whether to do so without the Dutch as well should be soluble even if much more difficult. Ratification by national parliaments where necessary should not take long thereafter; although the Americans had no details, they assumed early January at latest. But the Belgians and Italians, as well as the Dutch and Scandinavians, seemed certain to make their agreement conditional on SALT II ratification. This could complicate the timing of our agreement on Polaris replacement. The Administration were still hoping for SALT II ratification in December. But it could easily slip to January or even February. This was something the President and Prime Minister would need to talk about. The prospects might of course be clearer by 17th December.

6. Dr Aaron noted that we might be entering a period of crisis within the EEC, until the budget problem was settled. The Americans would need to walk all the more warily. They would not want to be accused of trying to widen a split within the Community by a move which could be represented as a dramatic resuscitation of the Special Relationship between Washington and London. An EEC crisis would also be a factor to be taken into account in deciding how to handle the recalcitrant Danes and Dutch over the TNF decision; it would be an argument against precipitating too sharp a NATO crisis at the same juncture.

Other points

7. a. I agreed with Dr Aaron that we could expect the subject of the Polaris replacement to be discussed by the Prime Minister in Washington only with the President, ie not during her visit to the Pentagon.

b. I mentioned the Panorama programme on the future of our deterrent, due on 10th December, as an example of the build-up of public interest; and the guarded nature of the line the Defence Secretary was being briefed to take during his interview.

R L WADE-GERY

29th November 1979

ANNEX A.

Draft letter from Prime Minister to President

1. At our meeting in Washington on 17th December I explained that the United Kingdom Government attached great importance to the maintenance of a nuclear deterrent capability. It will be necessary to replace the present Polaris force in the early 1990s and I explained that, having reviewed the options, the Government has concluded that the Trident 1 weapon system best meets the need to maintain a viable deterrent capability into the 21st century. I therefore asked you if the United States Government would be prepared, in continuation of the cooperation which has existed between our Governments in this field since the Polaris Sales Agreement of 1963, to supply, on a continuing basis, Trident 1 missiles, equipment and supporting services, in a manner similar to that in which Polaris was supplied. In addition I asked if the US Government would be willing to amend further the 1958 Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes in respect of the supply of special nuclear materials for the UK deterrent programme.

2. I explained that the UK Government would wish to purchase sufficient missiles, complete with multiple independently targettable re-entry vehicles and less only the warheads themselves, for a force of five submarines which the UK would construct, close coordination being maintained between the Executive Agencies of the two Governments in order to assure compatibility of equipment. We would also wish to purchase such special nuclear materials as were needed, and were beyond the UK's own capacity to provide, to enable the UK to produce the warheads.

3. As I explained, the successor to the Polaris force will be assigned to NATO, like Polaris; and except where Her Majesty's Government may decide that supreme national interests are at stake, the successor force will be used for the purposes of international defence of the Western Alliance in all circumstances. In our discussions we agreed that cooperation in the modernisation of the UK nuclear deterrent in this way would be consistent with the present and prospective international obligations of both parties.

4. I reaffirmed that the UK Government was determined to maintain its efforts in support of the military capability of the NATO Alliance across the spectrum of conventional as well as nuclear forces.

5. You indicated that the US Government were prepared to meet this request and you agreed that as the next step the US Government would receive technical and financial missions with a view to exploring how the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement might be used for this purpose.

Draft letter from President to Prime Minister

Thank you for your letter of recording our discussions in Washington about a successor to the United Kingdom's Polaris force. I confirm that the US Government is prepared to meet your request to purchase the Trident 1 system on the basis you describe, and to receive technical and financial missions with a view to exploring how the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement might be used for this purpose.

TOP SECRET

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2B

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Polaris Replacement: Dr Aaron's Call

This minute supplements my note of 29th November recording Dr Aaron's call. It is not being copied outside the Cabinet Office, although I shall report orally today to Mr Quinlan, Ministry of Defence and Mr Moberly, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, asking them not to discuss the subject with anyone except (at most) Lord Carrington, Mr Pym, Sir Michael Palliser and Sir Frank Cooper.

