

Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Hill-Norton G.C.B.

Fordingbridge (0425) 52392

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CASS COTTAGE,
HYDE,
FORDINGBRIDGE,
HAMPSHIRE. SP6 2QH

29
5th June, 1986

Personal

The Rt. Hon George Younger M.P.,
Secretary of State,
Ministry of Defence, Main Building,
Whitehall,
London, SW1A 2HB.

Hull Forms for Warships

When the Prime Minister wrote to me on *at 11ap* 12th May, my Committee and I were delighted that she had so readily accepted our recommendation that there should be an Official Inquiry into the matters raised in our Report. We were, as I told her Principal Private Secretary, a little disappointed that she had felt that the Inquiry should be conducted by a 'professional expert of recognised impartiality rather than by a judge or QC', as we had suggested. I am sure that you are aware how difficult it is to find an individual of sufficient eminence who truly fills that 'job description' after such a long-standing and sometimes bitter controversy. I look forward to hearing from you in due course, as the P.M. indicated, who this will be.

The main purpose of this letter is to record some personal unease, which is shared by my Committee colleagues, at the Terms of Reference which were annexed, in draft, to my letter from Mrs. Thatcher, and which I see from the News Release by the Navy Department have been adopted unchanged.

The objective of our Inquiry was, quite simply, to see where the balance of advantage lay between the two rival hull forms, for application to new warships of frigate or destroyer types. I am sure that you would agree that this is what needs to be established beyond any future doubt or argument.

The events of October 1983, and the surrounding and subsequent assessments, are now of only marginal relevance to what must be that central and common aim, which I am sure we share. I am bound to be concerned that any focus by your Inquiry on the past, or upon a Specific Naval Staff Requirement, is bound to blur (and might even over-lay or conceal) what it is absolutely necessary to establish for the future.

Continued/

Personal

The Rt. Hon George Younger M.P.

5th June, 1986

May I suggest that an additional sentence could, and should, be added to the beginning of the Terms of Reference in the sense of:

"The object of the Inquiry is to establish the balance of advantage between a short/fat (Sirius) and the conventional long/thin hull form for future designs of frigate or destroyer (for the Royal Navy) from the operational and financial points of view"

The present text could then remain unchanged except that the first two words 'to review' would be deleted and replaced by 'Account should be taken of.....'

I feel confident that you would agree that such an amendment would be consistent with the objective which I have no doubt we share.

May I raise one other, much less important, point while I have my pen in my hand? Euan Strathcona, and a number of other people, have asked me whether the findings of the Inquiry will be made public. It has never occurred to me that they would not, and perhaps you would re-assure me that I am right. Any classified material submitted to the Inquiry - of which there needs to be very little - could readily be put in a classified Annex without blurring or diluting the central conclusions.

I apologise, if that is necessary, for writing at such length, contrary to my accustomed practice during many years of toil in Whitehall, but after a year's hard work on this awkward subject I am extremely anxious that it should not have been in vain.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister.

General

Issue, non-Board Younger...

27th June, 1966

It is noted that an additional engine could be added to the propulsion of the vessel in the event of a breakdown of the main engine.

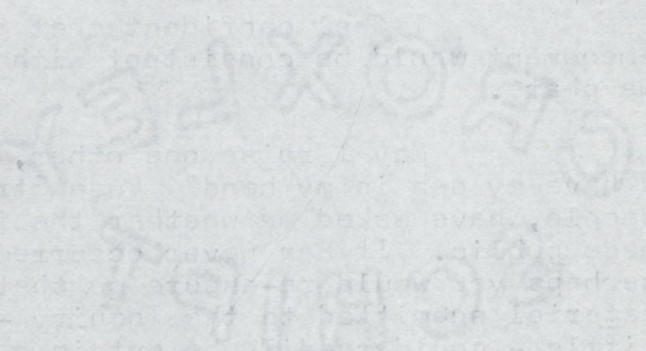
The plan of the vessel is to be modified in the light of the above. The plan of the vessel is to be modified in the light of the above. The plan of the vessel is to be modified in the light of the above.

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With Compliments

From

Admiral of the Fleet
The Lord Hill-Norton

HOUSE OF LORDS
LONDON SW1A 0PW