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fa. Hunt

Ref. A0945

PRIME MINISTER

Visit to Washington - 17th December 1979

Future of the United Kingdom Nuclear Deterrent

I attach a brief on this subject for your meeting with President Carter on 17th December. The draft exchange of letters and communique have been discussed with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Treasury and Ministry of Defence.

RA

(Robert Armstrong)

13th December, 1979

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COPY NO 1

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON

17 DECEMBER 1979

FUTURE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM NUCLEAR DETERRENT

This will be the most important matter which you will wish to discuss with President Carter.

LINE TO TAKE

2. Most grateful for your message of 15 October and the assurance it contained. Would like to discuss the timing of the UK request and US response as you suggested.

Understand that you would prefer not to have a substantive request until SALT II is ratified. Prepared to hold back for this reason for a while.

Fully sympathise with your difficulties. But there are dangers either way. From my point of view, there will be strong pressure for an announceable decision by end January.

Failing that, can we agree now that matter should not be allowed to slip beyond February or (if necessary) March at the latest?

In any event, may need to consult you again in early 1980, in light of developments both in US (progress of SALT ratification) and in UK (public pressure for a decision). Things will get steadily more difficult as time passes.

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Meanwhile there are two things it would be helpful to settle now. First, in the light of the welcome affirmation of your intentions in your October message, may I take it that, when I do make a formal request to you for the MIRV'd Trident C4 system (less warhead) and related assistance, your answer will be affirmative? Second, pending the time when such a request is actually put, can the drafting of a formal exchange of letters be discussed between the senior officials concerned? Finally, suitable language needed to cover this subject in communiqué on my present visit. Drafts have been considered between White House and Cabinet Office. Suggest Brzezinski and Armstrong finalise.

BACKGROUND

3. Although it is not possible to specify a single date when the United Kingdom Polaris force will cease to be effective, the increasing risk of various forms of equipment failure point firmly towards starting to replace the force soon after 1990. Exhaustive studies of the problem suggest that the best replacement would be the Trident I (C4) (Multiple Independently Targettable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV)) ballistic missile system already in production in the United States. We would of course provide our own warheads. The necessary submarines would be built by us with United States assistance, as we did with Polaris.

4. President Carter wrote to you on 15 October (copy at Annex A) assuring you that his approach to modernising the United Kingdom strategic nuclear forces including the C4 option "will be affirmative". You replied to his message on 22 October (copy at Annex B).

5. President Carter laid great stress in his message to you on the delicate question of timing of the decisions. Subsequent discussions with Dr Aaron,

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Dr Brzezinski's assistant, suggest that this may be the main point at issue when you meet the President. From his point of view a Polaris replacement deal with Britain must be carefully timed in relation to two other issues. The first issue is the NATO decision on Theatre Nuclear Forces. Although this may be taken at the NATO meetings on 10/13 December, there will still be problems of parliamentary approval in some countries and possibly also of linkage with SALT II ratification. The second issue is SALT II ratification itself which he believes the Russians might link with any announced decision on a UK Polaris force replacement prior to ratification. He regards successful ratification as the "mainspring" of his Presidency; if it fails, he believes that he is significantly less likely to be re-elected. But the ratification process may drag on for months, and this could present you with a real problem on timing: the longer the decision is put off, the nearer will be the US Presidential election, and the greater the pressures on the President to postpone a decision until after the election.

6. From your point of view it would be highly desirable to obtain from President Carter on 17 December his clear-cut consent to your specific request, which can be publicly announced thereafter within a matter of weeks rather than months. He would prefer you to come to Washington without a formal request in your pocket and to discuss with him there how the whole issue should be handled, including the timing both of your formal request and of his reply.

PROPOSED HANDLING

7. You may care to start with the proposed 'Line to Take'. Thereafter your discussion might conveniently take the following shape:-

a. The importance which the United Kingdom attaches to maintaining a credible strategic deterrent force

Your exchanges of messages suggests that this point can be taken for granted.

