

Ref: B05832

SIR JOHN HUNT

cc Sir Robert Armstrong  
 Mr Hastie-Smith  
 Professor Mason, MOD  
 Mr Quinlan, MOD  
 Mr Moberly, FCO  
 Cdre Hill, MOD  
 Mr Howe, MOD

X Polaris Replacement: Dr Aaron's Visit

The following main points emerged from today's meeting with Dr Aaron and his team.

(i) Congress He promised to let us know how far Congressional approval would be needed for whatever the President decided to do to help us. Even if some aspects required formal approval he seemed to think that this should be fairly automatic. But he was clear that on such a sensitive subject it would be essential to consult the Senate leadership and the key Senate committees.

(ii) NATO He was clearly pleased with our assurance that the next generation of our deterrent would continue to be assigned to SACEUR on the same basis (including agreed targetting) as at present. He seemed to find helpful our ideas on how to present the replacement decision to our allies and to defend it against Soviet criticism. He thought the Americans would want to explain the position to the French before any announcement (but as he later made clear in private conversation, he hoped that a first account of what was in the wind would be given to the French by ourselves).

(iii) Targetting He seemed impressed by the account we gave of our doctrine and intentions. He noted with surprise that we ourselves had never had to state publicly \* ~~~~~

\* He hoped that the United States Government could be equally reticent; but he thought that they might in practice need to be rather more forthcoming, eg during the envisaged consultations with Congress. ~~~~~

\* ~ \* Passage deleted and retained under Section 3(4). @Wayland  
 1 13 December 2011

~ Nor about our targets.



(iv) SALT III He was fairly robust about the need to resist Russian pressure for the inclusion of British weapons. But he thought it would be harder to do this when discussing grey area weapons than when discussing systems; the de minimis argument would be much weaker, since our share of the grey area total would not in fact be insignificant.

(v) Plutonium and HEU He seemed a bit worried by the news that we would need from the Americans some supplies of Special Nuclear Materials, to supplement our own resources. He was not sure how much they would have to spare.

(vi) The 3 per cent Programme He emphasised how important it would be vis-a-vis Congress for the United States Government to be able to say that we had reconfirmed our intention to fulfill the agreed NATO programme of annual Defence Budget increments. He seemed if anything even more worried than in August about the danger that the cost of replacing Polaris would erode our conventional defence effort.

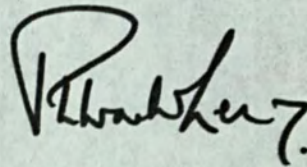
(vii) United Kingdom/United States Co-operation in Other Areas He produced a curious ragbag of pleas for a more forthcoming British attitude as regards joint action in various defence fields (eg the air defence of the United States bases here); and as regards a number of political problems, eg security co-operation in the Caribbean and restraint over East-West technology transfers. He deplored the harm <sup>which would be</sup> done to the West's security interests by our providing credits for Cuba or making cuts in the BBC external services. And he urged us not to exclude the idea of acquiring some ground-launched cruise missiles of our own in the context of the Theatre Nuclear Force modernisation programme, even if lack of capacity at Aldermaston meant that these had to have United States warheads under dual-key arrangements. He was careful to make clear that in none of these cases was he seeking to attach conditions to United States help over Polaris replacement. But the Americans no doubt feel that they should do what they can to exploit the strong position in bilateral relations which our nuclear military dependence gives them.

Are we?



2. The general atmosphere was good, despite occasional sticky patches (eg (vi) and (vii) above). On balance, a useful and reassuring meeting.

18th October 1979

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R L Wade-Gery', written in a cursive style.

R L WADE-GERY



SECRET

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1  
Telephone 01-~~23178122~~ 218 2111/3

SECRET

2nd November 1979

MO 18/1/1

*To await a copy from  
press from the Fco.  
K.W.*

*Dear Clive,*

POLARIS REPLACEMENT: DR AARON'S VISIT

I understand that the Prime Minister would like to know a little more about the American ideas for joint action in various defence fields which were referred to in paragraph vii of Mr Wade-Gery's minute to Sir John Hunt of 18th October (which I understand you have seen).

