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PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister.

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Even if you were ready to see Admiral here in principle before Monday evening's meeting of Ministers, your being for Friday and Monday is such that we could not fit him in. I have explained this to Mr NDK's office, who tell me that Mr NDK is not urging you to see Admiral here before Monday.

I have undertaken to the Chief of the Naval Staff to submit to you the request in his minute to me, attached, that you should see him before you discuss with me and colleagues directly concerned my proposals on the future shape of the defence programme.

You have in any case agreed to see the Chief of Staff extensively following Monday's meeting. If, after that, Admiral here wants to see you possibly (presumably is after his resignation) I think you will have to offer him an interview. May we proceed in this way?

2. I hope to put to you tomorrow evening the paper of which CNS has seen a draft.

SW

Ministry of Defence

13th May 1981

Yes  
no

KH  
14.V.



No. 1500/40

Secretary of State

THE DEFENCE PROGRAMME

Reference:

A. Draft paper to Ministers

1. Although you are already aware of my views I feel I must put on record my disagreement with your proposals.

2. Such a step change in our conventional naval capability will cause disproportionate damage both to our National and to our Alliance interests: the former because we are an island dependent on seaborne trade and because much of our political influence in Europe and world-wide depends upon naval power and presence - a principle from which the Soviets and the French continue to derive great benefit: the latter because of its impact on NATO's ready forces to deter and confront the expanding Soviet Navy and because it impacts upon the crucial linkage of the US to Europe. At a time when the capability to deter Soviet aggression outside Europe is becoming increasingly important it makes no sense to slash the only part of our defence capability which can contribute to this deterrence on a continuing day to day basis.

3. I consider your proposals for the Navy of the future to be irresponsible and damaging to the short and long term interests of our country. My advice has been disregarded. I must ask for the opportunity of expressing my views personally to the Prime Minister before Ministers meet with her to discuss your proposals.

*1.*

First Sea Lord

13 May 1981