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DR. PROFESSOR RONALD MASO

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

Telephone 01-218 6588 (Direct Dialling)

01-218 9000 (Switchboard)



CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER

12th October 1979

CSA/483/79

Dear John,

The Strategic Deterrent

Following the team's visit to Washington in mid-August, I re-convened my working party to revise Part III of the study of factors relating to consideration of the future of the UK nuclear deterrent. Our Report is enclosed.

Copies of this letter go to Douglas Wass, Michael Palliser, Terry Lewin and Frank Cooper.

Yours ever,
Rm.

Sir John Hunt, GCB
Cabinet Office

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PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister

Future of the British Deterrent

SM
20/12

There is a lot of paper already for tomorrow morning's meeting so I will confine this brief to a few key points.

2. Since the meeting on 13th December was postponed, this is the first meeting of Ministers to look at the study. There are three parts:-

- I The politico-military requirement
- II Criteria for deterrence
- III System options.

All three parts interrelate to some extent, but I think it is important to take them in that order, and not to try and take short cuts by going straight to Part III.

3. Parts I and II were prepared by a small group under the chairmanship of Sir Antony Duff. Part III was produced by a similar group chaired by Professor Mason (Chief Scientist, MOD). Both Sir Antony Duff and Professor Mason will be present at the meeting tomorrow. I do not think that it is necessary (unless you particularly wish either of them to do so) for them to introduce their studies since all three parts have useful Summaries at the front. I hope however that you will tell them that they are free to intervene to clarify any purely factual points (I say this particularly because Dr. Owen's minute of yesterday not only has a number of incorrect statements but also seems to misunderstand some of the statements in Part III).

4. As regards Parts I and II I sent you a brief on 12th December (A08555), and I have nothing to add to it.

5. As regards Part III I would like to emphasise only two points.

- (1) My minute of 15th December (A08593), which was copied to the other Ministers concerned, makes clear that the only decision required now is whether the stage has come when there should be talks with the Americans. It is very difficult to take the study any further without

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CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01-233 8319

From the Secretary of the Cabinet: Sir John Hunt GCB

Ref. A08609

2
1. Prime Minister
You asked where
the UK stood on
this.
2. How nuclear policy
20th December, 1978
29/12

Dear Bryan

Strategic Nuclear Policy

Thank you for your letter of 18th December about national doctrine on the use of strategic weapons. We agree that the Prime Minister's comments recorded in your second paragraph fairly epitomise the positions of the three countries concerned. Our own position is closest to that of the United States. Our latest official public statement of NATO's strategy of deterrence, which we support and to which our Polaris force contributes, is contained in paragraphs 117-119 of the 1978 Defence White Paper (Cmd 7099). I enclose a copy of these paragraphs for convenience. Looked at from a national point of view, there is no appropriate public statement of United Kingdom doctrine for the possible use of our strategic nuclear force in a national role. But this, as you will be aware, is analysed in Part I of the study submitted with Sir John Hunt's minute of 7th December, especially paragraphs 8-15.

I am sending copies of this letter to Kingsley Jones (Treasury), George Walden (FCO) and Roger Facer (MOD).

Yours ever
Maurice Vile

(M. J. Vile)
Private Secretary

B. G. Cartledge, Esq.

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PRIME MINISTER

MINISTERIAL MEETING ON NUCLEAR MATTERS

I am re-submitting your folder for the restricted Ministerial meeting on nuclear matters, now re-arranged for Thursday, 21 December at 0945, because it now contains a further paper - Part III (System Options and Their Implications) of the study which you commissioned. The preparation of Part III has, as you know, been accelerated so that there can be a preliminary discussion of it before your meeting in Guadeloupe.

19 December 1978

... the size of our present SSBN, to carry about 80 cruise missiles. On this basis they argue that submarine deployment will be one or two years later and that the cost will not be much different from a ballistic missile system. Paragraph 26 does mention the alternative, which I believe needs far more serious study, of deploying submarine-launched cruise missiles on existing SSNs. But it does not feature as a major part of the paper. We currently plan an SSN fleet of around 19 by the end of the 1990s. We need the SSNs anyway for non-nuclear purposes - and I have long advocated an increase in the SSN-building programme on its own merits. Equipping each of them with the ability to fire a salvo of five cruise missiles from their torpedo tubes need not be an unacceptable detraction from their other roles, and it would

* Passage deleted and retained under Section 3(4).

