

Mr. Derek JACKSON



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From the Private Secretary

15 December 1986

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I attach a copy of a letter the Prime Minister has received from Mr Derek Jackson.

I should be grateful if you could provide a draft reply for Private Secretary signature. It would be helpful if this could reach me by 5 January 1987.

C D POWELL

David Ball Esq.  
Ministry of Defence

ECU

Strictly Private and

Confidential

RIS/12.

DB (MOD) RS

1 Greenfield  
Hatfield  
Herts

Dear Mrs Thatcher,

You will not remember me, I'm sure, but when you visited Harconi Avionics at Rochester some years ago, I was very pleased to show you around the advanced flight controls work we were doing at the time associated with the Tornado and also exports to the U.S.A. For the last two or three years I have been helping to sort out the Nimrod AEW problems, and I am now writing to you as a private citizen, who happens to work in GEC, to ask for your help.

You will know that we have been working since March this year to demonstrate what progress we could make given the freedom to run the job ourselves, and the team has worked enthusiastically around the clock and has produced outstanding performance improvements. We have prepared proposals which offer to fully meet the RAF's requirements and I believe we are the lower cost and best delivery. In an overseas competition, e.g. in the USA, we would expect to be successful in these circumstances, particularly as we have taken the risk of lateness with a fixed price and very large lateness penalties.

However the MOD has produced a 'risk assessment' which I gather has concluded that there is a great risk of us being very late and that our programme is likely to be discarded in favour of Avitrics. I am extremely unhappy with the way this risk assessment has been done, information on their terms of reference were not given to us, & the whole exercise in terms of their contact with us was very superficial, judged

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against the issues involved in this decision. For example, the people who assessed the important schedule/time element - the project schedules - were with us for a day & a half only. Moreover the MOD people we met almost exclusively expressed their satisfaction with the information we provided at the 'working level'. Overall, however the whole atmosphere of the risk assessment was hostile to us and the Nimrod, and very many of us in the company are prepared to believe that the aim from the start was to eliminate Nimrod so that Avrocs could go forward as the only viable solution. The key to the risk assessment of course is the manner in which the detail assessments are edited and conclusions drawn & we are extremely concerned about how this has been done.

I am extremely upset that this kind of activity could occur in my own country. One doesn't always get fair play completely when tending overseas but the treatment we have had on Nimrod these last ten months seems to me to be outrageous. Of course many of the people in MOD, who are both judge and jury in this situation, are involved in the past fracas on the project and are not in a position to be objective.

Hundreds and hundreds of people have worked their hearts out in these last months to pull the Nimrod round - they know they have succeeded and that Nimrod will be got right by the dates stated which incidentally, are our own freely chosen dates, not ones stipulated by MOD.

A large and difficult project such as Nimrod, now on the threshold of success must not be wiped out by superficial risk assessment, which we are not allowed to see or have the opportunity to rebut or answer. The tragedy of a decision against us would not be the job losses - large though they would be - but the sheer injustice to a team which has put heart and soul into Nimrod.

Mrs Thatcher, Christmas 1988 without Nimrod would be a very uncharitable one for a lot of hard-working people and their families

Yours Sincerely

Derek Jackson