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*Agreed
ms. 1*

PRIME MINISTER

The Queen's Flight

Mr. Pym minuted you last month saying that, in the light of the reductions in the defence budget agreed in Cabinet, he saw no alternative but to abandon the proposal to re-equip The Queen's Flight with two BAe 1-11s. He also pointed out that to buy these aircraft for The Queen's Flight at a time of deep economic recession would be open to attack.

You agreed to wait a little time before replying to the Defence Secretary to see whether any other members of the Cabinet reacted to his minute to you. Only two colleagues have responded so far. You saw the Chancellor of the Duchy's minute of 25 November (Flag A) in which he proposed that we should buy one new aircraft for The Queen's personal use or, failing that, a second-hand BAe 1-11 which could be refurbished. You commented that the cost might come off the Arts budget! We have now had the minute from Lord Soames at Flag B in which he suggests that if The Queen's Flight cannot be re-equipped with new aircraft, BAe 1-11s should be hired ad hoc as necessary.

Mr. Pym's Private Secretary has now written responding to the suggestions made by the Chancellor of the Duchy and the Lord President (Flag C). The Defence Secretary is no more prepared to provide the money for one aircraft, whether new or second-hand, than he was for two. Moreover, he does not like the idea of buying a second-hand aircraft, because not only would it be second best, but it might quickly prove impossible to maintain it to the appropriate safety standards for The Queen's Flight. On the other hand, Mr. Pym goes along with Lord Soames' suggestion that aircraft might be hired from time to time, since this is something which is occasionally done already. (A British Airways BAe 1-11 was hired, for example, for the recent State Visit to Italy.)

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Are you content that I should now reply to Mr. Pym's Private Secretary saying that you go along with Mr. Pym's reaction to the Chancellor of the Duchy's and the Lord President's minutes, and that you agree with him that the question of the re-equipment of The Queen's Flight should not be pursued further for the time being.

AWW

5 December, 1980.

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

8 December 1980

Dear Brian,

THE QUEEN'S FLIGHT

I have shown the Prime Minister your letter of 5 December 1980 about The Queen's Flight setting out your Secretary of State's reaction to the comments made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in his minute of 25 November and by the Lord President of the Council in his minute of 3 December.

The Prime Minister agrees that, in present economic circumstances, there is no alternative but to shelve for the time being the proposal to re-equip The Queen's Flight, whether with one or two new BAe 1-11s. She also shares Mr. Pym's view that, for the reasons given in your letter, it would not be appropriate to buy and refurbish a second-hand aircraft. She agrees, however, that we should continue our present practice of hiring BAe 1-11s as and when necessary.

*Passage deleted and closed, 40 years, under
FOI Exemption. Wayland. 27 August 2013*

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to other members of the Cabinet, to the Minister of Transport, to the Chief Whip and to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

John Whitman

B.M. Norbury, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

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