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PRIME MINISTER

FUTURE OF THE BRITISH DETERRENT

It may save discussion time tomorrow if I comment in advance on some of the ideas in the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute to you of 19th December.

2. Part III of the paper by officials takes as given the criteria suggested in Part II. If, as the minute suggests, we accept instead an order-of-magnitude reduction in our capability to inflict damage, then it naturally follows that different and smaller force options would come into the reckoning.

3. Even given this, the concept of small packages of cruise missiles on existing SSNs has further implications which we should note. Once we get away from a "dedicated" force, we are in effect changing other criteria as well as the damage criteria - we break away from year-round readiness, we increase vulnerability (because boats have other things to do besides hide), we may increase reaction time (because boats may be in the wrong place for firing and out of communication). In addition, we detract from the other and very important roles of the SSN - the pattern of deployment and operation for the strategic deterrent roles is incompatible with that for the existing roles. We have none too many SSNs now for these roles, and I note the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's view that we should have more. His proposal would have the opposite effect unless we built more boats - which in logic should then, as the paper by officials notes, be charged to the deterrent role.

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4. There are some further operational points to note. We know that Tomahawk could go into our SSNs. We also know that for technical reasons about forty minutes must elapse between salvos. The chance of CMs penetrating to the target - already a matter of some concern unless one is in business on the United States' scale - would not be improved by coming at the defences in penny packets. In addition, the submarines themselves would be more vulnerable, since the first salvo would disclose their positions.

5. I turn to the life of the present force. I take the boats first. Hull life is not the main problem (though we should note that US hulls are made of different metal from ours, so that assessments cannot be read across simply). Machinery is the earlier problem - it will become increasingly difficult and costly to maintain as we move into the 1990s, with longer and more frequent repair and refit needed; the risk of a break in the cycle, so that continuity of deployment was lost, would rise markedly. Operationally, too, the submarines would fall steadily further and further below likely future standards of quietness, and would thus be increasingly vulnerable.

6. Secondly, the missiles. The central factor here is motor life. We are having to look at this now, since it could be a problem as early as the mid-1980s. No amount of US missiles, however cheaply acquired, would carry us through the 1990s - almost all the US missiles are appreciably older than our own and some have begun to show a rather disconcerting failure rate in tests. We are already considering a modest buy on easy terms as an insurance "float", but this cannot be expected to take us beyond the early 1990s.

7. I am sending copies of this minute to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, and to Sir John Hunt.

20th December 1978

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CABINET
NUCLEAR DEFENCE POLICY

Note of a Meeting held at
10 Downing Street on
THURSDAY 21 DECEMBER 1978 at 9.45 am

PRESENT

The Rt Hon James Callaghan MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon Denis Healey MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Rt Hon David Owen MP
Secretary of State for Foreign
and Commonwealth Affairs

The Rt Hon Fred Mulley MP
Secretary of State for Defence

ALSO PRESENT

Sir Antony Duff
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Professor R Mason
Ministry of Defence

SECRETARIAT

Sir John Hunt
Sir Clive Rose

SUBJECT

FUTURE OF THE BRITISH DETERRENT

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FUTURE OF THE BRITISH DETERRENT

The Meeting had before it minutes from the Secretary of the Cabinet dated 7 and 15 December covering Parts I, II and III of a study of factors relating to further consideration of the future of the United Kingdom deterrent.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that there would be an opportunity during the forthcoming quadripartite summit meeting in Guadeloupe for him to raise the question of the future of the British deterrent with President Carter, if it was considered desirable to do so. Officials had therefore been asked to advance the completion date of the study so as to give Ministers a chance to consider it before the Guadeloupe meeting. He was however not certain whether we had yet reached the stage when it would be appropriate to speak to the President. There had been little time for preparation and so far no consultation with colleagues other than those present at the meeting. But there was clearly advantage in having a preliminary discussion of the subject before the Guadeloupe meeting at which various aspects of nuclear defence policy would be raised.

