



PM/80/45

PRIME MINISTER

Polaris Successor: Memorandum

1. I am content with the memorandum enclosed with Francis Pym's minute of 10 June subject to two particular points.
2. I could not agree to the reference to the French option in paragraph 51. The French know full well that we have not seriously consulted them or even gone as far as suggesting preliminary discussions about their nuclear deterrent programme. Any implication therefore that serious consideration was given to the possibility of acquiring M-4 missiles is not only inaccurate but is bound to annoy the French. I think we should place this option in the broader European rather than in the narrower French context. This approach is not without its drawbacks. It risks giving rise to questions about European defence collaboration and European nuclear forces which we have no particular interest in stimulating. On the other hand it has, in my view, the over-riding advantage of not dealing specifically with the French and certainly not in terms which would only annoy them without any particular advantage to British interests.
3. I would therefore suggest a revised paragraph 51 to read:

'Another possibility, which was considered at an early stage, was a European solution. Collaboration in the European context could have been of considerable political significance. But it was soon apparent that this option would have a number of disadvantages, in particular related to cost. There is no likelihood that the United Kingdom could have acquired by this route an effective deterrent force at a cost, either in initial investment or in subsequent support, which

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could compare with that for the already proven Trident system, especially when account is taken of the economic advantages of our long-established arrangements for collaboration with the United States in nuclear forces. The Government therefore sees no adequate basis on which this option could have been pursued at this juncture.'

To be consistent, the reference to 'or collaboration with France' in paragraph 25 might read 'or some European solution'.

4. Secondly, we need to remain sensitive in referring to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in paragraph 64 to the forthcoming NPT Review Conference this year. I suggest that we should add the following after the existing first sentence: 'The Review Conference of the Treaty will be held in August 1980 in which the United Kingdom intend to play a full part. The Government remains committed to pursue negotiations of effective measures of nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the Treaty. But nothing in the agreement requires the existing nuclear powers ... ' then as in the existing second sentence.

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

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(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
12 June 1980