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MO 18/1/1

Prime Minister.

On the whole an encouraging progress report, though there remain a number of potential problems.

PRIME MINISTER*Amend to**John*CHEVALINE

19ii

This minute reports on progress on the Chevaline programme over the last twelve months.

2. The period has been one of solid technical achievement, particularly in the development programme, which is now nearing completion. The flight trials programme is now well advanced and has gone satisfactorily; there were four flight trials during 1979 from a pad at Cape Canaveral, and although one of these was a "non test" owing to failure of the US second stage motor (a failure unrelated to the Chevaline modifications), the overall results are most encouraging. We are about to embark on the next stage of the flight trials programme - a series of three firings of tactical standard missiles at Cape Canaveral; these are planned for March and May 1980.
3. Despite the complexity of the system most of the technical problems of the development programme have now been overcome. The basic concept of the design is sound and there is every confidence that the accuracy and penetration requirements will be met. There is also confidence in the basic safety features. The emphasis of the work has now largely shifted from development to production and preparation for in-Service operation. It is in these areas that the consequences of the industrial disputes and staff shortages which have beset us are principally felt. The schedule for working up the depot at Coulport, where missiles are assembled and stored, has been disrupted by industrial disputes and delay in the completion of buildings, but special measures have been taken to meet the requirements of the trial firings from a submarine (scheduled for November 1980) and the Acceptance firings (in early 1981). Provided that there are no unforeseen setbacks the first operational deployment, initially with a partial outload, will proceed on schedule in mid-1981.
4. Although the production of in-Service hardware has been disrupted by industrial disputes, the present assessment is that extramural production will not be a holding factor.

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Production of re-entry bodies and decoys at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston, and the Royal Ordnance Factory Burghfield, remains an area of concern. Since I minuted you (on 1st November last year) about this, there has been some improvement in the staffing situation. Provided that this improvement is sustained; that there are no further technical or industrial problems to hold up production; that arrangements now in hand for the loan of fissile materials by the US are confirmed; and that the Plutonium component manufacturing line at Aldermaston is brought back on stream by the end of this year, the programme for initial outload and continuous deployment should be met. The provisos are, however, of critical importance and I am keeping a close eye on the situation.

5. A new factor is the need to extend the refit of HMS REVENGE (the second submarine to deploy with Chevaline, thus achieving a continuous patrol capability) in order to deal with problems over the levels of radio-activity in her reactor system. It is now unlikely that REVENGE will be available to deploy with modified missiles before February 1983. Provided that the intramural production programme is met, a full outload of missiles should be available by then.

6. We have continued to monitor closely developments in the ABM defences that Chevaline is designed to penetrate.

it remains the Ministry of Defence assessment that Chevaline will have an acceptable penetration capability during its Service life.

7. So far a total of £720M has been spent or committed. There is likely to be little contingency in hand because inflation in the high technology sector of the engineering industry is much higher than the national rate and the backlog of work caused by industrial disputes will have to be caught up at the new higher pay rates. Nevertheless we are on target to remain within the approved project cost of £935M at 1979 Survey Prices, which is the sum our predecessors agreed as the basis for the project to be funded to completion. This sum will become just over £1000M after adjustment to 1980 Survey Prices.

8. As you know I revealed in general terms the main features of the Chevaline project in the House of Commons on 24th January. I believe the public impact has been favourable to perceptions of our deterrent capability and resolve.



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9. In summary, therefore, the development programme continues satisfactorily. Production and preparation for in-service use are advancing and provided there is no major unforeseen setback a system with acceptable performance and capability will be available for service within the cost authorised. Possible delay to the programme, principally because of intramural production difficulties remains a source of concern but present indications are that the timetable for initial outload and continuous deployment should be met. I will inform you if there is any significant change in this position.

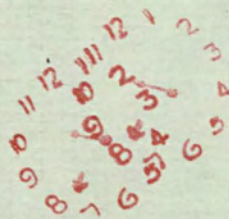
10. I am copying this to our MISC 7 colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'R. J. ...', written over a faint 'CONFIDENTIAL' watermark.

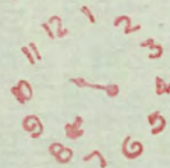
Ministry of Defence

18 March 1980

~~19 MAR 1950~~



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19 MAR 1950



SECRET



c. c. CO
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FCO
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Defence

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

20 March, 1980.

Chevaline

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 18 March, 1980, about progress on the Chevaline programme over the last twelve months.