In discussion it was suggested that there was a strong case for maintaining our position as a nuclear power. The changes which had taken place over the last 30 years in international affairs, such as the Sino/Soviet quarrel, Yugoslavia's withdrawal from the Cominform, the development of fusion weapons and the rapid progress in decolonisation, had not been predicted in advance. Developments in the next 30 years were likely to be equally uncertain. The Atlantic Alliance had lasted longer than might have been predicted 30 years ago, but no one could say what would be its future or the future of United States/Soviet relations in the period to which we had to look forward. Similar uncertainty applied to relations between the two parts of Germany and the Soviet Union and China. In this situation it would make sense, if we could afford it, to maintain a contribution which would reinforce the weaker links in Alliance deterrence. This would act as a stabilising factor, particularly in relation to Germany, and also as a balance to France, who would otherwise remain the only nuclear power in Europe. Moreover, we could not rule out the possibility that within the timescale we had to consider we might find ourselves having to face alone Soviet political pressure or military threats. In this situation, a British deterrent would provide us with the basis for resistance.

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*This is a copy. The original
has been removed and
retained under Section 3(4)*

The question then was what level of deterrence was required. It was suggested that the options proposed in Part II of the study were unnecessarily exacting. The Russians would be deterred by a fairly small risk of serious damage because they would not be able to afford being weakened in relation to other potentially hostile nuclear powers, namely the United States, China and France. On the other hand, our nuclear deterrent had to be designed not only to deter the Russians, but to be credible to our allies and ourselves. For this purpose, the power to destroy ~ Soviet cities, * ~~~~~ *, would probably be sufficient. This was somewhat less than Option 3a in Part II of the study, which postulated the destruction of ~ cities * ~~~~~ * On the other hand, it was argued that deterrence could be achieved by a very much lower level of destruction based on no more than one city. The Russians would be unwilling to take the risk of losses even on this scale resulting from a retaliatory nuclear strike by the United Kingdom. Inevitably, Part III of the study had been based on the damage criteria postulated in Part II and this had led to a more sophisticated and more expensive range of hardware options than was required, or indeed than we could afford. Despite the doubts expressed about credibility, consideration should be given to a fourth option at a much lower level than the existing three, which would enable further study to be conducted on cheaper hardware systems, and might make a force based on submarine launched cruise missiles a more attractive proposition.

In further discussion it was emphasised that budgetary considerations were a key factor. It was likely to prove difficult to sustain defence expenditure on the present basis, in particular the level of expenditure on equipment. The proportion of the defence budget pre-empted for fixed purposes, primarily personnel costs, amounted to about two-thirds of the total and this left little room for manoeuvre. We might have to choose in the future between continuing to operate a land/air strategy in continental Europe or a sea/air strategy based on the Atlantic. At this stage we should not rule out any hardware option for the deterrent, but we would need to look carefully at the criteria and the costs, so as to ensure that any system which was selected did not

** ~ * passages deleted and
retained under Section 3(4).*

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*Wayland
5 March 2009*

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pre-empt too large a proportion of our resources. The Americans might be prepared to sell us the Trident (C4) system, which would be a great deal more reliable and effective, and possibly cheaper, than the French M. But it was very unlikely that they would give us the MIRV element. At the same time we should pursue the idea of a force based on cruise missiles for which we would hope to acquire technology from the Americans so as to enable us to develop our own cruise missiles more cheaply. A force of 10 SSBNs carrying cruise missiles would enable us to keep 7 or 8 on patrol at one time, which would provide a much better hedge, and at lower cost, against increased Soviet ASM capability than the one, or possibly two, SSBNs we would be able to maintain on patrol under the Ballistic Missile options. It was pointed out, however, that for the Americans cruise missiles would be only one of three systems operating in their strategic forces, the other two being land-based ICBMs and SLEBs. Moreover, they were concentrating on Tomahawk air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) and did not intend to produce a sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM), which is the version in which we had an interest. Although the Americans were at present expressing high confidence in the effectiveness of cruise missiles this was intended to impress Congress whose approval would have to be sought in January for funding the programme. Our own studies were much more pessimistic about the ability of cruise missiles to penetrate likely Soviet defences.

