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PRIME MINISTER:  
meeting with Warren  
Hawksley, MP: Jan 1986



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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

6 January 1986

Article Attached.

Rather belatedly I've noted an article in the 14 December issue of Jane's Defence Weekly about the apparent intention of the Berlin Brigade to buy German APCs for use in Berlin. MOD Ministers are quoted as expressing concern at this decision.

It would be helpful to know how this matter now stands.

BF |

(CHARLES POWELL)

Dennis Brennan, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

BM.



### GEC scoops Plessey

GEC recorded one victory over rival Plessey last week — even though it wasn't the one envisaged.

With the two companies locked in a take-over fight following GEC's offer to Plessey to consider merger, Marconi Radar announced that it had won a contract to supply a £4 million air traffic control radar to Jordan's joint civil/air force base at Queen Alia airport near Amman, against strong competition, including Plessey.

### Israel's warning over F-5s

THE SAUDI Air Force has stationed F-5 fighters at its Tabuk air base. Lt Gen Moshe Levi, the Israeli CoS, has revealed that the US-made fighters are replacing the old British-made Lightnings.

The Israeli revelation is part of a campaign to warn the USA and Western countries not to supply the Saudis with new aircraft and modern weaponry.

They also point out that the Tabuk air base is only 160 km from Israeli borders, and might be used against the Israeli Air Force and sensitive installations in the Negev Desert.

## Thais offered captured tanks

ISRAEL HAS OFFERED to sell Thailand at least 100 or more captured Soviet-built T-54/T-55 tanks with modernised fire-control systems and fitted with 100 mm Soviet or 105 mm Israeli-made guns.

The offer of the tanks, designated the T-54S and T-55S, was touched on during an unpublicised visit to Thailand in October by Gen Chaim Erez. During the visit the Israeli general met Deputy Defence Minister Panieng Kantarat, as well as army CoS Gen Chaovalit Yongchaiyut, Supreme Command CoS Gen Banchob Bunnag and Gen Pichit Kullavanich, First Army Region Commander.

In addition to being fitted with the 105 mm rifled tank gun, the T-55S has many other modifications including a new powerpack incorporating an American 8V-71T Detroit Diesel, new transmission, gun control equipment, commander's cupola, Blazer reactive armour and a EL-OP Matador computerised fire-control system.

A number of European companies have

already sent tanks to Thailand for evaluation, including the Vickers Defence Systems Mk 3, Steyr-Daimler-Puch SK-105 and OTO-Melara OF-40.

Thai officers have travelled to China to study the Type 59 refitted with the 105 mm gun and Type 69 models which Beijing is apparently anxious to supply at friendship prices (JDW 26 October).

Thai officers indicated that the first shipment, sufficient to equip a complete battalion, may be provided free of charge. The Chinese are reportedly selling T series tanks fitted with the 105 mm rifled gun for about \$550 000.

General Arthit Kamlang-Ek, Supreme Commander and Army C-in-C, said on 29 November, that no agreement had yet been reached on the Chinese tanks.

He added, however, that the Thai forces would welcome any military grant aid from friendly countries "with no strings attached," because the Thai armed forces were facing a budget squeeze.

## Britain to buy German APCs for Berlin

By Simon O'Dwyer-Russell

THE BRITISH ARMY'S Berlin Brigade commander is poised to order up to 130 West German-built TM 170 armoured personnel carriers, at an estimated cost of DM70 million, despite a strongly-worded letter from the British Chief of the General Staff Gen Sir Nigel Bagnall, recommending that he procure the British-built Saxon APC.

Saxon is the army's new wheeled APC used by non-mechanised battalions based in the UK. Gen Bagnall's letter spoke of the "eminent operational sense" of the Berlin Sector commander choosing the Saxon APC. Maj Gen Bernard Gordon Lennox should "consider the case carefully" before buying the TM 170, said Gen Bagnall.

In his role as Commander and Military Governor of Berlin's British sector, Gen

Lennox has extraordinary powers including some on procurement matters — and control of the budget.

The TM 170 is to be procured within the Berlin Budget, which is provided for the Western powers in Berlin by the Federal German Government in Bonn.

### Mixed fleet

The UK's Berlin Brigade has for some years run a mixed fleet of support vehicles, buying a number of German-built trucks, staff cars and utility vehicles. However, never before has the brigade purchased German weapons or armoured vehicles. It is equipped with the same weapons as other British Army brigades.

Technical evaluation of the German TM 170 was carried out by the brigade's own workshops, a fact which the UK Ministry of Defence expressed "serious reservations" about because of the workshops' "limited technical capabilities" in this field.

The brigade is at present equipped with FV432 APCs and a wheeled APC is being sought to fill the gap between soft-skinned trucks and the heavy FV432 in the streets of Berlin. GKN Sankey, manufacturer of the Saxon APC, offered offsets in the production of vehicles bound for Berlin, thought to include a willingness to use German steel and components in the vehicle's construction, but without apparent success.

### Saxon 'unsuitable'

The Berlin Brigade's requirement is for a wheeled vehicle for urban warfare or garrison duties. The Saxon was ruled out on the grounds that it was unsuitable for garrison work, despite meeting the British Army's internal security requirements in full.

UK Minister for Defence Procurement, Norman Lamont, is receiving briefings on the decision.

According to his aides, he is "extremely worried" at the political implications of the British Army procuring a German armoured vehicle in favour of a British product.



◀ A West German police version of the TM 170 showing obstacle-clearing blade and the armoured window shutters lowered

what happened to that bulldozer Vansua run over?