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File A4



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

4 March 1981

Dear Brian,

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES : AV8B AND HAWK

I attach a copy of a letter from Sir Austin Pearce of British Aerospace about AV8B and Hawk and of my reply.

I am sending you copies of this correspondence particularly with Mr Nott's forthcoming visit to Washington in mind. As you will see, I have referred to it in my letter to Sir Austin Pearce.

Yours sincerely,

John White

Brian Norbury Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

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File AW

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

4 March 1981

Dear Sir Austin,

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 16 February 1981 with which you sent briefing papers on the Harrier/AV8B and the Hawk programmes. She was glad to have these as part of her briefing for her recent visit to the United States.

While the Prime Minister was in Washington, she took every opportunity to encourage the Americans to buy British defence equipment. As she reported in her statement of 2 March to the House of Commons, she and the US Defense Secretary agreed that there should be better balance in defence purchases between this country and in the United States. Mr Weinberger told her that the Department of Defense were seeking the approval of Congress for financial provision in FY 1982 for the development and production of the AV8B. In her discussions with Mr Weinberger the Prime Minister emphasised the excellent qualities of the Hawk trainer aircraft and the Defense Secretary took note of what she said.

As I am sure you know, Mr Nott is hoping to visit the United States in the next two or three weeks for talks with Mr Weinberger and other US officials, and I am sure he will be following up the Prime Minister's efforts to persuade the Americans to buy more British defence equipment.

Yours sincerely,

Alwi Whitman.

Sir Austin Pearce CBE

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