In further discussion it was pointed out that we had taken our studies about as far as we could on an in-house basis. We could not hope to get much further without being able to consult the Americans about costs and technical aspects. If we were to embark on such consultation this need not preclude the possibility of collaboration with the French if this should seem to be to our advantage and we should be careful not to foreclose the French option at this stage. Although existing United States legislation prevented the Americans from officially collaborating with the French, there was little doubt that they had given the French some technical help in developing their deterrent, of which we had not however been informed. The Guadeloupe meeting would provide a good chance for the Prime Minister to talk privately to President Carter during the two days after President Giscard and Chancellor Schmidt had left, without

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however at that stage asking him for any commitment. It would be possible to explain to him that we were considering how to deal with the future of our deterrent when the Polaris force was phased out, and that the main obstacle seemed likely to be financial. The Prime Minister might be able to get a feel of how far President Carter would be willing to go to help. This was an area in which the President had considerable expertise as a former naval officer concerned with Polaris, and we could be sure therefore that he would have a good grasp of the issues involved.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the meeting had been useful in enabling Ministers to have a preliminary discussion of the subject on the basis of the detailed studies prepared by officials. The immediate question for consideration was whether he should raise the matter with President Carter privately in Gandeloupe and, if so, what he should say. They had not yet come to any firm conclusion on this and would discuss it again at a further meeting of the group on 2 January. Apart from this no decisions were required at this stage and they would wish to return to the subject in more detail at a later meeting.

The Meeting -

Took note, with approval, of the Prime Minister's summing up of their discussion.

Cabinet Office
22 December 1978

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PRIME MINISTER

The U.K. Deterrent:
Ministerial Meeting on 2 January

At this morning's restricted Ministerial meeting, you said that you would wish to continue the discussion of the U.K. deterrent at a further meeting on 2 January. I have taken the opportunity of tidying up your folder for the meeting, which has become bulky.

The papers which, so far as I am aware, you have not yet had an opportunity to read, are:

- Paper 2C (part III of the overall study, dealing with system options and their implications)
- Paper 5 (U.K. doctrine on the use of strategic weapons)
- Paper 6 (modernisation of N.A.T.O. theatre nuclear forces).

The guide for which you asked at this morning's meeting on the characteristics of all the various weapons systems mentioned in these papers is in preparation and will reach you before the Guadeloupe briefing meeting on 2 January. *BW.*

Now
in
Folder
(on 60)
Bw.

21 December 1978

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FUTURE OF THE BRITISH DETERRENT

THE PRIME MINISTER said that at their meeting on 21 December the Group had held a first discussion of the studies prepared by officials. No conclusion had been reached but it was now necessary to decide whether he should raise with President Carter privately in Guadeloupe the future of the British deterrent. If this was agreed, the next question was what line he should take. Should he explain in general terms the current state of our thinking and seek President Carter's agreement to subsequent and detailed bilateral discussion, without commitment, about what the Americans might be prepared to make available and what it would be likely to cost? Or should he put a more specific proposition, still without commitment, to the President, whether related to a ballistic missile force on its own, a ballistic missile force with cruise missiles as ancillary weapons or a force based only on cruise missiles?

In discussion there was general agreement that the Guadeloupe meeting presented an ideal opportunity to broach the matter with President Carter privately and at a time when he was likely to be sympathetic to our interests. He had put a great deal of political capital into the SALT talks but would have a struggle to get a SALT II Agreement ratified by Congress. He needed expressions of support from his European allies, but Senator Jackson was busy collecting European criticisms of the SALT negotiations which he could use in the Congressional debate. President Carter might well conclude that Britain was his best friend and staunchest ally on this issue. Although we had some criticism of the way in which the Americans had handled consultations with their allies during SALT II, we had been generally constant in our support for the negotiations and the importance of retaining this support would not be lost on the President. We were unlikely to get a better opportunity of sounding out whether, and in what form, American help might be forthcoming if we were to decide upon replacement of the deterrent: and officials had made it clear that their work could not be taken much further without discussions with the Americans.

