



TOP SECRET

*Defence*PRIME MINISTERFuture of the Strategic Deterrent
(MISC 7)

I attach a brief for the discussion in MISC 7 on 5th December.

2. The handling of this discussion presents peculiar difficulty. You had a message from President Carter on 15th October, to which you replied on 22nd October. In his message the President made it clear that we could have whatever we wanted, including MIRV'D C4s, but he also asked us to go a little slow with our approach to the Americans, because of their sensitivities in relation to the ratification of SALT II and TNF modernisation. His emissary (Dr. Aaron) suggested at that stage that we should not take our decision about what we wanted until just before you saw the President in December. You promised the President not to approach him formally until you saw him.

3. You will have to handle the meeting without disclosing the existence of President Carter's message. He specifically asked that it should not be made known to the Chiefs of Staff; so that you would in any case be unable to refer to it, if you acceded to the request by the Secretary of State for Defence that he should be accompanied at the meeting both by the Chief of the Defence Staff and by Professor Mason. You told the President that you would tell the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence of his message, and Sir John Hunt showed the exchange to them both. By implication this excludes the Home Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and you will therefore be unable to refer to the message or disclose its existence to them.

4. All this means that the meeting need not in fact speculate on American willingness to help us with this or that technical or logistic support; but you cannot disclose the reasons for this. You will have to handle the meeting on the basis of an assumption, for the purposes of debate, that there are no limitations on American willingness to help us - except possibly as regards timing.



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5. Although the most sensitive aspects of what Dr. Aaron said in his latest visit on 29th November have not been circulated to your colleagues, there is no reason why you should not say that the latest indications from the White House suggest that you will face a difficulty with the President over the timing of the announcement about any new agreement (and therefore of its formal conclusion). He is likely to want to see SALT II ratified by both parties first. ^{Since} ~~But~~ that may well not be until February or later, you seek your colleagues' agreement that you should do all you can to change his mind. That is later than we should wish. Delay will be dangerous in offering the Russians time to try to wreck the agreement; it will expose you to domestic pressures; and (though you clearly cannot say so in Washington) the nearer we get to the American elections the less we shall be able to rely on the President to help us effectively. You will therefore need to invite your colleagues to agree that you should urge the President to accept the earliest possible announcement - preferably soon after the House of Commons resumes after the Christmas recess.

6. The attached brief, unlike the above, can be drawn on fully in discussion with your colleagues. As you will see, it suggests that you inform the Cabinet on 13th December of what MISC 7 decides on 5th December. You will remember that Dr. Aaron made clear on 29th November that the Americans are worried about leaks and would prefer you to be less specific in talking to your colleagues. You may wish to consider not revealing to the Cabinet which system MISC 7 has decided we should go for, at least until after your visit to Washington and perhaps not until just before you are ready to make an announcement.

RA

(Robert Armstrong)

4th December 1979



Copy 2 held on TNF (Defence May 79)

Ref. A0940

PRIME MINISTER

Modernisation of NATO's Long Range Theatre Nuclear Forces
and the replacement of Polaris

As agreed at the MISC 7 meeting on 6th December, the Defence Secretary will make a statement at Cabinet on 13th December under Foreign Affairs on the outcome of the NATO Ministerial meeting on 12th December on the proposals to modernise NATO's theatre nuclear weapons, and the parallel arms control proposals.

2. Following his statement you may care to inform Cabinet that, at your meeting with President Carter on 17th December in Washington, you will be exploring the possibilities of a suitable replacement for the U. K. Polaris force in the early 1990s. The Americans are very anxious that, at this stage, you should not be specific about which particular possibility you may have in mind.

REA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

12th December 1979