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MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE
PROCUREMENT

D/MIN/TT/12/3/2

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CDS' OD(SA)
Under this heading
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OPERATION CORPORATE - HMS ILLUSTRIOUS

I am sorry to have delayed responding to your minute of 27th April about the possibility of fitting Vulcan Phalanx to HMS ILLUSTRIOUS but the whole question of bringing ILLUSTRIOUS into service a year before what I had understood was the earliest possible date is a new one to Ministers. I now understand that an operational assessment of the plan to bring her forward will be with Ministers shortly.

2. As far as the procurement aspects are concerned, the Vulcan Phalanx gun system is certainly not too costly to consider for emergency temporary use, if the overall operational case has been approved. However, I note that the Sea Dart system may not be fully proven by July or August and I wonder how many other aspects of ILLUSTRIOUS' equipment and weapon systems will not be fully available. Perhaps you could let me know the answer to this question and to the question of whether the Chiefs of Staff have considered the wisdom of sending her to sea until the Sea Dart system particularly is proven.

30th April 1982

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