As to what should be said, it was suggested that there might be advantage in making a firm request for cruise missile technology. On the other hand, it was pointed out that we had not yet reached the stage when we could say definitely that this was what we wanted. Cruise missiles were not necessarily the best solution and we might decide in the end to go for the Trident C4. It would be

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better for the Prime Minister to take the line with President Carter that we did not need to take a firm decision about the future of our deterrent until the end of 1979 but that we were beginning to examine the various possibilities. We had however to take into account both cost effectiveness and the attitude of our allies to a decision to move into the next generation. The Prime Minister could then say that we would like to discuss with the United States Administration, on a very discreet basis and without commitment, what options might be most appropriate, whether the United States were willing to transfer technology to us, and whether, if we wished to go by this route, we would be able to make a direct purchase from the United States. The Americans were undoubtedly thinking about the future of their own deterrent in the context of developments in the SALT negotiations, and might respond favourably to a suggestion that we should send two senior officials to Washington to talk about these issues on a very confidential and restricted basis.

In further discussion it was pointed out that there was likely to be a major public debate about the SALT negotiations in which it could well be suggested that the Americans had sacrificed European interests: and there would also be discussion within the Alliance. This could well influence the argument about the future of our own nuclear deterrent. The Defence and External Affairs Sub Committee of the Expenditure Committee (DEASC) had already begun their enquiry into the future of our nuclear weapons policy and had circularised Members of Parliament in other European countries to ask for their views on our deterrent. In some ways this was unfortunate, but it was suggested that, although hitherto great secrecy had always surrounded this subject, there might now be advantage in having the matter discussed more publicly. There was bound to be a major argument in the Labour Party and, in deciding on the outcome, public opinion could be of considerable importance. A formula for inclusion in the Manifesto would in any case be required.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the Group were not yet ready to take a decision even in principle, though he himself favoured the Trident C4 option. They agreed however that he should raise the issue, privately and without commitment, with President Carter in Guadeloupe. To some extent he would have to feel his way, but if President Carter showed readiness to be helpful he would work out with him the best way of exploring the matter more thoroughly. It should be remembered that, however favourable

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the atmosphere in Guadeloupe might be, there might be contrary pressures when the President returned to Washington: for this reason, and although he realised this was unlikely, if he found the President was willing to offer him the Trident C4 on very favourable terms, he would be inclined to respond positively and say that he would discuss the matter carefully with his colleagues. As regards the Manifesto, the Defence Secretary should prepare for their consideration a formula on our nuclear weapons policy on which it would be possible to take a firm stand.

The Meeting -

Took note, with approval, of the Prime Minister's summing up of their discussion.

Cabinet Office

3 January 1979

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PRIME MINISTER'S CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT CARTER:
1.30 p.m., 5 January, at Guadeloupe

I woke the President up and said I wanted to talk to him about something important. I then explained to him the ground we had been over in considering the next generation of nuclear weapons. I explained to him that we might have to replace some of the motors of the Polaris missiles in the middle 1980s and that we had made a detailed in-house study ourselves about what would be involved if we decided on a new generation and we now wished to carry our studies further on a confidential basis. I wanted to know what his reaction would be. Our approach was that any successor system should be cost effective and that it should add to total security. For us as a nation the balance of advantage was only marginal and it could well be that we could use the resources to better effect in more conventional directions. This was why I had put the question to Schmidt this morning and had received the same answer that he had given me on an earlier occasion, namely that he wishes us to remain in the nuclear field. The President said that he too was glad that we were in the nuclear field and that he hoped strongly that both we and the French would remain. He did not wish the United States to be the only country that confronted the Soviet Union. What kind of system were we thinking of? I said we ruled out the GLCM for the time being. At this stage we were basically attracted to a submarine launched missile and for my part if the cost could be properly apportioned what I thought would be best would be the Trident C4. Did he see any objection? He said that there was no objection at all. I pointed out to him that it was MIRVed and that we did not have a MIRVed missile at the moment. He said "Well, so is the SS 20 MIRVed". Incidentally what I called the Trident C4 he called the Trident 1. I asked if they were the same and he said they were. He said it was the C5 (which I was calling the D5) which was still on the drawing board. At any rate it was quite clear that both of us were speaking of a MIRVed warhead. He said that the United States had always got the greatest benefits out of co-operation with Britain, that if they could transfer some of their technology to us it helped them on unit costs in production. I said that of course cost would be extremely important. One

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figure that I had seen was 10 billion dollars and this was beyond our capacity, so if he thought it was of value to have us in then I hoped that they would be able to help us very substantially financially. He said that they thought they could, and said that when it came to production it would lower their unit cost of production if we were in the field. I then said that I did not want any publicity at present, but I would like to send a couple of officials over who could talk about systems and cost. He agreed immediately, and said that Harold Brown was the man who he would nominate to talk about this. I asked if he meant Harold Brown personally and he said either he himself or somebody he would nominate. I said that we would send our Chief Scientist, Professor Mason, and someone else, and that we would be in touch with him about it. His whole attitude was extremely forthcoming and co-operative.

