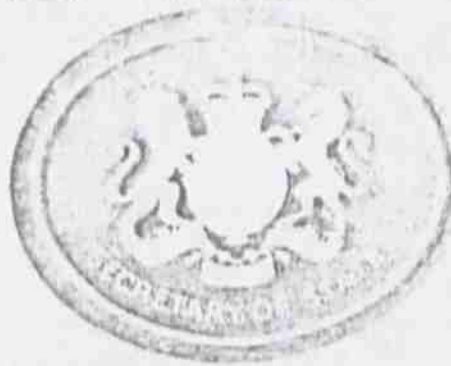


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PRIME MINISTER

CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS FOR UK BASED CRUISE MISSILES

We are to discuss at MISC 7 on Thursday the issue of dual-key arrangements for UK-based ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs).

Options for Change

/ 2. I attach a note which sets out - in some detail - options for change:

- a. to update and to refine the present UK/US agreement covering political consultation and announce publicly that we have done so; and to seek US agreement to being more forthcoming about the consultative process (paragraphs 2-5 of the attachment);
- b. to enlarge the UK presence at Greenham Common e.g. by expanding the UK security force (paragraphs 12-15);
- c. to provide a control mechanism in the weapon system (paragraphs 6-9);
- d. to own and man the missile system with the US retaining the warheads (paragraphs 10-11).

a and b could be useful presentationally but would do very little to counter the arguments advanced for dual-key; but c or d would be required to achieve full physical control.



Defence Considerations

3. My first consideration must be the effects of adopting a dual-key arrangement from a defence standpoint. The degree of concern that the cruise and Pershing decision has produced in the Soviet Union is apparent and anything that might diminish the deterrent effect of these systems - and the incentive they provide towards reaching an arms control agreement - would be a positive gain for them. They will undoubtedly see advantage in dividing the control of the systems on the at least hypothetical possibility that a British or European government might be that much less likely to agree to the use of the missiles than their American partners. The Soviets might perceive that under the existing control arrangement in the last resort the Americans would act alone within a European context. The system would therefore have more deterrent effect the less physical control that exists in Europe, whatever the political arguments.

4. The present system has operated for the control of F111 aircraft and Poseidon submarines under successive governments. It can be claimed to have worked to their satisfaction. Any change now would be interpreted as reflecting a lack of confidence on our part in the Americans with implications for Alliance credibility as a whole. Changes like c and d above could lead to a delay in the deployment date of December 1983 with a possible impact in other basing countries and could again affect the Soviet view of our resolve. Finally, the most realistic option for effective dual control (2d above) has significant cost and manpower implications for the rest of our defence effort. There are therefore, I believe, no defence grounds for seeking new arrangements for control (although clarifying the existing arrangements is a different matter).

Parliamentary and Public Opinion

5. The key question is, of course, whether we can hold the present line in the light of the parliamentary and public concern partly



focussed on the control issue. If by standing by existing arrangements the deployment itself were to come unstuck, the impact on our security would obviously be much more serious than that from modifying our position now. The poll evidence on public attitudes suggests there is widespread anxiety about cruise missiles but it is difficult to gauge from the published polls the strength of feeling and its political impact. (These polls may also be understating the "don't knows"). We need to consider how far reasonable opinion could be won over by careful presentation of the joint decision arrangements, and we must recognise that concessions on control are unlikely to affect the hard-core opposition. In short, I believe we need more in-depth evidence on public attitudes before making policy changes with major defence implications.

Impact on our Allies

6. A change in our position on control would be very sensitive in West Germany and I believe we should take no steps to seek control by a British key or full British manning before the General Election there.

7. I have had no opportunity to sound out myself US opinion on dual-control. I understand that this was originally on offer but we rejected it in the light of our experience of existing arrangements and the foreseen cost involved in purchasing and manning the missiles system in order to achieve dual-control. If we wish to re-open the issue, we must ensure our demands are realistic and be prepared to press them home: the worst of all worlds would be to ask for changes and to be rebuffed. It would be necessary to undertake any exploration at a very high level.

Conclusions

8. My own view is that:

a. There would be advantage in updating and refining the present US/UK agreements and taking a more positive line on them in public;



b. there could be presentational advantage in stepping up our contribution to the manning of the force and I propose to study this in more detail;

c. neither of these steps will be seen as more than palliatives by those arguing against us and will have only limited effect on public opinion;

d. we could not seek dual-control itself without risking a major impact on the deterrent effect of INF deployment and potentially large costs to the defence programme. Before accepting these major penalties, we should analyse more fully the nature of the public opposition to cruise missile deployment and the extent to which changes in the control arrangements would affect it;

e. in the meantime, we should launch ourselves with energy into the advocacy of the policies we are pursuing. We are to discuss this matter elsewhere;

f. we should make no approach to the Americans before the German elections unless we were totally satisfied that such an approach was secure.