The ideas fell broadly under three headings. The first of these was "standardisation and interoperability" and it contained four items. The first of these was "enhanced" UK participation in anti-tank programmes on which the US, most recently at the Four Power Armament Directors' meeting on 2nd - 4th October, are pushing a co-operative package. We are examining this with the French and the Germans, but there are real problems in what they propose. These will take some time to resolve: in the meantime the Americans have expressed themselves as well content with the method and timetable to which we are working. The second was that the UK should deploy Rapier missiles in defence of US bases in this country. This proposition arises basically, I understand, from disagreement between the USAF and US Army over which of them should take on the task. As put, the cost to Britain would be very high (perhaps £260M over ten years). On his recent visit to the USA, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Royal Air Force canvassed the proposal that the RAF might man the missiles if the Americans bought Rapier. This would have sales benefits.

The implications ...

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No 10 Downing Street

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The implications are being studied, but it is clear that there would be serious manpower difficulties. The third suggestion was that we should abandon Nimrod and join in the procurement of NATO AWACS instead. As you know, Ministerial approval to continue the Nimrod AEW programme was given in September and the considerations were spelled out then. Finally, the US suggested joint procurement of the Harrier AV8B aircraft. This could have attractions and is already being urgently studied.

The second general American heading concerns closer co-operation in defence of the central region. <sup>of NATO</sup> They had two propositions. The first was to use UK storage facilities in Germany for US ammunition. We should have liked to be able to help in this but there are no surplus UK facilities in the NORTHAG area we can offer. The second proposal concerned the requirement for an advanced IFF system (Identification Friend/Foe). On both cost and operational grounds we have long resisted US pressure to fit their own IFF Mk XII system. A new NATO Identification system is under study in the Alliance and we think it makes better sense to get on with this than to go for a retro-fit of IFF Mk XII. A recent Alliance study takes the same view.

The third category of American ideas concerned general world-wide co-operation. The main one of direct defence concern is the protection of sea lines of communication. Here we have said that we are ready to take part in talks with the USA and France, and await the papers and an invitation to meet. Mention was also made of security co-operation in the Caribbean. We are looking positively at this but will need to tread carefully.

In short, all the American points are being or have been pursued already in appropriate channels, as Dr Aaron indeed recognised in his discussions with us. We see his approach as an additional stimulus in respect of the more promising ideas, and are very ready to talk to Ambassador Komer, whom Dr Aaron indicated might wish to visit London to discuss them.

I am sending copies of this letter to George Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever,  
Bryan*

SECRET (B M NORBURY)  
SECRET



5 NOV 1979

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MR. WHITMOREPrime Minister.

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KMH

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Nuclear Defence Matters

In your minute to Sir John Hunt of 23rd October you listed certain questions raised by the Prime Minister on points made by Dr. Aaron during his talks here on 18th October about Polaris replacement:-

- (a) She asked why the Americans want to explain the decision on the replacement of Polaris to the French before any announcement (paragraph ii of Mr. Wade-Gery's minute of 18th October).

The Americans seem understandably anxious that their decision to help us over the replacement of Polaris should not be divisive of the Western Allies including France. In the French case they have not of course forgotten the violent reaction of General de Gaulle's government to the news of the Macmillan-Kennedy 1962 Nassau Agreement under which we got Polaris. They accept that today's circumstances are very different, and that nothing similar need be anticipated this time. The Gaullists will try to make the most of the decision, to the disadvantage of the Americans as well of us. This will add to the <sup>French</sup> President's domestic problems. He is likely to take a more balanced and sympathetic view; but the French Government might well be annoyed, both with the Americans and with ourselves, if they first heard about the decision from the newspapers, and we should do well to avoid that.

- (b) She assumed that there is no question of the United States Government discussing our targetting in the consultations with Congress (Mr. Wade-Gery's paragraph iii).

Passage deleted and retained under Section 3(4)

AWayland,  
13/12/11



Passage deleted and retained under  
Section 3(4).