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But you will wish to express appreciation for his positive attitude towards helping us.

b. Assignment to NATO

As we have made clear to the President's officials, who attached great importance to the point, the British successor force will be fully assigned to NATO on the same terms as Polaris, ie subject only to a "supreme national interest" clause.

c. Why the United Kingdom wants to replace Polaris with the Trident C4 (MIRV) system

Our studies have convinced us that the successor to the Polaris system should be another submarine force. The Trident C4 (MIRV) has a clear advantage over other possible systems; in range (so reducing anti-submarine warfare vulnerability);

in ability to deliver the number of warheads required; and in cost. As a system in service with the United States Navy, it would bring great technological, operational and logistic advantages. It seems highly probable that the President's advisers will confirm the validity, in technical terms, of the United Kingdom's assessment of its needs.

d. Size of the replacement force

It is unlikely that President Carter will wish to get to this degree of detail, but if he does you may care to say that you have not yet reached a final decision on this point.

e. Effect on United Kingdom conventional force levels of replacing Polaris

This is a matter on which the United States are showing great sensitivity

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at official level, although President Carter did not mention it specifically in his message to you of 15 October. Ideally he would like from you a categorical assurance that you will make such further increases in defence spending as are necessary to maintain the size and improve the effectiveness of United Kingdom conventional forces for the future. This is more than any NATO country could be expected to promise; but you will certainly wish to reaffirm the United Kingdom's strong support for the NATO long term defence programme, and to point to the general robustness of your Government's approach to matters of defence and the Alliance. You could also refer to the United Kingdom's absolute determination to replace Polaris as the top priority in our defence policy, with the corollary that our conventional forces are likely to benefit most if we can obtain the most cost effective replacement system available.

TIMING

8. This is likely to be the most difficult part of the discussion. President Carter almost certainly will wish to postpone a decision to an unsettled date possibly some months in the future. It is in the United Kingdom's interest to obtain firm United States agreement as soon as possible, not least because Presidential agreement some months hence when he may be nearer to ending his term of office will be of diminished value. How far you can press him must be a matter of political judgement but some of the arguments which you can use are as follows.

- i. With the passing weeks there is a strengthening domestic interest in the United Kingdom. We should all get the worst of several worlds if an impression gained ground that, although the United Kingdom wanted Trident C4, the United States were equivocating.

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- ii. The indications are that the Russians want to see SALT II ratified. Brezhnev certainly seems personally committed. If this is so, the Russians are unlikely to use an announced United States decision to help the United Kingdom over replacing Polaris as a reason for backing away from the SALT II agreement. Conversely if the Russians now believe that the ratification of SALT II is not in their interest they will have no difficulty in finding some excuse or other for not going through with the agreement, however the United States respond to the United Kingdom's request.
- iii. Until a decision has been announced the Soviet Union may regard the situation as still susceptible to their influence and seek in the process of SALT II ratification to make the position more difficult. They are less likely to seek to reverse an announced decision.
- iv. Within the Senate itself things might be more difficult if it was felt that precedence was being given to SALT II ratification over the interests of one of the main allies of the United States.

UPSHOT

- 9. Communique As you know (Mr Wade-Gery's minute of 30 November) the Americans have suggested two passages for the communique on your visit, covering both Polaris replacement and our attitude to conventional defence. We are sending them in advance of your visit slightly modified versions of these, as attached at Annex C. You should agree with the President that this should be finalised between Dr Brzezinski and myself in the course of 17/18 December.
- 10. Exchange of Letters We should like to start negotiating the documents which will enshrine the Anglo-American decision when it is reached and will

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thereafter be published on an agreed date. We took informal soundings of Dr Aaron last month. A draft of what we would like, not yet communicated to the Americans, is at Annex D. If possible you should agree with the President that I should give this to Dr Brzezinski and follow up as appropriate, without prejudice to your and his final decision on when the actual Exchange should take place.

