



MO 26/7

PRIME MINISTERSURFACE-TO-SURFACE GUIDED WEAPONS FOR THE ROYAL NAVY

We are due to consider the choice of anti-radar missile for the Royal Air Force on Wednesday 20th July. The purpose of this minute is to let you know, by way of background to next week's discussion, that we shall have to make a decision in the fairly near future on a surface-to-surface guided weapon (SSGW) for ships of the Royal Navy.

2. The main contenders are:

- a. The McDonnell-Douglas Harpoon, with a Texas Instruments seeker head. Submarine-launched and air-launched versions of this American weapon are already in service with the Royal Navy and RAF respectively.
- b. A sea-launched version of British Aerospace's Sea Eagle, with a Marconi Space and Defence Systems (MSDS) seeker head. Sea Eagle is already under development in an air-launched version for RAF and Royal Navy aircraft.
- c. The French Exocet MM40, an improved version of the missile currently in service in Royal Navy surface ships.
- d. The Franco-Italian Otomat missile, with the same MSDS seeker head as Sea Eagle.



3. The choice involves many of the same issues as face us in deciding between HARM and ALARM. There are complex and possibly conflicting arguments about cost, operational effectiveness, the extent to which improved versions of the weapons are operationally acceptable, the dates when they can be introduced into service, and the industrial, employment, sales and international issues that arise.

4. It will be a little time before I can complete a definitive assessment of the four options I have listed above. When I have done so and when I am satisfied that all the considerations have been fully explored and weighed, I shall be putting a recommendation to my colleagues. In the meanwhile I do not wish to defer a decision on the anti-radar missile for the RAF; and I am sending you this minute now only so that you are aware that a decision on a surface-to-surface guided weapon for the Royal Navy will be needed in the not too distant future.

5. I am sending a copy of this minute to other members of the Cabinet and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

West

Ministry of Defence
15th July 1983

5 JUL 1933