Wayland  
13/12/11

- (c) She wished to know a little more about the American ideas for joint action in various defence fields; and she also wanted to know whether it is true that we are providing credits for Cuba and if so why (Mr. Wade-Gery's paragraph vii).

Since these are primarily departmental issues, not closely related to Dr. Aaron's main theme, I have arranged for the Secretary of State for Defence's office to let you have the answer to the first point, and for the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's office similarly to deal with the second.

RA

(Robert Armstrong)

2nd November 1979



SECRET



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG.

Nuclear Defence Matters

The Prime Minister has seen your minute A0567 of 2 November to me.

She was grateful for this additional information about the meeting with Dr. Aaron on 18 October. She has noted that you have arranged for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence to let her have notes on the questions which she asked about paragraph (vii) of Mr. Wade-Gery's minute of 18 October.

*JAW.*

*HRB*

5 November 1979

SECRET

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Defence

BF 30.10.79

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

Sir John Hunt  
Cabinet Office

Nuclear Defence Matters

The Prime Minister was grateful for your minute AO461 of 19 October 1979. As I told you yesterday, she approved the draft message to President Carter without amendment, and I attach a copy in the form in which it was despatched.

The Prime Minister did, however, have a number of questions about Mr. Wade Gery's minute of 18 October recording the main points which emerged from the meeting with Dr. Aaron and his team:

- (a) Paragraph (ii). She would like to know why the Americans want to explain the decision on the replacement of Polaris to the French before any announcement.
- (b) Paragraph (iii). The Prime Minister assumes that there is no question of the United States Government discussing our targetting in the consultations with Congress.
- (c) Paragraph (vii). The Prime Minister would like to know a little more about the American ideas for joint action in various defence fields. She would also like to know whether it is true that we are providing credits for Cuba and if so, why.

CAW

23 October 1979

TOP SECRET

A. H. M.



PRIME MINISTER

cc Cuba (Nov 79)  
'Credits for Cuba'

2.

defence

When you saw the record of the meeting which officials had with Mr. Aaron when he visited this country last month, you asked a number of questions. You have seen the answers to most of these, and we now have the attached replies to your two outstanding points.

(1) Credits for Cuba

We provide no aid to Cuba. There is a ECGD cover for British exports, running at just under £30 million. This is based on a normal commercial assessment of the risks involved. The current assessment would allow ECGD's exposure to rise to £75 million or more. Successive Governments have maintained that ECGD Section I activities must remain apolitical. There are no Section II national interest commitments at present.

There are also bank credits of about \$480 million for banks based in the UK. It would be difficult to prevent ~~the~~ private sector financing in Cuba, and any attempt would almost certainly become public.

All this means that it will not be easy to meet the Americans who are pressing their allies to discourage official and commercial credits for Cuba. We are, however, still considering what to say to them. More details are in the FCO's letter at Flag A.

Filed on  
Cuba (Nov 79) |  
'Credits for Cuba'

(2) Joint Action in Various Defence Fields

The Americans have a number of ideas in mind. All are already under discussion, but prospects for a positive UK response are not good in most cases. There are three sub-headings:

/(i) Standardisation



(i) Standardisation and "interoperability"

- greater UK participation in anti-tank programmes
- deployment of Rapiers missiles in defence of US bases in the UK
- UK to abandon Nimrod and join in the procurement of NATO AWACS instead
- joint procurement of the Harrier AV8B aircraft (probably the most attractive under this sub-heading)

(ii) Closer Co-operation in Defence of NATO Central Region

- use of UK storage facilities in Germany for US ammunition (we have no surplus)
- use of the American advanced IFF system (we prefer to think in terms of a new system to be developed within NATO)

(iii) Worldwide Co-operation

- protection of sea lines of communications (we are ready to join the US and France in talks)
- security co-operation in the Caribbean (possible but to be approached with circumspection)

More detailed explanations on these points are at Flag B. ( <sup>revised</sup> 2.11.79

There is no need for any further action on your part on these proposals, which are all now under consideration, unless there are particular items which you would like to pursue.

JW.

22 November 1979