9. I am copying this minute to the other members of MISC 7 and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Ministry of Defence
25th January 1983

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THE OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

1. The options for change fall within the following, not mutually exclusive, categories:

a. to refine or improve existing arrangements for political consultation (e.g. through a revision of the 1958 "Murphy-Dean" agreement taking particular account of the GLCM deployment, and of our public statements on control);

b. provide a physical control mechanism, not necessarily linked to UK ownership or operation (i.e. through the provision of a control mechanism within the GLCM launch control centre or missile which would preclude release without the specific authority of the Prime Minister);

c. changes in the manning arrangements by:

i. complete British manning of the system (less warheads);

or ii. an increase in the British elements by expanding the contribution to the security force or joint manning of the system itself.

REVISION OF THE SPECIFIC UNDERSTANDING

2. The provisions of the 'specific understanding' reflect the shared status of the US and UK as nuclear weapons states and thus go beyond the arrangements which the US maintains with other NATO countries which act as hosts to US nuclear weapons. The agreement was concluded in June 1958 and has not been substantially revised since then. The US Administration has however indicated that the agreement will also apply to US GLCMs deployed to the UK. The strength of the existing agreement lies in the fact that it has been accepted and endorsed as satisfactory by successive Administrations on both sides of the Atlantic. Its weakness lies in the fact that it is secret and relies fundamentally on mutual

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trust and good faith. Moreover critical observers can claim with some justice (and have done so already) that the secret understanding requires revision given that 24 years have elapsed since the agreement was concluded (30 years since the Churchill/Truman agreement to which we can publicly refer).

3. There would thus be merit in both presentational and substantive terms in seeking a revision of the agreement, with particular emphasis on the arrangements for GLCM. It would be a wise precaution to annex to the agreement a definitive document embodying the mutual US/UK understandings on the basing arrangements for GLCMs, and covering such matters as the safety standards for US nuclear warheads, the security of warhead storage sites, the control of access and egress at the two RAF bases, command and control, and the arrangements for off-base training deployments in peacetime and in war.

4. Any re-negotiation of the "Murphy-Dean" agreement would necessarily take place on a very restricted basis and the terms of the revised understanding would need to remain highly classified. But the aim would be to make public the fact that the existing understandings had been reviewed in detail with the US Administration and that specific agreement had been reached with the US on all aspects of GLCM basing. Such a statement should be linked (with US agreement) to a more forthcoming line on the joint decision - i.e. we might make clear in public that joint decision procedures applied to nuclear weapons systems and not just the bases from which they operate, and seek to remove from the public line the qualifying clause on decision "in the light of the circumstances at the time". In order not to indicate a lack of confidence in the existing arrangements (which have repeatedly been endorsed by Ministers) or in the US Administration, and in order to avoid creating difficulties with other basing countries, the changes would need to be presented as evolutionary (i.e. a revision of existing arrangements to take into account the new factor of GLCM deployment) rather than fundamental.

5. Such a revision should have some value in dealing with the criticism of the existing arrangements and as a demonstration of the Government's concern. It would not in itself satisfy critics of the present arrangements for control. Whatever revision is sought, it must prima facie be negotiable with the Americans. We have to recognise that the US have in the past been reluctant to be more forthcoming about the terms of public reference to the secret understanding, and could be expected to create difficulties over any future revision, particularly because of their concern over control arrangements in other basing countries and because of the sensitivities of Congress. We should have to explain to them the extent to which circumstances have changed in terms of public opinion.

PHYSICAL CONTROL MECHANISMS

6. There is a number of nuclear weapons systems currently in service for which the co-operation of both British and US personnel is required before an armed weapon can be released (e.g. Lance, nuclear artillery and nuclear depth bombs). The UK has, however, never exercised physical control over a US owned and manned system (Thor was owned and manned by the UK).

7. It is not a simple matter to introduce dual control of release. In the case of GLCMs, release has three stages; deployment of the weapon with its warhead from its bunker; the arming of the warhead; and the launch of the weapon with the armed warhead. We believe the Americans insist on two-man operation at each of these stages. In theory UK authorisation could be required at each stage but launch is the critical point, and it would be sensible to concentrate on this. We understand that the launch control centres for the GLCMs provide for two US Servicemen both of whom are required to enter simultaneously the authenticating code for the launch of the missiles before release can be effected. The simple substitution of a UK Serviceman for a US Serviceman would not constitute dual control. The UK operator would still be dependent

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on a release authorisation emanating from the White House and could at any time be replaced by a US Serviceman. For us to gain an absolute physical veto on the release of weapons, it would be necessary to re-engineer and reprogramme the launch control system so that release of the weapon could only be effected once two separate "codes" (one authorised by the US President, one by the Prime Minister) had been entered. Even with such a safeguard, regular access to the control mechanisms would be needed to ensure that UK control had not been circumvented by the US.

8. The British Government could be expected to bear the costs of any such modification, and in addition to provide communications facilities to ensure that the Prime Minister can remain in contact with the launch control centres at all times whether on or off base. The costs are difficult to quantify without detailed discussion with the US, although they might be expected to be in tens, rather than hundreds, of millions of pounds. Because of the time required to modify equipment and train British operators, there could be significant delays in deployment if we were to insist on such modifications before the first missiles entered service. This could have an impact in other basing countries.

