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PSO/CDS

STOCKS OF FISSILE MATERIAL

1. CDS asked for a short note on the impact of supplies of fissile material on future nuclear programmes. In broad terms, the situation is as set out below:

a. Irrespective of whether a UK LRTNF is introduced, the UK will have to acquire a modest amount of special nuclear materials from the United States in order to fulfill the existing weapons programme (ie Chevaline WE 177 maintenance and its replacement NAST 1231).

b. If the programmes shown above plus a Successor System are undertaken a significant amount of fissile materials would be needed from the United States (especially if MIRV'd warheads are used in the successor system).

I why?

c. Given significant help from the US the addition of 100 British warheads for GLCMS would raise no great problems from the fissile material aspect.

d. But WE 177 maintenance, NAST 1231, LRTNF GLCMS, and Successor Systems would raise warhead production and assembly problems. Any programme would have to be done sequentially as set out below:

(1) 1985-86 (inc), production of British warheads for 100 UK GLCMS.

- 100

(2) 1987-89 (inc), production of two thirds of NAST 1231 weapons replace WE 177. But sufficient WE 177s could probably be kept in service to maintain a mixed stockpile of NAST 1231 and WE 177 so that the total number of weapons would not fall.

- 200 + 100

1 of
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