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Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

R C Mottram Esq
Private Secretary to
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

15 February 1985

Dear Richard

BRITISH AEROSPACE OFFER FOR SALE

The Chief Secretary understands there is a possibility that the next international discussion at Ministerial level of the European Fighter Aircraft project may be brought forward from June to late April or early May. He has asked me to draw attention to the risk that this timetable could conflict with the BAe offer for sale.

The present plans for the sale are as follows:

April 3	Pathfinder prospectus
April 19	Decisions on main prospectus
April 29	Offer priced
May 1	Main prospectus published
May 10	Offer closes

The possibility of some slippage in these dates also needs to be kept in mind.

It is not clear whether on the earlier timetable for EFA the Government ought legally to disclose in the prospectus the line it intended to take at the meeting - the Treasury Solicitor has not been consulted as yet. But whatever the legal position it would clearly be preferable to avoid active UK Ministerial or international discussions of EFA while the BAe sale is in the market. Any decisions taken between April 3 and publication of the main prospectus could also be awkward to handle.

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The Chief Secretary seriously doubts whether in any case a thorough study and discussion of all the options could be carried out on the accelerated timetable, in a way which would allow recommendations to be made in good time, as promised in Mr Heseltine's minute of 2 July 1984 to the Prime Minister.

I am copying this letter to Andrew Turnbull (No. 10), Len Appleyard (Foreign Office), Callum McCarthy (Department of Trade and Industry) and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely
Richard Broadbent

R J BROADBENT
Private Secretary

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