We moved on to one or two other related topics. He said that he had been very disappointed by Helmut's attitude this morning and he did not understand it. He would like to tell me a little later about Teng Hsiao Ping's attitude to nuclear disarmament because as the United States and the USSR disarmed more the significance of the countries with smaller nuclear armaments increased. He said he would do this later. I said that I thought this afternoon we should press Giscard very strongly on how he saw SALT III developing. For my part I then repeated the attitude that we had developed - namely that there was no difference between a weapon that was called strategic and was launched from Moscow to hit Washington and one that was launched from Moscow and hit London, and that it seemed to me we must wrap up grey areas and so-called strategic weapons together. He said he agreed. I said I didn't know what forum this could be done in, but it was important to know how far Giscard would come. I also said that whilst I was not stating a final British position, if at the end of the day there was an advantage both to world peace and to the strength of the Alliance at the end of the negotiation in Britain giving up her nuclear capacity, then I would certainly not rule that out. He said he understood that I was not putting forward the policy position, but that this was something we would need to consider together.

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Prime Minister

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PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Matters: Next Steps

There are, I think, two things which will need to be done in the fairly near future.

Firstly, you have it in mind to write to President Carter confirming your conversation with him and asking whom our two visitors should contact. I will let you have a draft for this purpose, but first it is necessary to settle the composition of our team. Professor Ron Mason must clearly be one of them. I think careful thought needs to be given to the second. You will remember that the three parts of our own nuclear study were produced by small groups under the chairmanship of Sir Antony Duff and Professor Mason. Sir Antony Duff chaired the first group (which was concerned with criteria and the case for having a deterrent) because he is Chairman of the JIC and there clearly had to be a large intelligence input. This is not however the part of the study which will feature predominantly in the discussions with the Americans, and in any case I think it is arguable that you should have someone who reports directly to you in the team, both so that he can report directly to you and so that he can have in mind considerations of special concern to you. I think this points to the second member of the team being Sir Clive Rose, or if you prefer it, myself. I do not think that this would cause any problems with Sir Antony Duff.

The second question is what you say to your colleagues. I think a decision to go for the Trident C4 would require a wider Cabinet endorsement than the restricted group of Ministers which have looked at the issue so far: but we are a long way from that yet. The purpose of the mission (whose remit will need to be cleared specifically with you) will be essentially exploratory, and I do not think it is necessary at this stage to widen the circle of Ministerial consideration. You will however need to tell the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence about your conversation with President Carter since at the last restricted meeting you told them that you would raise the matter with President Carter at Guadeloupe and report back. It will not

*Discussed
LHC 12 PM
was after
P. Rose &
Mason
AM*

*Let's have
a word
about
this.*

*Yes we
are.
I put that question
to him to see
what was the
range of
options*

23/ will report to them.

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however be sufficient to tell them simply about this one conversation with the President. They will need to know how you got on in the discussion with President Carter, Chancellor Schmidt and President Giscard about SALT III and the grey areas. I rather doubt whether a straightforward circulation of the records is the right answer. SALT III and the grey areas were dealt with both at the second meeting on Friday afternoon and at the meeting on Saturday morning: and there are a number of remarks attributed to individuals which ought not perhaps to get a wider circulation. I suggest therefore that the right course would be for us to let you have a draft paper which you could circulate to the restricted meeting which would draw on the records in a way which would give your colleagues a coherent picture of what had been discussed and the conclusions reached.

I should be grateful if you would let me know whether you would like me to let you have a draft letter to President Carter and a draft paper for the restricted meeting on the lines suggested above.

