

22-10-79

TOP SECRET

SUBJECT

PRIME MINISTER'S 37



PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T125/79T

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Mr President

Thank you for your message of 15 October, about military nuclear matters, which David Aaron delivered to John Hunt during his very useful visit to London last week.

I warmly welcome what you say about your affirmative approach to the modernisation of the British strategic deterrent. As you know, my colleagues and I have not yet decided which system we would wish to go for. But it is very good to know that any of the alternatives under consideration could in practice be made available to us; and that in particular this would (if we so decide) cover the complete C4 missile system including its MIRV capability.

Thank you also for your frank explanation of your concern about the delicate issues of timing involved in the interaction between decisions in this field and the important decisions which the North Atlantic Alliance needs to reach on Long Range Theatre Nuclear Forces. Your point is well taken. As you know we are giving you full support on the LRTNF question and I shall be glad to co-operate with you in seeking to avert the dangers you identify.

Against this background I am happy to agree that no British request on the strategic deterrent should be put to you before we meet in Washington in December, and that we should discuss the matter then. To avoid any misunderstanding, and in the same spirit of frankness, I should make clear that at that meeting

/I shall

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- 2 -

I shall need to discuss the substance of the strategic modernisation issue, as well as procedure and timing. I am confident that we shall then be able to settle both the substantive question and the problem of the timing of any announcement. The latter will clearly depend on how other matters, including LRTNF decision-taking, have progressed in the interval.

Meanwhile, I fully agree that knowledge of your message to me and of my present reply should be confined to a very narrow circle indeed. On our side I shall tell Peter Carrington and Francis Pym (but not the Chiefs of Staff). The documents themselves will be seen by no-one outside No. 10 Downing Street and the Cabinet Office; and I suggest that any communications on the subject should be confined to the direct White House/Cabinet Office link.

Yours Sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

The President of the United States of America

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*1 copy passed to Sir John Hunt
with CAW minute of 23.10.79.*

B/WHITE HOUSE 001/22

IMMEDIATE 221045Z OCT 79

FROM: CABINET OFFICE LONDON
TO: WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET

FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE PRESIDENT:

DEAR MR PRESIDENT

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE OF 15 OCTOBER, ABOUT MILITARY NUCLEAR MATTERS, WHICH DAVID AARON DELIVERED TO JOHN HUNT DURING HIS VERY USEFUL VISIT TO LONDON LAST WEEK.

I WARMLY WELCOME WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT YOUR AFFIRMATIVE APPROACH TO THE MODERNISATION OF THE BRITISH STRATEGIC DETERRENT. AS YOU KNOW, MY COLLEAGUES AND I HAVE NOT YET DECIDED WHICH SYSTEM WE WOULD WISH TO GO FOR. BUT IT IS VERY GOOD TO KNOW THAT ANY OF THE ALTERNATIVES UNDER CONSIDERATION COULD IN PRACTICE BE MADE AVAILABLE TO US: AND THAT IN PARTICULAR THIS WOULD (IF WE SO DECIDE) COVER THE COMPLETE C4 MISSILE SYSTEM INCLUDING ITS MIRV CAPABILITY.

THANK YOU ALSO FOR YOUR FRANK EXPLANATION OF YOUR CONCERN ABOUT THE DELICATE ISSUES OF TIMING INVOLVED IN THE INTERACTION BETWEEN DECISIONS IN THIS FIELD AND THE IMPORTANT DECISIONS WHICH THE NORTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE NEEDS TO REACH ON LONG RANGE THEATRE NUCLEAR FORCES. YOUR POINT IS WELL TAKEN. AS YOU KNOW WE ARE GIVING YOU FULL SUPPORT ON THE LRTNF QUESTION AND I SHALL BE GLAD TO CO-OPERATE WITH YOU IN SEEKING TO AVERT THE DANGERS YOU IDENTIFY.

AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND I AM HAPPY TO AGREE THAT NO BRITISH REQUEST ON THE STRATEGIC DETERRENT SHOULD BE PUT TO YOU BEFORE WE MEET IN WASHINGTON IN DECEMBER, AND THAT WE SHOULD DISCUSS THE MATTER THEN. TO AVOID ANY MISUNDERSTANDING, AND IN THE SAME SPIRIT OF FRANKNESS, I SHOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT AT THAT MEETING I SHALL NEED TO DISCUSS THE SUBSTANCE OF THE STRATEGIC MODERNISATION ISSUE, AS WELL AS PROCEDURE AND TIMING. I AM CONFIDENT THAT WE SHALL THEN BE ABLE TO SETTLE BOTH THE SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION AND THE PROBLEM OF THE TIMING OF ANY ANNOUNCEMENT. THE LATTER WILL CLEARLY DEPEND ON HOW OTHER MATTERS, INCLUDING LRTNF DECISION-TAKING, HAVE PROGRESSED IN THE INTERVAL.

