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help us have a word.

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Joe Nigel

AWACS

You no doubt have more than enough on this, & the die seems cast.

But I thought you might care to glance at this note by John Wiggins which raises some still disturbing points. I must say that some of my own personal contacts support the impression that scientists within the Procurement Executive do not necessarily see

eye to eye with love in the RAF...

Your
Gavin.

Mr Nicholls

c. Mr Dawson

NIMROD AEW

Here are some gleanings from GEC in the light of the material in the Defence Secretary's further papers:

- a. GEC would lose £175 million of their own money on the basis of the contractual obligations they have offered to undertake if they were 3 years late in meeting the RAF specification;
 - b. GEC say that their system is more advanced than AWACS because it is much more automated (AWACS need an additional 5 crew members at least to operate manual tracking, while Nimrod should do this automatically). This seems to be at the root of the problem about computer power in the section of the Assessment paper about Data Handling: the comparative performance of AWACS in this respect is not addressed in the MOD paper;
 - c. The assessment paper says an RSRE audit concluded in July 1985 that the GEC radar would never have enough power to meet the ASR in normal operating conditions. (This prompts the question why the project was not then cancelled forthwith.) The GEC reply seems to be that MOD (PE) in effect acting as its own prime contractor deliberately chose the Comet airframe and thereby accepted that they would use a lower powered radar than that mounted on AWACS — the Nimrod task is to see aircraft at sea level at 200 miles, not aircraft at 30,000 feet at 600 miles or over the polar regions, and MOD deliberately chose to go for a cheaper, lighter system.
 - d. GEC feel that the RAF assessment has been "fixed" against them. They say that it is widely believed among working level engineers both in their own company and at MOD Research Establishments that the technical data have been deliberately distorted by the RAF. As Mr Levene has admitted, many of the problems are between MOD(PE) and the RAF rather than between the contractor and the customer.
 - e. On the Tornado radar GEC assert that the equipment they have delivered meets the specification in their contract with MOD (PE). But its performance does not meet the present ambitions of the RAF (whose dissatisfaction has presumably rubbed off on the Saudis). According to GEC it is not simply a question of their radar failing to operate satisfactorily: the problem also concerns how the radar is fitted into the aircraft, which is partly the responsibility of BAe (a contractor for the airframe) and partly that of MOD(PE) (as in effect overall prime contractor). A year's development work was thought to be required to meet the RAF's present specification.
2. The GEC working level clearly believe that their top management would be ready to continue the project for another 2 months at the company's expense if they were assured that there really would be a genuinely independent

assessment of the project and the prospects for its success. If they were then proved wrong, they would have to accept AWACs with a good grace.

3. I should add that this information was volunteered to me, and I have not drawn in any way on the material in the MOD's papers in responding to it.

JW

16/12