J.H.
(John Hunt)

7th January 1979

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AND PERSONAL

Prime Minister
Agree to send a
scaled personal message
in these terms?

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MR. CARTLEDGE

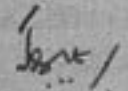
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Future of British Nuclear Deterrent

Following his conversation with President Carter at Guadeloupe on 5th January, the Prime Minister had a short talk with Sir Clive Rose and me in Barbados on 9th January about his "follow up" letter to the President and about the composition of our team to visit Washington.

I now attach a draft letter which is, I think, largely self-explanatory. I should however like to comment briefly on the wording of the fourth, fifth and sixth sentences in the second paragraph. It is important to mention the C4 specifically in case the President has not debriefed to his own people, and the letter should not say anything which would have the effect of diluting the impression that the C4 may be our front runner: but equally the visiting team ought not to be confined to discussing C4 since we shall need also to cover other options such as Cruise missiles and a "modernised" Polaris. Hence the reference to "perhaps other possible systems options".

Given the very private nature of the Prime Minister's conversation with the President, I rather doubt whether the message ought to go over the hot line. If you will let me have the Prime Minister's letter when he has signed it I will arrange for it to be delivered unopened to the President.


(John Hunt)

15th January, 1979

TOP SECRET

P.2

6

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typed 19/11
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DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER
TO PRESIDENT CARTER

We spoke privately in Guadeloupe about the future of our nuclear deterrent. I told you that we had recently begun to think about whether to develop a successor to Polaris. So far we have taken no decision about this and indeed there is no immediate need for a decision since our Polaris force, with the improvements we are making, will last into the 1990s.

But we shall have to take certain decisions within the next year. With this in view I told you that we had embarked on detailed preliminary studies of the possibilities open to us. But we have found that we cannot take these any further without discussing with your people certain technical and financial aspects. I mentioned that the option which at present seemed to me most likely to meet our requirements was the Trident C4 MIRVed missile. You said you would be willing in principle to consider the possibility of making this available to us if it turned out to be what we wanted and that you hoped it would be possible to work out satisfactory financial terms. You kindly agreed that I should send over to Washington two people who could talk about this, and perhaps other possible system options at the same time. I should like to send Sir Clive Rose, a Deputy Secretary in the Cabinet Office, who was with me in Guadeloupe, and Professor Ron Mason, who is the Chief Scientific Adviser in our Ministry of Defence. Would you let me know whom they should arrange to meet and when this would be convenient?

TOP SECRET

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CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01-233 8319

From the Secretary of the Cabinet: Sir John Hunt GCB

Ref: A08710

15th January 1979

Dear Bryan

P.O.
JWH
14,

Restricted Meeting on Nuclear Matters

This is to confirm that the next meeting of the Restricted Group of Ministers which has been discussing nuclear matters will take place at 10.00 am on the fourth, fifth and next Friday, 19th January. It is proposed to circulate beforehand an account of the Prime Minister's discussions in Guadeloupe in this area.

I am copying this letter to George Walden, FCO, Tony Battishill, Treasury and Roger Facer, MOD.

Yours ever
Martin Vile

(M. J. Vile)

B. G. Cartledge, Esq.

(John Hunt)

15th January, 1979

Prime Minister
Agree to send a
scaled personal message
in these terms?
No. 1 of 3 Copies

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10 Apr -
Prime Minister's minute
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in new form? (but 15/1)
Copy No. 1 of 3 Copies

Ref. A08715

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Defence Policy

I attach a draft minute recording the discussions at Guadeloupe about grey area systems and the future of the British deterrent which you may like to send to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence. This would provide the basis for further consideration of both these subjects at the restricted meeting on 19th January.

2. The minute is rather long. But these subjects are of major importance and discussion of them occupied more time than any others. I believe therefore that you will wish to give your colleagues a fairly full account of what transpired. I have not suggested any specific questions for consideration because you may prefer to leave it to your colleagues to comment on the outcome, which has opened up some new prospects for the handling of both these subjects.

