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Prime Minister

To be aware.

A.J.C. 4/10.

M

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARYTHE SECOND GLCM BASE : RAF MOLESWORTH

I have been considering the American proposals for the timetable of the development of RAF Molesworth, a disused RAF site in Cambridgeshire, as the second GLCM base. Your officials, and Patrick Jenkin's, know the details.

2. The choice of Molesworth as the second GLCM base was part of the June 1980 announcement on the deployment of cruise missiles to the United Kingdom. All public statements by the Government have referred to a deployment date for Molesworth of 1988. The Americans have now put to us formally proposals for the development of the base working to an Initial Operating Capability (IOC) with the first flight operational of December 1987. On PSA's assessment of the time needed for the construction programme, this timetable would require that initial site surveys, and consultations with planning and highway authorities, would have to begin very shortly and indeed should ideally have already commenced. Physical site surveys would almost certainly attract attention and, very understandably, the necessary consultations with highway and planning authorities could not be guaranteed to be kept confidential.

3. These local consultations ought not in themselves, if handled properly, to give rise to special difficulties in a planning sense. But this activity would serve to raise the public profile of the Molesworth deployment just at the moment of maximum sensitivity at Greenham Common with the arrival of the ground launch cruise missiles for the IOC there of the end of the year. Moreover, a decision now

-4 OCT 1983





to proceed with the second base could be seen, and represented, as suggesting we see no possibility of an INF agreement which would make unnecessary some, at least, of the planned INF deployment in this country. It would complicate our task in persuading reasonable opinion that we are committed to arms control.

4. I do not believe that it is critical for the GLCM programme that this work goes ahead now and I have therefore decided that site surveys and consultations should not take place at Molesworth for the present. I suggest we review the position at the end of the year in the light of whatever progress has been made in the INF talks and of public attitudes here at the time. We can look then at whether the IOC date should "slip" from the American preferred date or whether we should seek to accelerate the construction programme. For the moment, I have arranged for the Americans to be informed of where matters stand through the London Working Group. This decision may not be welcome to the Americans at the working level but I know from my recent talk with him that Mr Weinberger himself accepts the general need to handle the GLCM programme carefully in relation to public opinion and to the Geneva talks. With the Greenham Common deployment well on target we have no reason to feel on the defensive.

5. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for the Environment and Sir Robert Armstrong.

WJH

Ministry of Defence

4th October 1983



20 A

FCS/83/210SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE25
10
T-aThe Second GLCM Base: RAF Molesworth

1. Thank you for your minute of 4 October about your decision that no site surveys or local consultations should take place at Molesworth at present.
2. I endorse the decision you have taken. If we can avoid creating a further focus for the anti-nuclear weapon demonstrators this autumn then we should do so. I understand there may be some flexibility not only in the date of the operational deployment of cruise missiles at Molesworth but in the time needed for the construction programme and local consultations. I am confident that we can continue to explain to the Americans why activity at Molesworth would be unwise just yet.
3. I am copying this minute to the recipients of yours.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
25 October 1983

Defence,
IN F,
Pt 4

20 May 1983

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6 7 8

RIME MINISTER

The Defence Secretary has asked to see you tomorrow to discuss INF deployment.

This follows his recent conversations with Weinberger and others as a result of which it emerged that the Americans are not entirely happy with our timetable for deployment. I have no further details, but Mr. Heseltine will explain these to you tomorrow.

A.J.C.

3 October, 1983.



2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

AJC: to see

My ref:

Your ref:

Prime Directive

To be aware.

26 October 1983

Dear Michael,

AJC. 27/10

MB

THE SECOND GLCM BASE: RAF MOLESWORTH

Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute of 4 October to Geoffrey Howe.

Whatever Initial Operating Capability (IOC) date is chosen for the Molesworth facilities, the building completion date will need to be at least six months earlier, to allow the Americans time for the installation and commissioning of their own equipment. In addition, it is unlikely that a four flight installation as required at Molesworth could be completed in less than 2½ years bearing in mind our experience at Greenham Common and with an accelerated programme. In the normal event, PSA would allow at least a further year to cover the pre-planning, designing, specifying and tender invitation processes, all of which means that to achieve an IOC of December 1987 we ought to have full briefing available and be ready to start work in earnest not later than December of this year.

By cutting corners and phasing the work so that the flight facilities can be handed over in a staged programme as has been done at Greenham Common, PSA is reasonably confident that the essential programme can still be met even if the start date slips by another 3 or 4 months to the Spring of next year, as you are now suggesting. However, this needs to be subject to the following provisos:-

- i. that the Americans (and NATO) are prepared to accept the higher costs likely to be associated with an accelerated programme. The relatively modest acceleration required (and achieved) at Greenham Common added 10% to the initial contract price and since more seems likely to be required at Molesworth, we should allow for the possibility that acceleration could amount to some 20% extra in that case, or about £4m-£5m on that part of the work which would need acceleration;
- ii. that for the operational part of the Molesworth works (aside from the sizeable infrastructure requirements which will have to be designed from scratch anyway) the US eschew all but unavoidable changes in requirements so that we can make the maximum reasonable use of the existing detailed drawings produced for Greenham Common; and

iii. that the various planning and approval processes can be contained well within normal timescales. We would of course do as much as we could by consulting local authorities immediately a decision to go ahead has been taken and generally gearing all concerned - including NATO - to accept the need for prompt action. Even so, there are risks of delays for reasons beyond our direct control.

I mention these points only to avoid misunderstanding. PSA will do its utmost to help, but clearly the earlier we can be given full briefing, permission to consult local authorities and appoint consultants for surveying and design, the better the chances will be of achieving the very tight timetable now envisaged.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Your ever
Patrick

PATRICK JENKIN