Timing

2. Paragraph 5 of my note of 29th November describes only the tip of the iceberg.

3. I explained to Dr Aaron that, though these were only my personal guesses, I expected that the key Ministersconcerned would next week choose a MIRV'd Trident C4 system as our preference; that Cabinet would be told of this, and would concur, the following week; and that the Prime Minister would (as her message in October foreshadowed) seek the President's agreement to this on 17th December. Dr Aaron said he hoped she would come to Washington not "with a formal request in her pocket" but rather to discuss with the President how the whole issue should be handled, including the timing both of her request and his response. The President would of course confirm to her the assurances already given in his October message. But there would almost certainly be major problems to discuss as regards timing in relation both to the Theatre Nuclear Force decisions and (above all) to SALT II ratification. These might make it necessary to postpone the date on which our Polaris replacement agreement was published, and therefore the date on which it was formally reached. With that prospect, it would be dangerous if the Prime Minister arrived on the crest of a wave of public expectation that the decision was about to be made. With suitable apologies for trespassing on our internal arrangements, Dr Aaron wondered if our decision at Cabinet level in mid-December need be in specific terms. The risk of leakage was bound to rise thereafter.

4. I stressed the very strong pressures which the Prime Minister would be under. The climate of expectation already existed. We had done well to damp it down for as long as we had. The Government had been elected on a platform which included the replacement of Polaris. That was eight months ago. Mrs Thatcher was now about to pay her first visit to Washington as Prime Minister. It would be ludicrous to suggest either to her Cabinet colleagues or to the President that we still could not make up our minds what we wanted. Dr Aaron took the point. He conceded that she would be bound to tell the President which system we wanted. But could she perhaps tell her Cabinet colleagues that, while our preference was decided, she would not formally ask the President to agree to it until she was sure that he would?

5. Dr Aaron then raised the question of what was to be said in the 17th December communique, and left me for consideration draft passages (attached at Annex A) covering not only Polaris replacement but also British conventional effort (cf paragraph 3 of my note of 29th November). I said that these would need careful consideration here. My own first reaction was that theywere on the right lines. But the real problem was that fend-off language of this kind would only serve for a limited period. The Prime Minister would come under increasingly strong pressure for news of a concrete request and response. The position in Parliament could no doubt be held until the Christmas Recess; but it would be very difficult once Parliament reassembled on (probably) 14th January. There would no doubt be similar problems at the United States end.

6. Dr Aaron agreed. Congress would reassemble early in January. There would be strong pressures. But the dangers on the other wide would be even greater. As he talked, it became clear that the real American worry centres on SALT II. It was the "mainspring" of Mr Carter's Presidency; without it the Presidency would "be destroyed". It was clear that the Senate would attach to ratification some riders which the Russians would much dislike. If the Americans had at that stage just announced a Polaris-replacement deal with us, the Russians might well attach a counter-rider insisting that the British deal be abandoned. The President could not survive if SALT II was lost because (as it seemed) he had made the wrong deal with us at the wrong moment. But once SALT II was ratified by both sides he would be free to make whatever deal we wanted.

7. I reminded Dr Aaron that he had talked in August of the period before SALT II ratification as the best time vis-a-vis the Russians for the United States and United Kingdom to make their Polaris replacement deal. But it was clear that he had already discounted this and other arguments in favour of speed. He refused to be drawn on just how long a period of delay he saw as likely or possible. But he was quite clear that "timing is going to be our one big problem".

Procedure

8. I explained to Dr Aaron that you would be in Washington on 20th-21st December as well as with the Prime Minister; and I sounded him on the idea of your leaving a considered draft for the Exchange of Letters with Dr Brzezinski on 17th December and discussing its substance with him on your return to Washington later in the week. Not surprisingly, in view of his timing worries, he suggested that this might be too rapid a programme. It might be better, he thought, if you left our draft with them on 20th December (so that they could if necessary tell reporters truthfully on 18th December that this had not been done); negotiations on it could then be taken up in January when you and/or I and/or the standard Wade-Gery team might perhaps come over to Washington. But he would like to discuss this whole aspect of the matter with Dr Brzezinski and then let us know their considered views.

The French

9. Dr Aaron then turned to the question of presenting the Anglo-American agreement to our allies. Apart from the French he thought nothing needed to be said to any of them in advance (though he did not demur when I said we had not yet considered whether it might be tactful to tell the Germans before they read it in the press). As to the French, he himself would be seeing M Wahl at the Elysee on 13th or 14th December, on his way back from the NATO meeting. He had in mind to tell him that Polaris replacement was likely to be discussed between the President and the Prime Minister in Washington, and that the Americans were disposed to continue their collaboration with us over a new generation. It might be useful (he thought) if we too had an advance word of this kind with M Wahl (not with any other French official), preferably just before Dr Aaron did. I said we had already indicated to the French in general terms, eg to President Giscard last week, that we intended (a) to modernise our strategic deterrent and (b) to continue to base ourselves on collaboration with the Americans;

the French appeared to welcome (a) and to understand our reasons for (b); and it might therefore be that there was little further we could tell them until the new Anglo-American agreement was concluded. Dr Aaron agreed that this might be so. But he asked us to let him know before 13th December whether we would be speaking to M Wahl.