TIME-TABLE

11. The formal agreement should clearly not be made and dated until just before it can be published; otherwise Parliament and Congress would ask why it was held back. It would be ideal if you could get the President to agree on 17 December to a reasonably early date, eg in the second half of January. A fall back would be to agree on a date beyond which it ought not to be allowed to slip; eg the end of February or (at a pinch) March. It is very desirable to get the President committed, as firmly as possible, to a date which is not too far in the future. If that proves impossible, you will need to reserve the right to return to the charge in early 1980, in the light of how slowly SALT ratification moves and how quickly domestic pressure for a decision builds up in Britain.

FOLLOW-UP

12. Details could be delegated to Dr Brzezinski on his side and myself on yours; with a minimum number of departmental advisers being involved, by agreement if appropriate. As soon as formal agreement is reached, detailed work should urgently begin between the relevant experts. We hope the President will agree to two parallel operations here:

- a. Polaris Sales Agreement This should be up-dated, by the Project Officers designated under its provisions, to cover our purchase of Trident C4. Technical discussions should be referred to the Joint

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Steering Task Group established under the Polaris Sales Agreement.

b. Nuclear Materials We shall need to negotiate separately for our needs, of which the President's advisers are already aware; for an appropriate amendment to the 1958 United Kingdom/United States Defence Agreement, on the model of the amendment already agreed to cover our needs under the current Polaris Improvement Programme (CHEVALINE).

Cabinet Office

12 December 1979

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THE WHITE HOUSE

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WASHINGTON

October 15, 1979

Dear Madame Prime Minister:

As we go forward in the North Atlantic Alliance toward a decision on Theater Nuclear Forces, I want to share with you my views on the decisions which you and I will make concerning cooperation in the future modernization of the British nuclear deterrent.

First, I can assure you that my approach to the question of modernizing your strategic forces -- including the option of the C-4 Missile system -- will be affirmative and fully in keeping with our traditional relationship of close cooperation in the strategic nuclear field.

Second, with respect to the delicate question of timing of the decisions, I believe it is extremely important to avoid providing any pretext which either the Soviets or some of our more reluctant friends could seize upon to damage the prospects of an Alliance consensus on long-range theater nuclear deployments by the end of the year. I believe that too early an exposure of our plans regarding the British deterrent would provide an excuse for some of our friends not to assume their fair share both of LRTNF deployments and of the responsibility for the corresponding decisions.

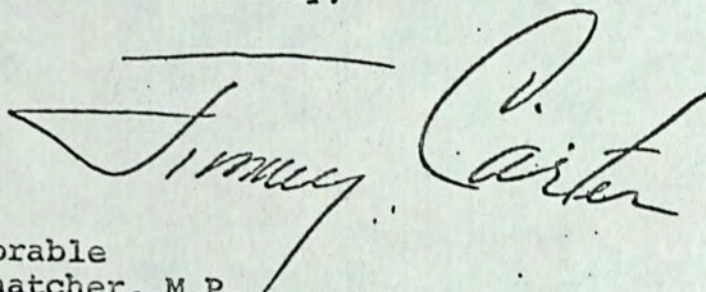
Therefore, I suggest we discuss this issue, including the timing of any British request and American response, when we meet in December. I would also propose that to minimize the possibility of inadvertent disclosure, we keep to a minimum discussions between our respective officials, civilian and military.

I know I can count on your understanding of these timing considerations just as you can be confident

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of my appreciation of the contribution of
the British deterrent to the security of the
Alliance and of the need for its modernization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jimmy Carter". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

The Right Honorable
Margaret R. Thatcher, M.P.
Prime Minister
London

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER

Thank you for your message of 15 October, about military nuclear matters, which David Aaron delivered to John Hunt during his very useful visit to London last week.

