

## Annex 2: Exchange of letters between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States of America

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### *Letter from the Rt Hon Tony Blair MP, Prime Minister, to the Honorable George W Bush, President of the United States of America*

The United Kingdom Government attaches great importance to the maintenance of its independent nuclear deterrent capability, both as a means of ensuring the security of the United Kingdom and our vital interests, and as an important element of our contribution and commitment to the North Atlantic Alliance.

We have therefore to set in train the steps necessary to maintain our current submarine-based nuclear deterrent system, replacing those elements—in particular the submarines—that will reach the end of their planned life by the 2020s.

Following the agreement reached in an exchange of letters between the United Kingdom and the United States Governments in 1982 under the framework of the 1963 Polaris Sales Agreement, our current Vanguard class submarines have carried the Trident II D5 missile since they began to enter service in 1994. We have decided that we will replace the Vanguard submarines with another class of submarines in the 2020s, and would like these submarines to continue to carry Trident II D5 missiles.

Accordingly, we wish to participate in the planned life extension programme for the Trident II D5 missile, which we understand is intended to extend the life of the missiles into the 2040s. We also seek assurance that, in support of those missiles, the United States will provide us, under the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement, as amended for Trident, with sufficient equipment and supporting services to equip a force of new SSBNs. I propose that, as in the past, these matters be taken forward by the executive agencies of the two Governments to ensure mutually satisfactory solutions.

For the longer term, we need to be assured that we can, if we so choose, maintain a nuclear delivery system, with US assistance, for at least the remainder of the life of our successor submarine force. In this respect, the United Kingdom wishes to ensure that any successor to the D5 system is compatible with, or is capable of being made compatible with, the launch system for the D5 missile, which we will in the meantime be installing into our new submarines. We believe that there would be merit in the United Kingdom having the opportunity to participate, at an early stage, in any programme to replace the D5 missiles, or to discuss a further life extension—for UK purposes—of the D5 missile, to match the potential out of service date of our new submarines. I propose that, as in the past, close coordination should be maintained between the executive agencies of our two Governments in order to ensure the compatibility of equipment.

We wish also to maintain our cooperation under the 1958 Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic energy for Mutual Defence Purposes (“Mutual Defence Agreement”). In addition, I believe that this programme has the potential to open up new opportunities for future cooperation and collaboration on other aspects of future submarine platforms,

and we would wish our respective experts carefully to consider where this might be of mutual benefit.

As has been the case in the past with the Polaris force, and is currently the case with our Trident force, we intend that a future UK deterrent submarine force equipped with Trident, and any subsequent successor to Trident, will be assigned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation: and except where the United Kingdom Government may decide that supreme national interests are at stake, this successor force will be used for the purposes of international defence of the Atlantic Alliance in all circumstances.

*7 December 2006*

*Letter from the Honorable George W Bush, President of the United States of America to the Rt Hon Tony Blair MP, Prime Minister*

Thank you for your letter regarding modernizing your independent nuclear deterrent. The United States Government continues to attach great importance to the maintenance of an operationally independent nuclear deterrent capability by the United Kingdom and values the deep and long-standing cooperation between our two countries in this area.

The United States Government accordingly welcomes the steps outlined in your letter to maintain and modernize the UK's capability in this area for the longer term. We also attach importance to, and welcome, your intention to continue to assign this force to NATO.

The 1958 Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes ("Mutual Defense Agreement") and the 1963 Polaris Sales Agreement have provided a strong, enduring basis for cooperation between our two countries. We believe that these two agreements, the terms of which are not affected by this exchange of letters, will continue to provide a solid basis for ensuring mutually satisfactory cooperation in those areas where you have requested assurances. I can reaffirm the US commitment to support the missile system and associated equipment deployed by the United Kingdom under the terms of these agreements.

In this context, the United States fully supports and welcomes the intention of the United Kingdom to participate in the life-extension program for the Trident II D5 missile. We will work to ensure that the necessary components of the overall system are made available to the United Kingdom to support life-extended D5 missiles, under the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement and the 1982 Exchange of Letters. I fully agree with your suggestion that, as in the past, these matters be taken forward by the executive agencies of our two governments to ensure mutually satisfactory solutions.

For the longer term, in accordance with your proposal and under the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement and the 1982 Exchange of Letters, I would invite the United Kingdom to participate, at an early state, in any program to replace the D5 missiles or to discuss a further life extension—for your purposes—of the D5 missile to match the potential out-of-service date of your new submarines. In this respect, any successor to the D5 system should be compatible with, or be capable of being made compatible with, the launch system for the D5 missile, which you will be installing into your new submarines. The United States will also ensure under the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement and the 1982 Exchange of Letters that the United Kingdom has the option to sustain an

effective nuclear delivery system for at least the life of your successor submarine force as was done with the Polaris system. Again, I agree with you that, as in the past, close coordination should be maintained between the executive agencies of our two governments in order to ensure compatibility of equipment.

I agree that we should maintain our cooperation under the 1958 Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes ("Mutual Defense Agreement"). I also concur in your proposal that our two countries should also explore the scope for cooperation and collaboration on other aspects of future submarine platforms. We recognize the importance of this potential collaboration and will work to ensure that further cooperation in this area can be deepened accordingly.

*7 December 2006*