10. Dr Aaron concluded by asking Mr Thomson to leave us and then repeating the President's problem about timing with great emphasis. SALT II was vital to him. Everything else had to take second place.

R L WADE-GERY

30th November 1979

ANNEX A

TOP SECRET

DRAFT LANGUAGE FOR
US/UK DECEMBER 17 COMMUNIQUE

The two leaders agreed on the importance of maintaining a credible British strategic deterrent force and US/UK strategic cooperation. The leaders agreed that their governments will be in touch to ascertain the most appropriate means of achieving these objectives for the future.

communique language on UK defense budget commitment:

"The President and Prime Minister discussed the importance of increased efforts to strengthen NATO's defenses, both nuclear and conventional. The President reviewed the outlines of the US Five Year Defense Plan, noting that in order to carry out that plan, the US will be increasing defense spending, in real terms, steadily over the next five years. The Prime Minister noted that the UK had increased its defense spending in recent years, and was determined to make such further increases as are necessary to maintain the size and improve the effectiveness of UK conventional forces, including provision of modernized equipment and war reserves."

TOP SECRET

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PRIME MINISTER

Future of the Strategic Deterrent

(MISC 7)

BACKGROUND

This is a key decision, which will affect our most important means of defence over the next 40 years and thereby the basis of our international military posture, and will have major implications for the defence budget, and indeed for public expenditure, for at least the next decade.

2. On the financial background the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Defence have (as you know) reached agreement on the lines of the formula proposed by Sir John Hunt ("option 5") under which the defence budget during the PESC period to 1983-84 is fixed at the (lower) Treasury figures, and the cost of replacing Polaris is treated as a charge on the Contingency Reserve. This has not been reported to other Cabinet or MISC 7 colleagues. The Chancellor has since agreed with you that the public expenditure figures will have to be reopened. But I understand that he has decided not to mount a fresh attack on the defence budget, or to go back on his agreement to "option 5", although there is likely to be an argument over the cash limit calculation for the 1980-81 defence budget. You will therefore wish to tell MISC 7 of the likelihood of Cabinet settling for the "option 5" formula.

3. But that leaves open what happens about Polaris replacement costs after 1983-84. The Chancellor will want them met from within whatever defence budget is agreed for 1984-85 and later years; the Secretary of State for Defence will argue that in that case there will need to be a corresponding increase in the defence budget's overall size, and his argument will be reinforced by the importance which the Americans can be expected to attach to the maintenance and improvement of the United Kingdom's conventional force at the same time as the Polaris force is being replaced.

4. MISC 7 cannot resolve that point now, and need not do so, provided that its members are prepared to agree that Polaris replacement is our top defence priority, and in consequence that, if we do not have the resources to sustain all four of the "pillars" of the Secretary of State for Defence's strategy, as discussed at OD yesterday, this pillar will be the last to go. The Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Defence can then each resolve their positions on whether it is paid for (after 1983-84) by new money or by cuts elsewhere in the defence programme or by a bit of both.

HANDLING

5. You may wish to conduct the meeting in three stages:

(i) "Procedural" points.

(ii) The answers to the three questions in my minute of 29th October -

(a) Do we retain our strategic deterrent?

(b) What should it be capable of doing?

(c) Which weapon should we choose?

(iii) Other major issues -

(a) Number of boats.

(b) Foreign policy factors.

(c) Timing of announcement.

These stages are discussed in what follows.

PROCEDURE

6. You are due to meet President Carter on 17th December. Deterrent policy is certainly one of the issues you will want to discuss with him. If our decision is to go for a system which depends on American technical and logistic support, that will be the time to ask him for it. For the purposes of this discussion we should assume that there will be no limitations upon American willingness to help which might constrain our freedom of decision. The Americans are well aware that we are considering Polaris replacement, and what the options for us are. The President will not be unprepared for your request, if you make one to him.

THE THREE QUESTIONS

Yes or No?

