

OPS

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T41/82



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

11 March 1982

Subject a Reference:
UK Nuclear Determent:
Pt 4

I wrote to your predecessor on 10 July 1980 to ask whether the United States Government would be ready to supply Trident I missiles equipment and supporting services to the United Kingdom on a similar basis to that on which the Polaris missiles were supplied under the Polaris Sales Agreement of 6 April 1963. President Carter replied on 14 July confirming that the United States Government were prepared to do so, subject to and in accordance with applicable United States law and procedures.

In the light of decisions taken by the United States Government in 1981 to accelerate their own programme to procure Trident II missiles, and to phase out the Trident I programme earlier than had hitherto been intended, the United Kingdom Government have carried out a review of their nuclear deterrent programme. In the light of this review, I am now writing to ask whether in place of Trident I missiles the United States Government would be ready to supply Trident II missiles, equipment and supporting services on a continuing basis and in a manner generally similar to that in which Polaris was supplied. The United Kingdom Government would wish to purchase these missiles complete with multiple, independently targettable re-entry vehicles but without the warheads themselves. I propose that, as in the past, close co-ordination should be maintained between the executive agencies of the two Governments in order to assure compatibility of equipment.

Like the Polaris force, and consistently with the agreement reached in 1980 on the supply of Trident I missiles, the United

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Kingdom Trident II force will be assigned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and except where the United Kingdom Government may decide that supreme national interests are at stake, this successor force will be used for the purposes of international defence of the Western alliance in all circumstances. It is my understanding that co-operation in the modernisation of the United Kingdom nuclear deterrent in the manner proposed would be consistent with the present and prospective international obligations of both parties.

I would like to assure you that the United Kingdom Government remain wholly committed to the strengthening of the Alliance's conventional forces. The United Kingdom Government have in recent years substantially increased their defence spending and further increases are planned for the future in order to sustain the United Kingdom's all-round contribution to allied deterrence and defence. The economies made possible by the United States Government's co-operation with respect to the supply of the Trident I missile system will be used in order to reinforce the United Kingdom Government's continuing efforts to upgrade their conventional forces.

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

The President of the United States of America