

Ref: A09614

SECRET

PRIME MINISTER

SALT II: Non-circumvention

With my minute of 21st May I sent you a paper by officials on this subject, for consideration by the restricted group of Ministers on 24th May. You will also have seen that the subject came up during my talks with Dr. Brzezinski (my separate minute of 21st May, paragraph 5). I do not think anything he said affects the conclusions in paragraph 10 of the paper.

2. I suggest you turn straight to these conclusions and invite your colleagues' comments on them. Do they agree with those at i, ii and iii in paragraph 10? If so the only action needed is to send instructions to the British Representative to NATO on the lines of paragraph 8.

3. The conclusion in paragraph 10(iv) is relevant to whatever decision you take on sending a message to President Carter about the future of our deterrent. This is dealt with in paragraph 6 of my minute on this subject of 18th May. During his present visit Mr. Vance has given very firm assurance to Lord Carrington that "in no way would the terms of the SALT II agreement stand in the way of United States aid to the United Kingdom over a Polaris replacement, though the provision of such aid would of course be a political decision". This is very satisfactory but there is something to be said for getting it on record since President Carter and Mr. Vance may not be around when a successor system is being developed. If you are sending a message to President Carter about talks on a successor system it will be easy enough to make it clear that we assume that non-circumvention will not be a problem and to invite his concurrence. I am however doubtful about the need for putting "concrete cases" into such a message (as the paper suggests) both in view of Mr. Vance's assurance and because it could well imply that Ministers had got further into the choice of options than is likely to be the case. We will prepare a draft for your consideration after the meeting.

*John*

John Hunt

23rd May 1979