



Prime Minister

②

h.s. Lyne

This note has already been
in to you but there is no
indication that you have actually
seen it.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

13 March 1981

Dear Michael,

Lyne
25/3

mb

UN Arms Embargo Against South Africa: Marconi

In your letter of 20 February you asked for a report on the Marconi contract mentioned to the Prime Minister by Mr Jim Spicer, MP.

I enclose a note accordingly. The South Africans want the equipment to control both civil and military aircraft in the air space of South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, and also to help to control aircraft in part of the air space of Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Ministers in the Ministry of Defence, Department of Trade and Foreign and Commonwealth Office will need to consider Marconi's application when they seek an export licence formally. However, to judge from the information so far available, the application seems likely to fall within the guidelines which the Prime Minister agreed last year. If this is so, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary expects to recommend that Marconi should receive an export licence on the basis that the equipment has a clear civil application and is not required primarily for military purposes.

A decision to license this sale would probably incur criticism at the UN and perhaps at home, as being contrary to the spirit (and, on a broader interpretation than ours, to the letter) of the arms embargo resolution. The resulting argument might also strengthen the hands of those African governments which are pressing for the Security Council to extend the arms embargo and to define it more strictly, thus increasing the risk of our being forced to veto a resolution to that effect in the Council (probably in company with the Americans and perhaps the French). But we would expect to have a firm basis for rebutting criticism; and the question of action in the Security Council may already have been resolved by the time that a decision on Marconi has been taken and become publicly known.

I am sending copies of this letter to the other recipients of yours.

Yours ever
Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing St



SALE OF RADAR EQUIPMENT TO SOUTH AFRICA

Background

1. Marconi sold South Africa 4 radar sets in 1964 before the mandatory United Nations arms embargo. South Africa wants to replace this equipment and buy one more as a spare. The South Africans are seriously interested in the Marconi equipment, provided that Marconi can get an export licence.

2. Marconi asked about the export licence requirements on 28 January. The Department of Trade asked them for more information which Marconi are now assembling.

Value of Contract

3. The contract is worth £3.9 million. The equipment is based on what Marconi had hoped to sell to the UK Civil Aviation Authority.

Dual Purpose Nature of Equipment

4. The UN Civil Aviation Authority have been advising South Africa's neighbours how to improve civil aviation safety in Southern Africa. They confirm the need to replace South Africa's existing equipment for general safety reasons. The Marconi equipment is of no specific military application because it has no height-finding capability. However like similar systems elsewhere it can be used to control aircraft, whether civil or military.

5. The South African customer will be Marconi (South Africa) and the operator will be Air Space Control Ltd, a civilian organisation.