

Alan - for you? No letter is classified

RP

Kay
15/4.



file cc 19
RCP

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

15 April 1983

Dear Richard

Thank you for your letter of 29 March about HARM and ALARM. As you say, the Government are now approaching the point of decision between the competing systems, though no decision has been taken yet. Your comments on behalf of the Aviation Committee are therefore timely, and will be taken into account when the decision is made.

I am sure you will understand that, at this sensitive stage, it would be wrong for me to comment on the Committee's preference for ALARM. However, in fairness I should point out that some of the factual statements in your letter are open to question.

Yours sincerely
Michael Colvin

Michael Colvin, Esq, MP.

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1

Telephone 01-~~236 7922~~ 218 6169

D/S of S/PS/10

14th April 1983

cc 15

Dear Willie,

*Physre
14/4*

With your letter of 30th March you enclosed a letter to the Prime Minister from Michael Colvin MP on the question of HARM versus ALARM, and you asked for a draft reply for the Prime Minister to send.

HARM and ALARM are competing weapon systems to meet the RAF's requirement for an air-launched anti-radiation homing missile, to be carried on the Tornado and used to destroy hostile radar defences en route to the target area. HARM, an American system manufactured by Texas Instruments, is already fully developed and a decision is about to be taken on the launching of full production; ALARM, from British Aerospace, is still at the design stage. There are in effect three proposals, since HARM has been offered to us either as a straight purchase from the USA or on a co-production basis with Lucas undertaking a substantial share of the work in Britain.

A good deal of money and work is at stake, and the Parliamentary lobbying, mainly on behalf of ALARM but by no means entirely so because of the Lucas interest, has been intense. My Secretary of State is currently considering how to proceed, but there is no reason why Mr Colvin should not be told that the Aviation Committee's views will be taken into account in the decision. However, while it would be wrong at this stage to give any substantive reaction to the Aviation Committee's preference for ALARM, it would equally be wrong to leave Mr Colvin with the impression that his statement of facts is accepted. For example, his statement that ALARM beats HARM on price by a wide margin is incorrect; the opposite is true. And although British Aerospace claim that ALARM will be ready in 1987, this Ministry's assessment is that a date of 1989 is more realistic. While it would be premature to make these points in the reply to Mr Colvin, the attached draft registers the point that not all the statements in the letter are factually accurate.

*Yours ever,
B P Neale*

(B P NEALE)

W F S Rickett Esq

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D R A F T

From: Prime Minister
To: Michael Colvin MP

Thank you for your letter of 29 March about HARM and ALARM. As you say, the Government are now approaching the point of decision between the competing systems, though no decision has been taken yet. Your comments on behalf of the Aviation Committee are therefore timely, and will be taken into account when the decision is made.

2. I am sure you will understand that, at this sensitive stage, it would be wrong for me to comment on the Committee's preference for ALARM. However, in fairness I should point out that some of the factual statements in your letter are open to question.

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1003



13/4
Michael COLVIN,
MP

file

BPC



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

30 March 1983

I enclose a copy of a letter to the
Prime Minister from Michael Colvin, M.P.

I should be grateful for a draft reply
for the Prime Minister to send to Mr. Colvin
by 13 April please.

W. F. S. RICKETT

Barry Neale, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence

HL

From: Michael Colvin. M.P.

*John ed 30/3
cc IGC*



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

29th March, 1983

Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP,
Prime Minister,
No.10 Downing Street,
London SW1.

Dear Primi Minister

HARM v ALARM

As you are probably aware, the HARM versus ALARM debate is coming to a climax. Statements have been made in both Houses on several occasions, and we are given to understand that the decision on which to purchase is likely to be made by the end of this month.

I am writing as Chairman of our Aviation Committee to say that we have had a very close look at the relative merits of the British Aerospace product, ALARM, and the Texas Instruments/Lucas Aerospace HARM competitor, and there has been intensive lobbying by both consortia. All things being equal - which they are not - I come down in favour of ALARM for the following reasons:-

ALARM meets the RAF operational requirements, is affordable and has technical and operational growth potential. It also meets the frequently stated ministerial requirement in that it is a highly exportable product, thus generating long-term production as well as valuable foreign exchange.

ALARM maintains high level anti-radar and seeker technology and design teams in the UK, and has a recognisable technological spin-off for downstream missile and commercial projects. It will also provide jobs for 3,000 in short-term and about 1,800 in the longer term production phase.

ALARM is a 97% British product, with sufficient overseas content to promote its use in Europe as a standard NATO weapon. It is also a fixed price bid, with British Aerospace willing to accept penalties - and beats HARM on price by a wide margin.



29th March, 1983

ALARM enjoys a weight advantage also, but HARM will be ready one year earlier - 1986 - and that could be crucial from the defence point of view, because there is growing anxiety about Warsaw Pact ground defences, particularly the new generation of SAMs, and the radar-controlled gun dish.

I would hope that if they got the order, British Aerospace and their sub-contractors could narrow the delivery date.

On balance, therefore, I feel ALARM has the edge over its competitor, and of course, it is all British.

John Searley

Richard [unclear]