MEANWHILE, I FULLY AGREE THAT KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR MESSAGE TO ME AND OF MY PRESENT REPLY SHOULD BE CONFINED TO A VERY NARROW CIRCLE INDEED. ON OUR SIDE I SHALL TELL PETER CARRINGTON AND FRANCIS PYM (BUT NOT THE CHIEFS OF STAFF). THE DOCUMENTS THEMSELVES WILL BE SEEN BY NO-ONE OUTSIDE NO. 10 DOWNING STREET AND THE CABINET OFFICE: AND I SUGGEST THAT ANY COMMUNICATIONS ON THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE CONFINED TO THE DIRECT WHITE HOUSE/CABINET OFFICE LINK.

YOURS SINCERELY
MARGARET THATCHER

NNNN

SENT AT 1128Z/22 NH K

Mr Alexander



CABINET OFFICE

FWI

24x

With the compliments of

Mr Wade-Gery

With reference to paragraph 7 of
Sir John Hunt's Top Secret minute
(Ref: A0461) on Nuclear Defence
Matters dated 19th October 1979

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS

Telephone 01 233 8378



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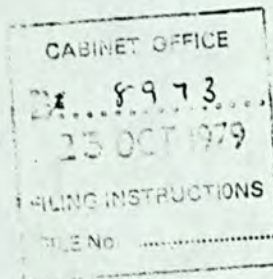
Head of DS 17

SECCOS

Cabinet Office (Mr Wade-Gery)

FCO (Mr Moberly)

UK Del NATO (Mr Gainsborough)



1. Copy

Paul
 i. Mr. Alexander
 No 10
 ii. Sir John Hunt
 (we spoke).

2. Mr. Haslie-Smith

3. File.

Richard Lee
 23/x

TNF MODERNISATION - VISIT BY MR DAVID AARON

1. As the Secretary of State is aware, a high level US team led by Mr David Aaron visited London this week as part of a tour round the capitals of the five NATO countries who have been invited to accept the basing of US GLCMs on their territory as part of the Alliance TNF modernisation programme. They had a meeting with UK officials, led by Mr Wade-Gery of the Cabinet Office, on 17 October; a further discussion on other nuclear matters (which is being recorded separately) took place on 18 October. A full note of the TNF discussion is being prepared; this minute sets out briefly the main points.
2. The meeting went very satisfactorily, and there were no major surprises. Mr Aaron said that the discussions in London were something of a formality since we had already told the US of HMG's decision in principle to accept US basing, but they nevertheless welcomed the opportunity to exchange views on the current state of play within the Alliance, and also to obtain our reactions to their first draft of the "Integrated Decision Document" which brings together the High Level and Special Group Reports to provide a basis for collective Ministerial decisions in December. Mr Aaron particularly mentioned that the US were very grateful that the UK had been able to react so promptly and helpfully to their request to accept a flight of 16 GLCMs from the total originally allocated to the FRG; he recognised that this had not been an easy decision and it had helped to avoid the real danger of the whole package coming unravelled.
3. The following main points emerged in the discussion:
 - a. Integrated Decision Document. We indicated that we were generally content with the US draft, but suggested a certain amount of reordering and amplification. The US team have undertaken to consider our comments and to incorporate as many of them as possible.

- b. Position of Other Countries. In a general review of the position of the other countries directly involved in the modernisation programme we reported on the recent exchanges between the Prime Minister and Sr Cossiga which suggested that the Italian position was generally positive, although they were anxious that there should be clear collective Alliance support for the programme. Mr Aaron said the Dutch position remained the key, and the US team had deliberately arranged to visit The Hague as the last capital on the trip in the hope that they could report firm support in all the other countries concerned. There was general agreement that reactions to the Brezhnev speech, even in the Netherlands, had been surprisingly robust, and it seemed unlikely unduly to influence the final decisions on modernisation. Mr Aaron made the point that there was a danger in going too far to meet Dutch concerns, for example by setting a specific numerical target for arms control negotiations which might subsequently weaken our negotiating position. We supported this view.

- c. SALT II. The US team were clearly concerned about the developing tendency to link TNF modernisation decisions to the ratification of SALT II. Mr Aaron was very optimistic about the final outcome of the Senate vote, but this could not be guaranteed in the timescale for the TNF decision. In US domestic terms it was useful to indicate the possible effect of non-ratification on the TNF programme, but it would clearly be counter-productive to establish too strong a link. We agreed to take any opportunities which presented themselves to try to influence the other Europeans concerned on this point. We also had a useful exchange of views on the machinery for Alliance consultation on SALT III.

