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10 DOWNING STREET

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FCO  
SO *Defence*  
CO.

*From the Private Secretary*

9 September 1982

*Dear Sir,*

UNITED KINGDOM STRATEGIC DETERRENT: MISSILE PROCESSING

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 7 September. She is content that he should make the proposed announcement at lunchtime today, subject to changes which I have already conveyed to you on the telephone:

- (a) The deletion from the end of paragraph 4 of the words "which we could then devote to other parts of our defence programme" (this follows a brief discussion in Cabinet this morning).
- (b) The deletion of the word "British" from paragraph 5.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the members of MISC 7 and to Muir Russell (Scottish Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever  
John Gals.*

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

HL





MO 18/1/1

Decision needed tonight. Treasury have no objection. Agree that Mr. Holt should make his statement to the press tomorrow (Thursday).

PRIME MINISTER

Yes not A.J.C. 1/19.

UNITED KINGDOM STRATEGIC DETERRENT: MISSILE PROCESSING

When Misc 7 discussed this subject on 28th July, it decided that, subject to the negotiation of satisfactory terms with the Americans, the initial assembly and periodic refurbishment of our Trident missiles should be carried out in the United States.

2. Following further discussions with US officials in Washington, the US have now indicated that:-

a. They are willing to undertake this task for us at their planned facility at Kings Bay, Georgia, under the general provisions of the Polaris Sales Agreement.

b. This will commence with the initial assembly of missiles in time to meet the introduction of Trident into service with the Royal Navy in 1994.

The provisions of the Polaris Sales Agreement (PSA) will provide the basis for the US to continue to provide assistance with processing if we requested it even in the unlikely event of their deciding to phase out Trident II (D5) before us.

3. The cost to the UK will be the forecast additional investment and operating costs at Kings Bay consequent on the addition of this task to that necessary to meet the requirements of the US Navy, together with a contribution of some \$70M towards the cost of the planned facility. I see no difficulty in answering any questions about how this latter contribution relates to the earlier US agreement in the Trident negotiations inter alia to





waive the normal facilities charge in the case of D5. We had not decided to seek their agreement to process our missiles at Kings Bay at the time of the main negotiations, and so this possibility did not form part of them. Given the very favourable terms on which the US are offering us D5, and the fact that we shall be making major capital and running cost savings of several hundred million pounds by going to Kings Bay, I have no doubt about the justification for contributing to the costs of their facilities.

4. The detailed implementation of this agreement will now be worked out as part of the continuing technical discussions which we are having with the United States in the course of planning for the introduction of Trident. In the meantime, we now have enough to enable us to announce publicly our decision. It would be very unwise to delay the announcement further for two reasons. It is bound to leak out of Washington shortly - and it will then be very much more difficult to handle presentationally. Secondly, I must handle this announcement personally - and I shall be away for two and a half weeks leading into the Party Conference season and the re-assembly of Parliament where such a move will be depicted as a controversial one, which it is not. I propose therefore to make an announcement at lunchtime on 9th September. I understand that this date is acceptable to the Secretary of State for Scotland. I intend that the announcement will be in the terms of the attached which is drafted to indicate, in particular, that there will certainly be no effect on employment at the Clyde Submarine Base before Polaris is finally phased out in the late 1990s.

5. I am sending copies of this minute to the members of Misc 7, the Secretary of State for Scotland and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Ministry of Defence  
7th September 1982

*JN* *Ramm*  
John Nott

Approved by the Defence Secretary  
& signed in his absence



DRAFT

When we announced our decision to procure the Trident II strategic weapon system, we stressed that there would be great advantages of commonality with the United States. Our adoption of Trident II, which is to provide the United States with its next generation of submarine launched ballistic missile, will allow us to keep in step with the US well into the next century.

2. Since taking our decision we have been studying ways in which, whilst modernising our independent strategic deterrent, we might be able, by exploiting this commonality, to reduce the cost of the Trident programme and so benefit our conventional forces, and especially our naval forces. One area which we have been examining in this context is the arrangements for the support of our Trident missiles when Trident enters RN service in the mid 1990s. Until Polaris is phased out therefore, the arrangements for the support of our Polaris missiles at Coulport in Scotland will remain unchanged.

3. Trident represents a major technological advance over Polaris. Components will be more reliable with a longer life. The intention is that the missiles should remain in their tubes in our submarines throughout their 7-8 year commission. This is a much longer period than in the case of Polaris, and such periodic servicing as is necessary will be carried out in the submarines themselves by British personnel. It will not therefore be normally necessary for us to remove our Trident missiles from our submarines during their commission. In the case of Polaris, however, the missiles have to be removed from the submarines at more frequent intervals and maintenance carried out ashore.

4. This major difference between Trident and Polaris has accordingly enabled us to decide, in agreement with the US authorities, that we should use the planned US facilities at Kings Bay, Georgia, for the initial preparation for service of our Trident missiles, and their refurbishment at the end of the 7-8 year commissions of our submarines. On this basis we shall not need to proceed with our previous plans to build the



full range of facilities for this purpose at Loch Long in Scotland, although some new facilities will be required. These revised arrangements will apply only to the missiles themselves: our nuclear warheads will be held in the UK. This decision will produce considerable savings for the defence programme, amounting to several hundred million pounds in capital costs, with additional savings in running costs [which we could then devote to other parts of our defence programme].

*There is only one!*

5. The complete independence of the United Kingdom deterrent will not be affected. Full control will remain directly in the hands of the (British) Prime Minister. With the 7-8 year commission time planned for our Trident submarines, we will be able to keep three in the operating cycle for a high proportion of the time: a significant improvement over Polaris. And, with the long in-tube life of the missiles, a higher proportion of them will be in our submarines at all times compared with Polaris.

6. This decision will remove the need for the originally proposed construction programme at Loch Long. We shall keep the Trades Unions side representatives informed as to the employment implications of our decision as our plans for the longer term are developed. However, it should be stressed that there will be no change in the arrangements for processing our Polaris missiles at Coulport which will continue to undertake this task until Polaris is phased out in the late 1990s.