7. Your Luxembourg speech made clear that we would continue with our deterrent after Polaris. It was MISC 7's starting point at its first meeting in May that the Government was fully committed to doing so. But the Chancellor was not

present at that meeting and the seriousness of the issue is such that you may wish your colleagues to reaffirm that we do wish to stay in what is, for us, a big league

8.

C4 MIRV?

9. Once again, the Secretary of State for Defence to lead. As he points out in his paper, this clearly emerges as the best option, on both military and financial grounds. The table on page 16 of the revised Mason Report shows that only this weapon will adequately meet the damage criteria. Cost is relatively low and reliable, because we should be acquiring a weapon which the Americans will be continuing to procure for themselves; not one specially devised for us.

Other Major Questions

Size of Force

10. The Secretary of State for Defence should lead on this. If the choice of system is C4 MIRV, the only real alternatives are four boats (as at present) or five. The programme cost of five boats is expected to be £8,000 million over 20 years, against £7,000 million for four boats. The Chancellor (his paragraph 3(c)) argues for the cheaper solution. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary points to a number of arguments in the same direction, though his arguments are insubstantial by comparison with the resources argument. But a five boat force would give us some hedge against accidents; and barring these, it would enable us to have two boats on patrol at all times (your Nuclear Release exercise in October pointed up the disadvantages of only having one boat on patrol). The French are

building their sixth ballistic missile submarine. It is now generally recognised that the cancellation of our fifth Polaris boat in 1965 was an expensive mistake, without which we might have avoided the costly Chevaline programme now nearing completion. In his minute dated 29th November the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary indicates some of the merits of a four boat force but he lays stress on the developing anti-submarine warfare (ASW) threat. As the Secretary of State for Defence points out in his minute of 3rd December, a five boat force (with two always on patrol) offers a far better bet against this threat because it is almost inconceivable that the Russians in this timescale will develop a capability to find and sink two submarines simultaneously. The fact is that the fifth boat would double the operationally available strategic deterrent, and diminish its vulnerability by a much greater factor than two, for relatively modest extra cost.

Foreign Policy Factors

11. Lord Carrington should be asked to lead.

(i) Arms Control. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary suggests that the 640 warheads implicit in a five boat force will be less easy to defend against inclusion in SALT than a four boat force with "480 warheads". (In fact a four boat force would have 512 warheads) SALT negotiations have not really grappled yet with the problems of ballistic submarines. But if the "weapons on launchers" approach is adopted, the key question may be the number of boats at sea. On this basis the difference will lie between two sometimes and two always.

(ii) Dependence on the United States. A decision to go for C4 MIRV will keep us totally dependent on United States co-operation over a very long period. As with Polaris, once we have our boats and weapons, we shall have full operational independence in a crisis. But as with Polaris we shall be relying on the Americans not only for initial supply but also for continuing logistic support. If the latter were cut off at any time - and it would be dependent not only on successive Administrations but also on successive Congresses - we could not keep going on our own for more than 6-12 months.

We cannot foresee how Anglo-United States relations will develop over the next 40 years. It is impossible to be as confident of continuing support for a quarter of a century ahead in 1979 as it was in 1949. But they have not so far either let us down or used our dependence as a means of pressure. In any case, we have no real alternative. Going it alone would be prohibitively expensive. That only leaves co-operation with the Americans or co-operation with the French.

(iii) The French. To avoid later recrimination it is important for your colleagues to be clear that they are choosing the American rather than the French alternative and why. In the light of your discussion with President Giscard on 19th November, our preference will come as no surprise to him. Our basic reason for not choosing the French alternative is that it would almost certainly give us a less effective weapon at greater cost. If we were convinced that we should base our long term decisions on the hypothesis that the American connection was likely to decline, and the French connection to become our predominant international link, then we should arguably go into partnership with the French. Politically and economically it would be a more evenly balanced partnership, but it would seriously worry the Germans. It would pose great problems with the Americans, on whom we remain dependent for keeping Polaris going through the 80s. And is France's long term reliability inherently greater than America's?

TIMING

12. I am sending you a separate minute on this issue. You may care to indicate that it could be a difficult area and to ask Lord Carrington and Mr. Pym if there are any other domestic political factors likely to effect the timing of an announcement.