John
JOHN HUNT

15th January, 1979

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from that. Nor was there general readiness to ask Foreign or Defence Ministers to continue our discussion. Accordingly I suggested that Carter could only sound out Brezhnev on a non-committal basis in February. After reflecting on this overnight, Carter came up with a proposal from which no-one dissented. This was that he would tell Brezhnev of his concern about the increasing deployment of the SS 20 and would say that he would like negotiations on this which would also take into account United States forward based systems. In proposing this he would leave open the question whether these discussions should take place in SALT III or in a separate negotiation. He would make it clear that any discussion of United States forward based systems would have to be on the basis of their probable modernisation rather than the status quo, and he would take care not to jeopardise any European interests or agree at this stage to the inclusion of any European-owned weapons in the negotiations. As regards follow-up among the four, Carter proposed that Dr. Brzezinski's deputy for SALT matters, Mr. David Aaron, should visit Bonn, London and Paris in the first week of February for confidential bilateral discussions with representatives of President Giscard, Chancellor Schmidt and myself. The purpose of these would be to clarify options which could then be further considered by us. This was agreed.

9. I had a separate private discussion with Carter about the future of our nuclear deterrent. I told him ^{that before we would consider it we would need} ~~we had recently begun~~ to consider whether to develop a successor to Polaris and if so what form it should take. I made it clear that we were at this stage not committed even in principle to a successor

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and that we had no need to take an immediate decision since our Polaris force, with the improvements we were making, should last into the 1990s. But I explained that we had reached a point in our detailed studies of the possible options when we could not take them much further without having discussions with the Americans about technical and financial aspects. I put it to Carter that the option which ^{on final information} at this stage I ~~would~~ ^{would} favour as being most likely to meet our requirements was the Trident C4 Mirved missile; would he be willing in principle to make this available to us and on a financial basis which would be within the limits of what we could afford? In reply Carter reaffirmed his support for the maintenance of an independent British deterrent (Schmidt also did this in the quadripartite forum) and said he was very ready to consider letting us have the Mirved C4 if this was what we wanted and that he thought it should be possible to work out satisfactory financial terms. He agreed to my suggestion that I should send over to Washington a small team to talk about this. I ^{for you to tell} have since told the President that I should like to send Sir Clive Rose and Professor Mason to Washington as soon as can be arranged and asked him to let me know whom they should contact on the American side. Since we have at this stage reached no final decision on our preferred option, I ~~have expressed~~ ^{would} the hope that the team may also be able to discuss details of other possible system options at the same time. I ^{Personal} hope you will agree that this was a satisfactory start. It does not commit us to anything, nor of course does it involve any firm commitment on the part of the United States Government. But it shows that the President himself

[Subject to your
agreement to the
first message to
President Carter]

Send after
and
Nashby

TOP SECRET

is more sympathetic to our problems and more inclined to be forthcoming in a practical sense than we had thought probable when we discussed this subject on 2nd January. K

10. We shall now need to take further our consideration both of future options for the British deterrent and of our position on grey area systems. I suggest we should discuss both these subjects, in the light of what transpired at Guadeloupe, at our meeting on 19th January.

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cc Nuclear Strategy
Group

and Mr. McNally.

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

TELEPHONE 01-218 9000
DIRECT DIALING 01-218 2111/3

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MD 18/1/1

PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister

18/1

At our meeting on nuclear defence policy on 2nd January, I was asked to prepare for consideration a formula on our nuclear weapons policy for inclusion in the Manifesto.

2. You will recall that the October 1974 Manifesto included the following paragraph:

"Starting from the basis of the multilateral disarmament negotiations, we will seek the removal of American Polaris bases from Britain. We have renounced any intention of moving towards a new generation of strategic nuclear weapons."

3. I should also draw your attention to the passage in the Labour Party Campaign handbook "Defence and the Pursuit of Peace", which I enclose an extract. No formula, therefore, which keeps open the option of replacing our Polaris force can be wholly consistent with the 1974 Manifesto, but I suggest that the following could be a basis on which we could stand; it is also in line with your own remarks in the House yesterday:

"During the next Parliament decisions will be needed on the future on Britain's contribution to NATO's nuclear capability. We shall ensure that these grave matters are not settled without proper public debate and a balanced appraisal of our true security interest including arms control factors."

4. I am copying this minute to Denis Healey and David Owen; a copy also goes to Sir John Hunt.

*including arms control factors
as well as the
security interest Fm.*

18th January 1979

SECRET
SECRET