



MO 11/2/2

Prime Minister

TO note.

A.S.C. ^{25.}/₇PRIME MINISTER

ms

THE GROUND LAUNCHED CRUISE MISSILE (GLCM) PROGRAMME

When we discussed cruise missile deployment at MISC 7 on 8th March, I suggested that we might increase the size of the British component of the joint RAF/USAF Defence Force. I have now looked in detail at what would be involved in increasing the size of the British component from one-third (220 men) to two-thirds (about 440 men).

2. The task of this force is to protect the missiles and their associated equipment when on base - or, more importantly, deployed in the field - in time of tension and war. They are not responsible for ordinary base security functions in peacetime, or for dealing with demonstrators, which are the tasks of the MOD and civil police. The British element of the force will be clearly in evidence at Greenham Common and when there are training deployments and be a visible symbol of UK involvement in the GLCM programme. But these personnel will have no part in the command and control of the weapon system itself, and could not be represented in any meaningful way as providing British control over the launching of the missiles. With one-third of the force we can show a substantial presence; two-thirds would add to this visibility but not in any decisive way.

3. On the other hand, increasing our contribution to the joint Defence Force above the presently planned level would have significant penalties. It would very soon run us into substantial extra cost over and above the £4M "in cash or in kind" which we originally agreed to contribute. To find the manpower, there would either have



to be an increase in the level of uniformed manpower provided for in the RAF programme or other high priority RAF tasks would have to suffer. In either case I would prefer not to take on an extra task when I am seeking to contain service manpower numbers and direct as much of the available effort as possible to our own front-line.

4. We need to look at this issue in the light of the progress we have made with the US Government on the public presentation of the joint decision arrangements and of the movement in public opinion since our discussion in March. I have concluded that, against this background, the presentational benefits from increasing the force are outweighed by the practical penalties. It is, however, important that we should have independent secure communications to the RAF Command at Greenham Common. This is being provided in the form of a secure telephone on the MOD net provided for the RAF Station Commander. In future by this means we shall be able to keep an independent national check on all movement of missiles on the base or entering and leaving the base.

5. Once GLCMs are based at Greenham Common, off-base training deployments would of course provide an opportunity and a focus for protestors trying to disrupt the cruise missile programme. I have registered with Mr Weinberger the need for the timing and location of off-base deployments to be carefully considered jointly. Consultations are in hand with the relevant police forces and the Americans, and plans are being prepared which would involve the use of MOD Training Areas and give the protestors minimum opportunity to interfere. I intend to report on this again later.

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

Wright
Ministry of Defence
21st July 1983