

341. Memorandum From the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (Iklé) to Secretary of Defense Weinberger¹

Washington, June 14, 1982

SUBJECT

UK Request for AIM-9M Seeker Heads (TS)

On Jun 9 the UK requested two AIM-9M SIDEWINDER seeker heads for trial installation.² If the trial is successful, an order for 20 seekers is expected.

The Navy and JCS recommend that the request be denied (see attached)³ for the following reasons:

a. The AIM-9M will not reach its IOC until Oct 82. Only prototype seekers are on hand, and these are required for the test program. The possible follow-on buy of 20 seeker heads cannot be met because of the low level of initial production.

b. There is a high risk of compromise of the seeker technology.⁴

¹ Source: Washington National Records Center, OSD Files, FRC 330-86-0042, UK 1982. Top Secret; Eyes Only.

² Attached but not printed is a copy of the June 9 request delivered by the British Embassy.

³ Attached but not printed is the June 10 action memorandum upon which both Hayward and Small initialed their disapproval of the British request.

⁴ At the end of this sentence, Weinberger wrote: "We must make every effort to keep secure. I think the UK will agree to our terms on this."

c. The added operational capability that the AIM-9M yields over the AIM-9L currently provided by the US to the UK is not required in the Falkland conflict.

d. Release of the AIM-9M seeker could lead to the European Consortium demanding authorization to build the AIM-9M. This has not been approved by the Foreign Disclosure Review Board and is opposed by the Navy.

The British requirement for the AIM-9M is indeed questionable in light of the military situation in the Falklands. Furthermore, the risk of technology compromise is of great concern: one need only consider the example of the SHRIKE missile in Brazil.⁵ Providing the AIM-9M seeker heads at this time will slow their introduction into the NATO theater where their unique capability is required. As a result of these considerations, I recommend we inform the British that the AIM-9M seeker heads not be provided for the foreseeable future.⁶

Fred C. Ikle⁷

⁵ See Document 321 and footnote 3 thereto.

⁶ Weinberger approved the release of the AIM-9M on June 17 and added the following notation: "OK [unclear] reaction + query again if they need it now."

⁷ Iklé signed "Fred" above his typed signature.