

**365. Action Memorandum From the Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs (Howe) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Eagleburger)<sup>1</sup>**

Washington, June 25, 1982

SUBJECT

Matériel Support for the UK

*Issue for Decision*

We have a number of outstanding British requests for military equipment. This memorandum recommends a strategy for responding to each of them.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/S Special Handling Restrictions Memos 1979–1983, Lot 96D262, Super Sensitive June 1982. Top Secret; Sensitive. A stamped notation in the upper right-hand corner of the memorandum indicates that Eagleburger saw it on June 26.

### *Essential Factors*

The British are continuing to press their requests for assistance. Since the fighting in the South Atlantic has stopped, the grumbling and resistance at the working level in the Pentagon have increased. The Services resent the diversion of equipment from their own forces in order to meet UK requests, and believe that the British are taking advantage of the Falklands conflict to get immediate delivery of equipment which would play no role in the South Atlantic.

As you know, Secretary Weinberger wants to be responsive until there is a clear cut agreement to end the conflict. Although Secretary Haig is prepared to return our arms supply relationship with the UK to a more normal pace, foreign policy reasons do not provide a compelling rationale for objecting to most individual UK requests supported by OSD.

### *Harpoon*

The British have requested early delivery of 20–34 Harpoon anti-ship missiles and the equipment needed to convert UK Nimrod aircraft into Harpoon platforms. (We had previously approved the transfer of information and equipment to assess the feasibility of Nimrod conversion.)

Following a personal appeal from Nikko Henderson on Thursday,<sup>2</sup> Secretary Weinberger has decided to provide eight Harpoon missiles and related equipment immediately.<sup>3</sup> This sale would not require Congressional notification. No decision has been made about the additional Harpoon missiles which the British want to buy.

*Recommendation.* That you concur in Secretary Weinberger's decision to provide eight Harpoon missiles to the UK immediately.<sup>4</sup>

### *AIM-9M*

The British have requested twenty of these improved Sidewinder air-to-air missiles. The British want the AIM-9M to counter an alleged Argentine capability to degrade the capability of the AIM-9L. The AIM-9M is so new, however, that there are only three of them in the US inventory.

Contrary to our earlier information, we now understand that Secretary Weinberger is prepared to give the British test data about AIM-9L and AIM-9M capabilities against various countermeasures (which presumably shows that AIM-9L performance is adequate), but has not

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<sup>2</sup> June 24.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 4, Document 362.

<sup>4</sup> Eagleburger approved the recommendation.

decided to provide the AIM-9M missiles themselves. Should he decide to go ahead on the missiles, there do not appear to be any strong foreign policy reasons to object to the sale. (However, I personally think this is going a bit far in a non-conflict situation.)

*Recommendation.* That the State Department not object to providing AIM-9L/M test data to the British, nor to providing AIM-9M missiles should Secretary Weinberger decide to do so.<sup>5</sup>

#### *KC-10 Tankers*

The British believe they need additional tanker capabilities to help meet their refueling requirements in the South Atlantic. They may be considering conversion of UK-owned DC-10 aircraft to a tanker configuration to meet these needs. The British also inquired about the availability of USAF KC-10 tankers. Before the fighting stopped, DOD was prepared to offer two KC-10s on a 90-day lease.<sup>6</sup> The British have not yet replied to our question about whether they would be interested in the possibility of a short-term lease.

Although KC-10s would be consistent with the President's policy on materiel support, they would be unmistakable and highly visible evidence of continuing US support for the UK after the de facto end of hostilities. That impression could be mitigated if the KC-10s were leased solely for *training* purposes (i.e., to give the British crews experience in flying converted DC-10 tankers) and were *not* operated in the South Atlantic. On the other hand, the KC-10 is not threatening in itself and would be very helpful to the UK in maintaining their presence.

*Recommendation.* That we defer a decision on KC-10s until the British renew their request.<sup>7</sup>

#### *F-4J Aircraft*

The British have inquired about the availability of up to twenty-four F-4J aircraft which we assume they would deploy at Port Stanley. We understand that any F-4s we sold would have to be diverted from US forces, and that F-4s already in the UK inventory are of a type which would be suitable for deployment in the Falklands.

Should the British renew their request, we should first confirm with them that their RAF and RN F-4s also would be suitable for deployment to Port Stanley. If the British believe they do not have enough F-4s both to perform their NATO missions and to meet their

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<sup>5</sup> Eagleburger approved the recommendation and added the following notation: "(re providing data) *Hold* on providing missiles."

<sup>6</sup> See Document 334.

<sup>7</sup> Eagleburger approved the recommendation.

Falklands requirements, we should consider filling in behind them in Europe before agreeing to transfer F-4Js for deployment in the Falklands.

*Recommendation.* That should the British renew their F-4J request, we follow the strategy described above.<sup>8</sup>

*Alternatively,* that the State Department concur in a DOD decision to transfer F-4s (should one be taken).<sup>9</sup>

*Alternatively,* that we defer a decision on F-4s until the British renew their request.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Overall Policy*

The time may have come to move away from our emergency rearming effort. If the current situation holds for a few more days, I will forward recommendations on how to move toward a more normal arms relationship with the UK.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Eagleburger neither approved nor disapproved the recommendation.

<sup>9</sup> Eagleburger neither approved nor disapproved the alternative.

<sup>10</sup> Eagleburger approved this alternative.

<sup>11</sup> Eagleburger highlighted the paragraph by drawing two parallel lines in the right-hand margin. Beneath the paragraph, he wrote: "John: I have my doubts. How do we assure some leverage over UK behavior if there is no coherent focus? LSE."