



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA
www.pm.gov.uk

7 December 2006

THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear George,

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.

Yours ever,
Tony

The Honorable George W Bush