2. I warmly welcome what you say about your affirmative approach to the modernisation of the British strategic deterrent. As you know, my colleagues and I have not yet decided which system we would wish to go for. But it is very good to know that any of the alternatives under consideration could in practice be made available to us; and that in particular this would (if we so decide) cover the complete C4 missile system including its MIRV capability.
3. Thank you also for your frank explanation of your concern about the delicate issues of timing involved in the interaction between decisions in this field and the important decisions which the North Atlantic Alliance needs to reach on Long Range Theatre Nuclear Forces. Your point is well taken. As you know we are giving you full support on the LRTNF question and I shall be glad to co-operate with you in seeking to avert the dangers you identify.
4. Against this background I am happy to agree that no British request on the strategic deterrent should be put to you before we meet in Washington in December, and that we should discuss the matter then. To avoid any misunderstanding, and in the same spirit of frankness, I should make clear that at that meeting I shall need to discuss the substance of the strategic modernisation issue, as well as procedure and timing. I am confident that we shall then be able to settle both the substantive question and the problem of the timing of any announcement. The latter will clearly depend on how other matters, including LRTNF decision-taking, have progressed in the interval.

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5. Meanwhile, I fully agree that knowledge of your message to me and of my present reply should be confined to a very narrow circle indeed. On our side I shall tell Peter Carrington and Francis Pym (but not the Chiefs of Staff). The documents themselves will be seen by no-one outside No 10 Downing Street and the Cabinet Office; and I suggest that any communications on the subject should be confined to the direct White House/Cabinet Office link.

22 October 1979

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ANNEX C

DRAFT LANGUAGE FOR
US/UK DECEMBER 17 COMMUNIQUE

The two leaders agreed on the importance of maintaining a credible British strategic deterrent force and US/UK strategic co-operation. The leaders agreed that their governments should continue their discussions of the most appropriate means of achieving these objectives for the future.

The President and Prime Minister discussed the importance of increased efforts to strengthen NATO's defences, both nuclear and conventional. The President reviewed the outlines of the US five year defense plan, noting that in order to carry out that plan the US will be increasing defence spending, in real terms, steadily over the next five years. *

The Prime Minister reaffirmed the UK's strong support for the NATO long term defence programme and noted that the United Kingdom had increased its defence spending in recent years, and planned to make further increases to improve the effectiveness of United Kingdom conventional forces, including provision of modernised equipment and war reserves.

* See addendum
attached

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DRAFT LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT

At our meeting in Washington on the 17th of December, 1979, I pointed out that the United Kingdom Government attached great importance to the maintenance of a nuclear deterrent capability. It will be necessary to replace the present Polaris force in the early 1990s and I explained that, having reviewed the options, the Government had concluded that the Trident 1 weapon system best meets the need to maintain a viable deterrent capability into the 21st century. I therefore asked you if the United States Government would be prepared, in continuation of the cooperation which has existed between our Governments in this field since the Polaris Sales Agreement of the 6th of April, 1963, to supply, on a continuing basis, Trident 1 missiles, equipment and supporting services, in a manner similar to that in which Polaris was supplied. In addition I asked if the United States Government would be willing to amend further the Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes of the 3rd of July, 1958, in respect of the supply of special nuclear materials for the United Kingdom deterrent programme.

I further explained that the United Kingdom Government would wish to purchase sufficient missiles, complete with multiple independently targettable re-entry vehicles and less only the warheads themselves, together with equipment and supporting services, on a continuing basis, to introduce and maintain a force of British submarines, close coordination being maintained between the Executive Agencies of the two Governments in order to assure compatibility of equipment; and would also wish to procure such special nuclear materials as were needed, and were beyond their own capacity to provide, to enable them to produce the warheads.

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I made it clear that the successor to the Polaris force will be assigned to NATO, like Polaris; and that, except where the United Kingdom Government may decide that supreme national interests are at stake, the successor force will be used for the purposes of international defence of the Western Alliance in all circumstances. In our discussions we agreed that cooperation in the modernisation of the United Kingdom nuclear deterrent in this way would be consistent with the present and prospective international obligations of both parties.