- d. Timing. There was some discussion of the Italian proposals for advancing the timetable for Ministerial decision taking. Both sides were sympathetic to the Italian reasoning, but doubtful as to whether the Dutch in particular could accept any acceleration. The US team have still not ruled out the possibility, and will discuss it further in the other capitals, but it now appears likely that the original timetable will be maintained. (Head of DS 17 has minuted separately about practical implications of this).

- e. Public Presentation. We said that while public presentation was perhaps less of a problem in the UK than in some other countries, it nevertheless needed to be handled carefully and the question of the basing facilities was particularly sensitive. We raised the question of the unclassified data base which the US had promised to produce for this purpose, and this provided an opportunity to clarify the position on the publication of numbers of Vulcan front-line aircraft on which Ministers had been consulted earlier. This turned out to be the one point which remained to be resolved on the data base, and the US undertook to circulate a final version through their Embassy as soon as

possible (now received; copies will be circulated separately). We stressed that nothing must be said about the number of weapons the Vulcan force carried.

- f. UK/US Undertakings on Consultation. We took the opportunity to seek confirmation (which was readily given) that US GLCMs based in this country would be subject to the existing undertakings on consultation over the use of nuclear weapons which apply to other US nuclear weapons already based in the UK.

4. The US team also raised with us, on a very tentative thinking-aloud basis, the possibility that some further step might need to be taken, as an end-game move, to clinch political acceptance of the TNF package, particularly in the Netherlands. Their notion for this was that the Alliance might decide, or offer, to withdraw 1000 nuclear warheads from Europe, and present this as in effect a response to the Brezhnev speech. These warheads would be those currently included in the MBFR Option III package, and their military significance is minimal. The idea has appeal from several standpoints, and we indicated that we found it interesting; but more study would be needed. The US said they would sound out others about it. It is most important that the possibility should not leak - this would tend to remove its value as a last-minute clincher.

5. The question of a UK national LRTNF capability was not raised at the meeting, but it came up separately the following day. I made it clear to Mr Aaron that no decisions had yet been taken, but that quite aside from issues of policy and difficult financial burdens we would face a major problem over the development and production of warheads for a UK GLCM force. We were unlikely to be able to take the matter any further until firm decisions had been taken over the strategic successor system. Mr Aaron noted this, but made it clear that he hoped that we had not closed our minds to options in this area; the US might well want to come back to them. The implication seemed to be that the US might want to suggest dual-key warhead arrangements for UK-owned missiles.

22 October 1979

W.S.G.
M E QUINLAN
DUS(P)

Ref. A0461

PRIME MINISTER

*From: Minister.**Agree the reply to President Carter?
K.H. Hx.*

Copy No. 1 of 3 Copies

*Yes M.I.*Nuclear Defence Matters*attached*

I submit a draft reply to President Carter's message which you will remember seeing just after Dr. Aaron of the White House gave it to me on 17th October.

2. It is very good news that the President is willing to let us have whichever Polaris replacement we want, including a MIRV'd C4 if that should be what we choose. We had feared that the all-important MIRV capability might be a difficult matter for the Americans; but Dr. Aaron made clear both to myself and separately to Mr. Wade-Gery that the President's assurance was intended to cover MIRVing and that this was why it referred to the C4 missile system.

3. His fears about timing in relation to the Alliance's Theatre Nuclear Force decisions are reasonable and we should clearly do what we can to meet them. Provided that those decisions are taken on schedule, i. e. at the NATO meeting on 11th-13th December, there should be no real problem. We would probably not be ready for an announcement about Polaris replacement until early January anyway. But if the TNF decision were to start slipping things could be much more awkward. You will see that the President's message suggests that when you see him on 17th December you should discuss "the timing of any British request", which implies that the request itself might come later. My draft reply deliberately indicates that on 17th December you will want to deal with substance as well as timing. Our clear impression from Dr. Aaron is that the White House will not in practice jib at that.

4. Although the President's message does not say so, Dr. Aaron made clear that Mr. Carter is also concerned about timing in relation to Senate ratification of SALT II. This is now expected (fairly confidently, despite Cuba) in mid-December. Here too there will be no problem if the timetable sticks. But it has slipped already and could well slip further.

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5. We can, I think, carry on with taking our own decision on Polaris replacement in the timescale already planned. We should be ready for the key meeting of MISC 7 on 5th November. At that meeting, your colleagues would no doubt be happy to agree that the actual request for what we decide to go for should be handled personally by you when you see the President in December; and that you should then also sort out with him any problems about the timing of an announcement. It will of course be very important to ensure that there is absolutely no leak about the fact that MISC 7 has taken its decision; and you may wish to mention the matter to other colleagues only at the last Cabinet before you go to Washington. The Americans have hinted that because of the risk of leaks it might be better if we took no decision until just before you go to Washington. We can meet the substance of this by deferring Cabinet consideration until December and being on that basis ready in the interim to deny publicly (if need be) that any decision has been taken.

