



MO 22/5

PRIME MINISTERLEAK TO THE GUARDIAN ON CRUISE MISSILES

Prime Minister

Sir Robert Armstrong  
is in favour of his letter being  
sent, but is sceptical about the  
prospects of success.

Content that it should go?

Yes *mk*

F.R.B.

10.11.

I have been considering whether to try to recover from the Guardian the copy of my minute of 20th October to you about the delivery of cruise missiles which was leaked to that newspaper and which they published in their issue of 31st October.

2. The document is of course the property of the Government. The objection to asking the Guardian to return it is that it gives them another story and at the most awkward time for us. There is therefore a case for doing nothing. But there are strong arguments in favour of trying to recover the document. The first is that if the leak inquiry which is now going on does lead to proceedings against someone, it will look odd if we have not attempted to retrieve the minute. Second, and more importantly, when the Ministry of Defence recovered some leaked papers from the Press Association in 1980, they enabled us to identify the part of the Department they had come from and so to narrow down the search for the culprit. It is the possibility - though I put it no higher than that - that the return of the document from the Guardian might help trace the source of the present leak that has persuaded me that we should ask the editor for it back.

3. I attach the draft of a letter to the editor which the Treasury Solicitor has prepared and which he would send on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. I should be grateful to know whether you and the colleagues to whom I am copying this minute are content for such a letter to go. If we are to approach the Guardian, we should do so soon. I should therefore be grateful for an early response.

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4. I am sending copies of this minute to the Lord President, the Home Secretary, the Lord Privy Seal, the Attorney General, Sir Robert Armstrong and the Treasury Solicitor.

*[Handwritten signature]*

Ministry of Defence  
10th November 1983

CONQUEROR  
10  
LONDON

DRAFT LETTER FROM T SOL

The Editor,  
The Guardian,  
119 Farringdon Road,  
London, EC1P 3ER.

I am instructed by the Ministry of Defence to request that the document dated 20th October 1983 and entitled "Deliveries of Cruise Missiles to RAF Greenham Common - Parliamentary and Public Statements" which your newspaper published on 31st October should be delivered to me forthwith. The document is the property of the Crown.

I should be glad of a reply by 6 pm tomorrow.



cc LPO  
HO  
LPSO  
Attorney General  
CO  
Treasury Solicitor



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

11 November 1983

Leak to The Guardian on Cruise Missiles

I am writing to confirm my telephone message of this morning that the Prime Minister is content that the Treasury Solicitor should write to the editor of The Guardian in the terms of the draft attached to your Secretary of State's minute of 10 November.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of those who received your Secretary of State's minute.

**E E R BUTLER**

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

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RESTRICTED



LAW OFFICERS' DEPARTMENT  
ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE  
LONDON, WC2A 2LL

H. Steel CMG OBE

10 November 1983

F E R Butler Esq  
Principal Private Secretary  
Prime Minister's Office  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON S W 1

*I have asked Mr. Moltrem to  
arrange for the lawyer to settle  
this point  
NBPM*

*Dear Robin,*

*FERS  
11-11*

LEAK TO THE GUARDIAN ON CRUISE MISSILES

The Attorney General is going to be caught up on other things tomorrow and, in view of the urgency of the matter, has instructed me to convey on the Private Secretary network his comments on the Defence Secretary's minute to the Prime Minister of today's date.

The Attorney General sees no objection to the Treasury Solicitor writing to the Editor of the Guardian substantially in the terms proposed. However, he has misgivings on one point. It is stated at the beginning of paragraph 2 of the Defence Secretary's minute that "the document is of course the property of the Government" and this is reflected in the draft letter. Whether that statement is correct depends on exactly what it is that the Guardian have. If it is a copy made on a Government machine, and therefore on Government paper, of one of the original copies of Mr Heseltine's minute of 20 October, the statement is indeed correct. But if it is a copy made elsewhere (i.e. a copy of a copy), it probably is not Government property. Unless, therefore, we have evidence to support our belief that what the Guardian has is Government property - and the Attorney General knows of no such evidence - he thinks that it would be prudent to omit the second sentence of the draft letter.

*Defence:  
1 inf, attached*

*with Robin?*

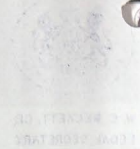
I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Secretary of State for Defence and the other recipients of his minute of today's date.

*For cov,  
Henry*

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Security: Guardian-convul Missiles 10/83

TOP SECRET  
NOFORN



Faint, illegible handwritten notes in blue ink, possibly describing the missile system or its security classification.

11 NOV 1983





Ref. A083/3208

MR BUTLER

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I have seen a copy of the Secretary of State for Defence's minute to the Prime Minister of 10 November about the leak to the Guardian on cruise missiles.

2. I am perfectly content for the Guardian to be asked to return the document. Indeed, it is a pity that the Ministry of Defence did not do this earlier.

3. On past experience I am afraid that the response will be a bland letter to the effect that the copy which they had has been destroyed. But it is still right to ask.

conqueror

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

10 November 1983