In particular, I emphasised that the United Kingdom continued to give whole-hearted support to the NATO Long-Term Defence Programme, with its emphasis on the strengthening of conventional forces. I noted that the United Kingdom Government had substantially increased its defence spending, in accordance with NATO's collective policy, and planned to make further such increases in the future in order to improve the effectiveness of its all-round contribution to Alliance deterrence and defence.

You indicated that the United States Government was prepared to meet this request and you agreed that as the next step the United States Government would receive technical and financial missions to pursue these matters, using the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement where appropriate.

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Thank you for your letter of _____ recording our discussions in Washington about a successor to the United Kingdom's Polaris force.

I confirm that the United States Government is prepared to meet your request to purchase the Trident 1 weapon system on the basis you describe, and to receive technical and financial missions to pursue these matters, using the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement where appropriate.

I also confirm that the United States Government is prepared to consider proposals for the further amendment of the Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes of the 3rd of July, 1958, in respect of the supply of special nuclear materials for the United Kingdom deterrent programme.

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Addendum to Annex C of the Prime Minister's Washington Brief of 12th December 1979 on the Future of the United Kingdom Nuclear Deterrent

The Americans have now (14th December) suggested revised wording for the communique passage on the conventional defence effort. We propose to reply that this is acceptable subject to one re-revision.

2. The following text of the earlier British draft, as in Annex C, shows in footnotes the changes proposed. Note d is the only major point.

- Note a The President and Prime Minister discussed the importance of increased efforts to strengthen NATO's defences, both nuclear and conventional.
- Note b The President reviewed the outlines of the US Five Year Defense Plan, noting that in order to carry out that plan the US will be increasing defence spending, in real terms, steadily over the next five years.
- Note c The Prime Minister reaffirmed the UK's strong support for the NATO Long Term Defence Programme and noted that the UK had increased its defence spending in recent years, and planned to make further increases to improve the effectiveness of UK conventional forces, including provision of modernised equipment and war reserves.
- Note d
- Note e

NOTES

- a. US revised draft proposes to start "In this connection [referring to the immediately preceding paragraph on the deterrent] the President and ". This is acceptable.
- b. US revised draft proposes "... reviewed the new US Five Year ..." Acceptable.
- c. US revised draft proposes "The President and Prime Minister reaffirmed their strong support for the NATO Long Term Defence Programme" Acceptable.

- d. US revised draft proposes "and for the NATO commitment to a 3 per cent real growth in defence spending. The Prime Minister noted plans for further significant increases in the UK defence budget to improve". Acceptable subject to one British counter-amendment to the first part of the new text, designed to remove the inaccurate reference to a NATO commitment, as follows: "and for the NATO aim of a 3 per cent real growth in annual defence spending".
- e. US revised draft adds a new final sentence as follows:
"The Prime Minister agreed that America's European Allies must share equitably in any collective defence build-up to meet the needs of the common defence." Acceptable; this is a paraphrase of something the US Defense Secretary said recently at a NATO meeting, on which he received full British support.

Cabinet Office
14 December 1979

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Ref: B05877

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

c Mr Whitmore ✓

Briefing Meeting on the Deterrent

I attach an addendum to Annex C of the Prime Minister's brief on the deterrent, which I will show with the brief to participants in this afternoon's meeting. The acceptability of the new American wording, subject to the one change noted, has been cleared with the Ministry of Defence and Treasury at official level this morning.

R. L WADE-GERY

14th December 1979

R L WADE-GERY

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- Note d Defence Programme and noted that the UK had increased its defence spending in recent years, and planned to make further increases
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Cabinet Office
14 December 1979

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ANNEX D

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In particular, I emphasised that the United Kingdom continued to give whole-hearted support to the NATO Long-Term Defence Programme, with its emphasis on the strengthening of conventional forces. I noted that the United Kingdom Government had substantially increased its defence spending, in accordance with NATO's collective policy, and planned to make further such increases in the future in order to improve the effectiveness of its all-round contribution to Alliance deterrence and defence.

You indicated that the United States Government was prepared to meet this request and you agreed that as the next step the United States Government would receive technical and financial missions to pursue these matters, using the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement where appropriate.

