

Prime Minister: Agree para 3?

Ref. A02149

Yes - but the Committee will be very angry about the decision

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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.

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ROBERT ARMSTRONG

12th May, 1980





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Reference is made to the report of the Joint Committee on the Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government, dated July 1, 1947, and to the report of the Joint Committee on the Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government, dated July 1, 1947.

In the report dated July 1, 1947, the Joint Committee on the Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government expressed its opinion that the present organization of the Executive Branch of the Government is not in accordance with the principles of efficiency and economy. The Committee recommended that certain changes be made in the organization of the Executive Branch of the Government, and that certain functions be transferred to other departments or agencies.

The Committee also recommended that the functions of the Executive Branch of the Government be reorganized so as to eliminate overlapping and duplication of functions. The Committee recommended that the functions of the Executive Branch of the Government be reorganized so as to eliminate overlapping and duplication of functions. The Committee recommended that the functions of the Executive Branch of the Government be reorganized so as to eliminate overlapping and duplication of functions.

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