CONCLUSION

13. You may wish, subject to points made in discussion, to sum up as follows:-

The discussion points towards a decision to go for a Polaris replacement, and specifically for a five boat force armed with Trident C4 MIRV

TOP SECRET

missiles. You propose to ask the President of the United States for American assistance to meet the requirement in extension of the 1963 Polaris Sales Agreement. You are hopeful that this request will be favourably received, although there may well be timing problems about when the agreement should be finalised and published. You propose to tell Cabinet on 13th December of the decision that you should approach the President /but in the interests of security not of the choice of system/. You are instructing the Secretary of the Cabinet to arrange the preparation of this part of your brief for your visit to Washington.

RWA

(Robert Armstrong)

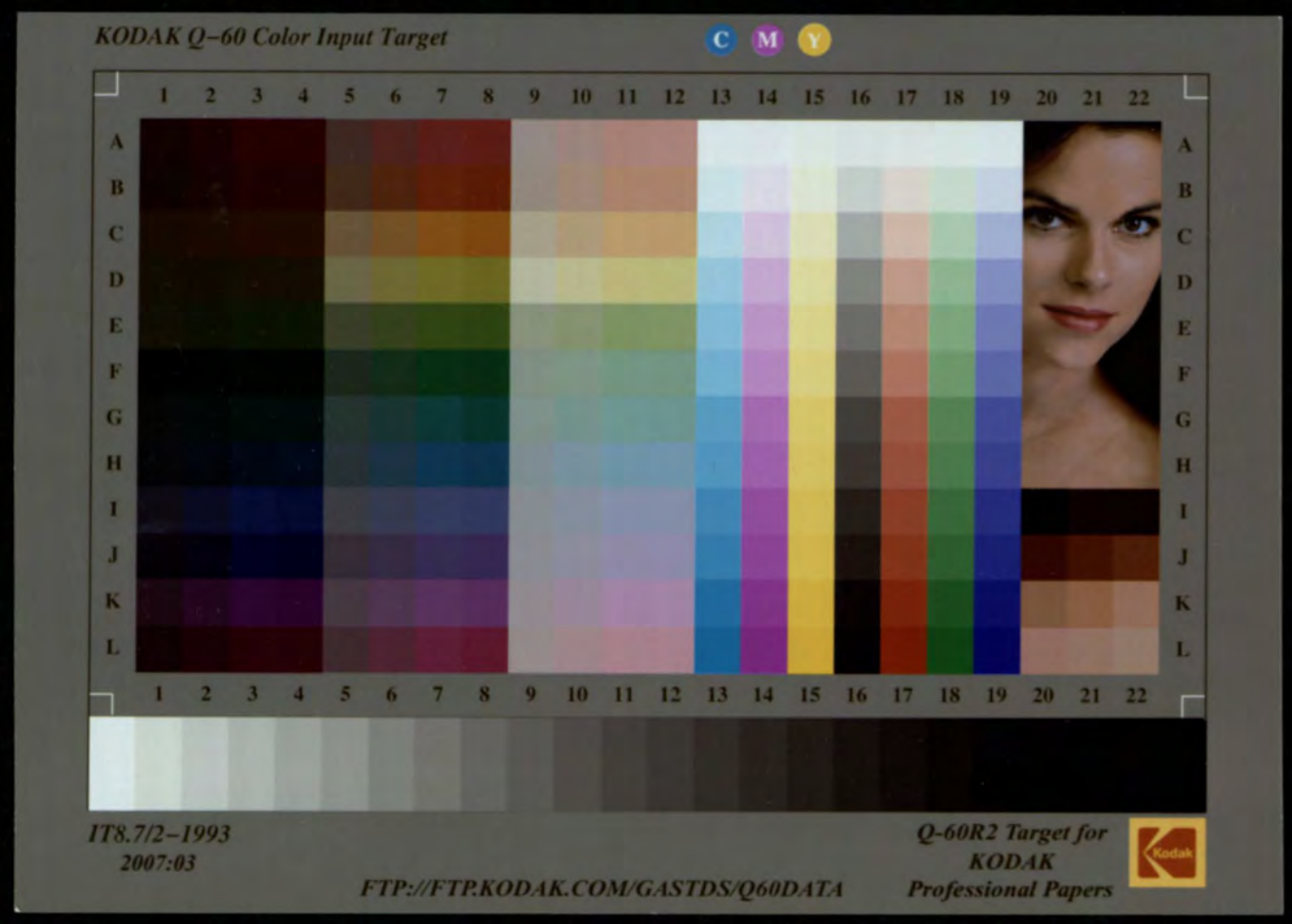
4th December 1979

PART 1 ends:-

Questions briefing 4.12.79

PART 2 begins:-

RTA to PM (A0814) 4.12.79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