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Thank you for your letter of _____ recording our discussions in Washington about a successor to the United Kingdom's Polaris force.

I confirm that the United States Government is prepared to meet your request to purchase the Trident 1 weapon system on the basis you describe, and to receive technical and financial missions to pursue these matters, using the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement where appropriate.

I also confirm that the United States Government is prepared to consider proposals for the further amendment of the Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes of the 3rd of July, 1958, in respect of the supply of special nuclear materials for the United Kingdom deterrent programme.

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Top copy of letter
on USA : Nov 79: Visit
to US Policy 6A



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PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
SIR FRANK COOPER GCB CMG

PUS/79/1149
61/1/38

Ly Ann

14 December 1979

C A Whitmore Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Dear Chris

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON

At the Prime Minister's briefing meeting this afternoon the question was raised of the timetable for procurement of any successor system. I attach a note on this. Also attached is a note on defence equipment trade with America.

Yours sincerely
Frank Cooper

FRANK COOPER

On Defence: Pt 2: Future
of UK Nuclear Retention

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SUCCESSOR TO POLARIS: TIMESCALE

No-one would expect to have a successor system operational in less than 10 years. Detailed technical discussions and negotiations with the US and with Industry will be necessary before we can produce a detailed programme and a critical path. An informed judgment, on the basis of present information, is that it will take at least 11 years from a political decision to proceed with the programme, to the deployment of the first submarine. The main factors are:

a. The submarine

There will need to be a major feasibility study in the US, lasting a year, before we can decide which kind of submarine mid section (the missile compartment) to select. This will be followed by a detailed design stage and the placing of an order in 1983. Building is estimated to take 6½ years, to be followed by trials and work up, leading to first deployment in 1991. This timetable will no doubt be refined but it is unlikely to be compressed. The submarine design will be very much more complex than for the original Polaris boats (the first of which was deployed in just under 7 years), and moreover, intramural and extramural design and building resources are more limited.

b. The warhead

This will be a major programme involving project definition study, a detailed engineering definition phase, a 4 year development programme, and some 3 years production (during which the production rate would be built up) before the first outload of re-entry vehicles is available. The total programme will amount to 10 years.

c. Depot facilities

The technical complexity and explosive content of the C4 missiles will demand a new depot adjacent to Coulpport (Loch Long). The construction work will be very extensive, demanding and expensive and the site itself is on difficult terrain and remote. A planning inquiry might be needed. Detailed survey and design work will need to be done before construction starts, and before the building can be started a road network will need to be built. The programme must also allow for a period of workup after construction is complete. Assuming an immediate decision to proceed with a successor system, road construction would start in 1981 and building construction in 1983; construction could be completed in 1990 at best.

2. Currently planning is stalled (though "technical" relations with the US are extremely good). There is an urgent need for detailed technical discussions. An initial exchange of letters between the US and the UK Governments would need to be followed by 50 days notice being given to Congress. The details of a revised Polaris Sales Agreement will need to be examined but it might be possible for such discussions to proceed in parallel with the "laying". In short, we are faced with planning blight.



Defence
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Ref. A0946

Copy No. 1 of 3 Copies

MR. WHITMORE

MMH
Bxi

Future of the United Kingdom Nuclear Deterrent

Atkinson

Sir Frank Cooper wrote to you on this subject on 10th December, copying his letter to Sir Robert Armstrong and enclosing "a piece of paper" dealing with the problem of the timing of an announcement about a 'successor' system, in relation to the decisions now being taken about the modernisation of NATO's long range theatre nuclear forces, and the current Congressional debate on SALT II ratification. You may like to have some comments on it.

2. The handling of this problem is the central theme of the brief on the future of the United Kingdom nuclear deterrent which Sir Robert Armstrong sent you on 13th December for the use of the Prime Minister when she meets President Carter on 17th December in Washington. Sir Frank Cooper approved that brief in substance on 11th December, and so I think that you should regard it as overtaking the contents of his "piece of paper", particularly as regards the 'line to take' for the purposes of the oral briefing on Friday, 14th December, and the subsequent meeting with the President.