She was glad to learn that the development programme is continuing satisfactorily, though she has noted that there remain a number of potential difficulties.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Members of MISC 7, and to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

IC. A. WHITMORE

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

SECRET

GB

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E13

2 PPs



1. *M. [unclear]*
to see.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~938 7022~~ 218 2111/3

2. file.

[Handwritten initials]
12v

MO 18/1/1

7th May 1980

[Handwritten signature]
Minister

[Handwritten initials]

9.40.

[Handwritten initials]

Dear C. line,

The series of Chevaline-related Polaris flight trials, which began in September 1977, is due to continue with the eleventh launch from Cape Canaveral on 19th May.

Publicity arrangements will be the same as for the last launch, which took place on 11th April. Notification will be issued locally to the media two days in advance of the launch but with publication embargoed until the time of the launch; no post-launch release will be issued unless something goes wrong. We shall do the same in the UK.

Our updated Press Office brief will again be used to deal with any subsequent enquiries from the media.

The No 10 Press Office will again be told of the result of the trial.

I am copying this letter to George Walden (FCO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

[Handwritten signature]
B. M. Norbury

(B M NORBURY)

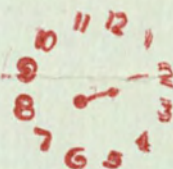
C A Whitmore Esq

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone (01-947 1001)



E-8 MAY 1980





MO 18/1/1

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
 MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
 Telephone 01-~~932 7022~~ 218 2111/3

27th March 1980

1. NBPM
2. *My copy*
To see
3. PA.

KW
28/3

Dear Michael,

CHEVALINE FLIGHT TRIAL

The series of Chevaline-related Polaris flight trials, which began in September 1977, is due to continue with the tenth launch from Cape Canaveral on 10th April. This is the trial which was originally scheduled for 7th March (Brian Norbury's letter of 14th February) but had to be postponed because of a fault in the missile, unrelated to the Chevaline development.

Publicity arrangements will be the same as for the last launch, which took place on 21st March and was highly successful. Notification will be issued locally to the media two days in advance of the launch but with publication embargoed until the time of the launch; no post-launch release will be issued unless something goes wrong. We shall do the same in the UK.

Our updated Press Office brief will be used to deal with any subsequent enquiries from the media. Your Press Office will again be told of the result of the trial.

I am copying this letter to George Walden (FCO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,
David Omand

(D B OMAND)
 Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01 924 3033



27 MAR 1960



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Reference

10 DOWNING STREET

22 February 1980

John Anson

*John
22/2*

CHEVALINE TRIAL FLIGHTS

Maybe I have read it wrong, but Norbury's letter to Clive Whitmore of 14 February (copy enclosed) looks a little as if this Press Office will be told of the results of the next series of trials automatically.

I wrote to John Ledlie on 23 October saying that, in future, we only wish to be informed of the results of these trials during silent hours when there is a serious mishap.

I would be grateful for a reassurance from you that your up-dated Press Office briefing, mentioned in Norbury's letter, includes this particular revision.

Murray Hanks

Thomas Charles V. A.

C V ANSON

I S McDonald Esq
Deputy Chief of Public Relations
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2HB

22 FEB 1960



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2
/



M. Jeffrey

To see.

MW

18ii

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~938 7023~~ 218 2111/3

MO 18/1/1

14th February 1980

Dear Clive,

MW

From: Minister

To see.

MW

14ii

CHEVALINE TRIAL FLIGHTS

My Secretary of State has asked me to let you know that the series of Chevaline-related Polaris flight trials, which began in September 1977, is due to continue with the ninth and tenth launches from Cape Canaveral on 7th and 20th March.

Publicity arrangements will be the same as for the last launch on 8th November. A notification (updated to take account of my Secretary of State's recent announcement in the House) will be issued locally to the media two days in advance of each launch but with publication embargoed until the time of the launch; no post-launch release will be issued unless something goes wrong.

Our Press Office brief, which has also been updated, will be used to deal with any subsequent enquiries from the media.

Your Press Office will again be told of the results of the trials.

I am copying this letter to George Walden (FCO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours and,
Bryan

(B M NORBURY)

C A Whitmore Esq
10 Downing Street

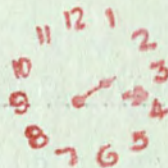
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Telephone 01-833033



14 FEB 1980



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Yours faithfully,
[illegible signature]

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14 FEB 1980