6. Meanwhile, given the extremely forthcoming nature of the second paragraph of the President's letter, we should clearly fall in with his wish to confine knowledge of the present correspondence to a very tight circle indeed. In particular the Americans do not want the two Navies to know about the President's decision at present and the United States Chiefs of Staff have not been told. You may like to tell the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence orally (I will be suggesting a possible moment for this on 22nd October); but I don't think the documents themselves should go outside No. 10 and the Cabinet Office. On the American side knowledge of the correspondence will, I gather, be confined to the President, Mr. Vance, Dr. Brown, Dr. Brzezinski, Dr. Aaron, one State Department official (Mr. Bartholomew) and the United States Ambassador here. *He must not mention it to anyone.*

Agreed

7. You may also like to see the attached note by Mr. Wade-Gery of the main points which Dr. Aaron and his team raised in their scheduled discussion of Polaris replacement on 18th October (the President's message was not of course mentioned at that meeting). I will also be letting you have a note of the main points which emerged at a meeting on TNF matters with Dr. Aaron and his team on 17th October; the most important of these is that the Americans are fairly

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confident about German, Italian and Belgian co-operation but are very uncertain about the Dutch and worried lest Dutch defection unravels the whole skein.

John
JOHN HUNT

19th October, 1979



TOP SECRET

DRAFT MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO
PRESIDENT CARTER

Dear Mr President,)

1. Thank you for your message of 15th October, about military nuclear matters, which David Aaron delivered to John Hunt during his very useful visit to London last week.

2. I warmly welcome what you say about your affirmative approach to the modernisation of the British strategic deterrent. As you know, my colleagues and I have not yet decided which system we would wish to go for. But it is very good to know that any of the alternatives under consideration could in practice be made available to us; and that in particular this would (if we so decide) cover the complete C4 missile system including its MIRV capability.

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Yours sincerely,

Margaret Thatcher.

M.J.

Agreed

PRIME MINISTER'S

Prime Minister + Mr 34

PERSONAL MESSAGE

Whitmore have seen. Sir

SERIAL No. T120/79T

J. Hunt will be submitting a

T120/79T

THE WHITE HOUSE

brief at the weekend, following

TOP SECRET

WASHINGTON

Talks with Mr Amou. *Amou 17/x*

October 15, 1979

Dear Madame Prime Minister:

As we go forward in the North Atlantic Alliance toward a decision on Theater Nuclear Forces, I want to share with you my views on the decisions which you and I will make concerning cooperation in the future modernization of the British nuclear deterrent.

First, I can assure you that my approach to the question of modernizing your strategic forces -- including the option of the C-4 Missile system -- will be affirmative and fully in keeping with our traditional relationship of close cooperation in the strategic nuclear field.

Second, with respect to the delicate question of timing of the decisions, I believe it is extremely important to avoid providing any pretext which either the Soviets or some of our more reluctant friends could seize upon to damage the prospects of an Alliance consensus on long-range theater nuclear deployments by the end of the year. I believe that too early an exposure of our plans regarding the British deterrent would provide an excuse for some of our friends not to assume their fair share both of LRTNF deployments and of the responsibility for the corresponding decisions.

Therefore, I suggest we discuss this issue, including the timing of any British request and American response, when we meet in December. I would also propose that to minimize the possibility of inadvertent disclosure, we keep to a minimum discussions between our respective officials, civilian and military.

I know I can count on your understanding of these timing considerations just as you can be confident

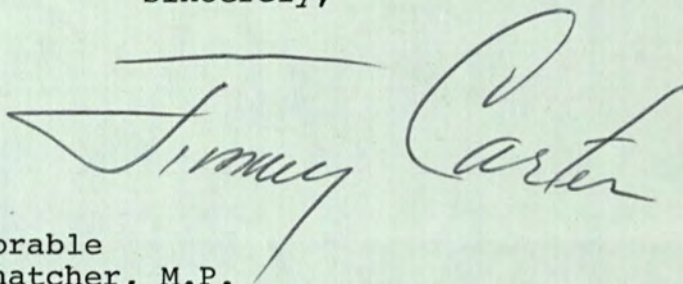
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of my appreciation of the contribution of
the British deterrent to the security of the
Alliance and of the need for its modernization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jimmy Carter". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

The Right Honorable
Margaret R. Thatcher, M.P.
Prime Minister
London

TOP SECRET