3. On points of detail, our main brief points out the obscurity of the real relationship between the decision we are seeking, and SALT II ratification. But it may obviously be difficult for the Prime Minister to press the argument. The practical arguments for an early decision in paragraphs 6 and 7 are real enough from a Ministry of Defence point of view, but they seem unlikely to carry much weight with the United States who will say that a delay of perhaps 2-3 months will not make much difference. Similarly a reference to the increasing risk of leakage may not be very persuasive, however true.

4. British domestic pressures apart, the most powerful (and usable) argument against delay is the danger that the Russians will make Polaris replacement the subject of their next major international propaganda campaign, following their success over the neutron bomb and failure (or success) over LRTNF.

MJV.

(M. J. Vile)

13th December, 1979

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PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE
SIR FRANK COOPER GCB CM G

PERSONAL

PUS/79/1131

10 December 1979

Clive Whitmore Esq
No. 10 Downing Street

*NBPM in the light of M
Vie's memo A0946 J
13 Dec 1979
JMS
13xiii*

Frank Cooper

During a discussion last week my Secretary of State - who is now in Brussels - said to the Prime Minister that he would like to give her "a piece of paper". This I enclose.

A copy goes to Robert Armstrong.

*Yours man
Frank Cooper*

FRANK COOPER

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Problem

1 Relationship of any announcement about a "successor" system with LRTNF and SALT II ratification.

Considerations

2 Waiting for LRTNF decision is no great problem and makes sense, barring unforeseen snags, in Brussels this week. SALT II is a different matter. Ratification could well take until late February (optimistically) April (more likely).

3 Meanwhile, subject increasingly high interest and high profile in UK - eg major Panorama programme 10 December (we have told US of this).

4 Inescapable risk of leakage as more people come to know, question or guess about decision either taken or apparently not taken. This will increase after Prime Minister's visit to Washington. Risk of confused position - wide open to critical exploitation (next target for Russian propaganda, SALT opponents, anti-nuclear lobby etc).

5 Can UK domestic, especially Parliamentary, interest be reined in? Perhaps all right until early in New Year but increasingly difficult, after Parliament resumes in January (middle or late)? How long can a nuclear debate be held off?

6 UK has been pressed (subject to White House confirmation which is being sought) to commit money very soon on long lead items (this is quite normal for sub contractors in projects of this kind). Difficult to justify without firm decision and impossible without political agreement. Difficulty compounded by need for President's proposal to supply weaponry to lie before Congress for 50 days.

7 Difficult to argue that we can yet identify crucial programme deadline in UK but difficulty increases sharply if we cannot plan and prepare with US experts. 1990 seems distant but much to be done, and other programme resources to be moulded around this one - eg submarine building; PSA effort at Coulport. There is also "planning blight" on rest of defence programme.

8 Relationship with SALT II obscure. What is it? Does it offer options? Danger in leaving situation open for indeterminate period. Russians given clear field for disruptive propaganda and action (though we can avoid upsetting them). On other hand, Senate anti-SALT lobby may make trouble if they get wind of concealment, temporising or apparent weakness in helping Allies. Supply of "Successor" could also help to convince waverers in Senate if announced at judicious time.

Possible Action

9 The Prime Minister might perhaps let the President know in advance of her visit that she could agree to distance announcement from LRTNF decision in December but indicate that there are political and practical

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for UK in delay for more than a relatively short period. She might add that she would wish to discuss position carefully during her visit, indicating that it would be very hard for her to hold position at this end for a long time, that nature of linkage with SALT II is not immediately clear to her, and that it would be necessary for her to achieve as positive an outcome as possible.

10 This positive outcome should include reaffirmation of President's previous statements; confirmation about the supply of MIRVs; no precise timing linkage to the ratification of SALT II; and conditional agreement to an exchange of letters.

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