9. More fundamentally, it seems extremely doubtful that the US Administration would accept a dual key control of this sort in what was otherwise a US owned and manned system not least because of the likely attitude of Congress. If we were to insist on a physical dual key mechanism, we must anticipate the American argument that this would need to be accompanied by a substantial (perhaps complete) contribution to the manning of the system, together with a transfer of ownership of the delivery system.

UK MANNING

Complete British manning

10. The establishment of a wholly British team to man, maintain and support the GLCM system would provide the clearest evidence of

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effective British control over the possible employment of the missiles, as demanded by critics of the present arrangement. The weapons themselves would, of course, remain in US hands and their release would be subject to the authority of the US President.

11. The main arguments against introducing this arrangement can be summarised as follows:

a. changing the arrangements now could be seen as showing a lack of confidence in the US, could affect our relations with them and the resolve of other basing countries, and thereby weaken the deterrent effect in Soviet eyes of INF modernisation;

b. if the US were to insist that we purchased at full cost the entire system (less warheads) as a condition of UK operation, the procurement cost (over 10 years) could be in the region of £1 billion for a 160 missile force. While it is possible that the US Administration would be prepared to transfer ownership of the missiles and their supporting equipment without costs or at something less than full cost, we need to consider if in its present mood Congress would be likely to support this. If the UK were to provide operational and support personnel on the scales which the US propose to adopt (a total of about 3,300 split between the two bases) this might lead to a total personnel cost of about £35M a year (excluding initial training costs).

Mixed British/US Manning

12. Presently planned basing arrangements provide for a role for the RAF and the MOD Police in the organisation of the GLCM force which might be stressed more in public:

- a. The GLCMs will be based, like other USAF assets in this country, on an RAF base which remains in RAF ownership and for presentational purposes, under RAF command. (This has, however, no relevance to operational control of the weapons, which remains in American hands);
- b. the RAF Regiment and RAF Police will be providing approximately one third of the security force for the GLCM systems (128 out of 385 at Greenham Common; 92 out of 275 at Molesworth) both at the bases and when deployed off-base;
- c. MOD Police will control access and egress at both stations.

13. Increasing the level of participation of UK Service personnel would be a useful method of demonstrating the close integration of US and UK interests. Increased UK participation at levels short of full manning might for example, be achieved by:

- a. Option A. Substantially increasing the UK contribution to the joint UK/US security force. The external guarding of the perimeters of the GLCM bases with Service policemen is already a UK function. But the defence of the system from possible hostile attack is the job of a jointly manned force to which the UK contribution is roughly one-third - 220 men. Organisationally the joint defence force is intended to be fully integrated. We understand that both British and US personnel will be employed without distinction to protect the cruise missile alert and maintenance area (GAMA) and the Alert Bunker. If the UK element were to be increased to more than one-half of the total force - up to perhaps 75% - this would both substantially increase the British presence and minimise

the future risk of some direct confrontation between American security personnel and members of the British Public. The additional manpower might be around 200 personnel and the cost would be in excess of £2M a year in pay and allowances, plus costs for initial training and accommodation.

b. Option B. Providing a proportion of manpower for the operation and immediate support of the transporter-erector-launchers and launch control centres. Definition of the precise manpower requirements would entail detailed discussion with the US although for such an option between 200 and 400 additional men might be needed, at an annual cost of between £2M and £4M, plus substantial additional costs for initial training.

14. Of the two options for mixed manning, Option B would allow us to demonstrate that the missiles were operated by a closely integrated force, while keeping manpower requirements and costs within reasonable limits (though there would be problems over the availability of personnel and training). The Americans could, however, be very reluctant to accept this arrangement, which would be bound to take time to implement. Option A also has presentational attractions: there would again be manpower problems since it would place an extra burden on the RAF Regiment which is a small force already overstretched with particular problems at NCO level. Whilst both mixed manning options increase our insurance that the US would not act in a manner contrary to our wishes and provide a capability to impede US operations should such a need ever arise, neither of them provides an absolute physical guarantee that the missiles would not be fired without UK consent. But Option A could be presented in a manner from which it came to be inferred that there was a largely British force controlling access and egress to and from the weapons' Alert Bunker and off base deployments.

15. Option A could probably be managed relatively quickly. Option B would inevitably take a longer time to put into effect since additional personnel would have to be recruited for training in the UK

and possibly specific training on GLCM equipment in the US. There would be insufficient time to introduce such a new system to become operational by December 1983. The UK might therefore need to accept that the systems will enter service entirely US manned: the Government could, of course, announce, prior to deployment, that it planned to introduce an element of mixed manning into the GLCM force, and the training process was being set in hand. Mixed manning would provide a useful first step towards full manning and the introduction of a physical dual key if these were held to be necessary in the longer term.

16. The question of joint training in the operation of cruise missiles was raised by the then Defence Secretary with Mr Weinberger in December. Mr Weinberger said that he thought it would not present problems for the US Government.