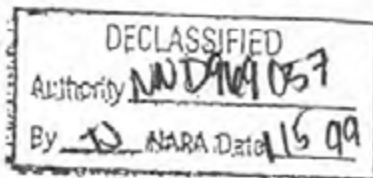


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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ACTION MEMORANDUM

S/S
POM

January 30, 1973

TOP SECRET/NODIS

To: The Under Secretary for Political Affairs

From: PM [signature] Ronald I. Spiers

Forthcoming Visit of Prime Minister Heath:
Possible Request for POSEIDON

During the past two weeks, State and Defense have picked up a number of indications that Mr. Heath may be planning to ask the President whether the United States would be prepared to sell the POSEIDON missile system to the United Kingdom. In his January 18 letter to Mr. Kissinger, Secretary Laird strongly urged that the US not make a commitment of any sort to the British in the event Mr. Heath made an approach at the White House level on POSEIDON.

We believe that it would not be desirable at this stage to give either an affirmative or a negative decision on the sale of POSEIDON to the UK. We believe that a sympathetic but non-committal response to the Prime Minister would best advance the interests of the US at this point.

A memo to Mr. Kissinger setting forth this position and explaining the reasons underlying it is attached.

Recommendation:

That you sign the attached memo to Mr. Kissinger.

Attachment:

Memo to Mr. Kissinger

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Drafted: PM/AE:HGHandyside:rgH
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Clearance: EUR - Mr. Springsteen (draft) [signature]

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By W. ANARA Data 15 99

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Date: 2-1-73 1973

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TOP SECRET/NODIS

To: The Secretary
From: PM [Signature] Ronald I. Spiers

Visit of British Prime Minister Heath:
"Nuclear Questions"

[Signature]
10/30/78

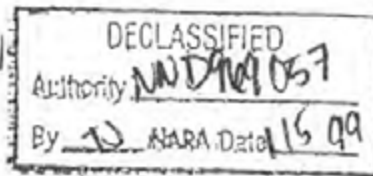
Although the list of topics for the forthcoming Heath meetings handed us by the British Embassy did not include any reference to nuclear matters, State and Defense staff members in the past two weeks have picked up several indications both here and in London that Prime Minister Heath is planning to raise a number of "nuclear questions" with the President. Despite active probing of British officials, we have not yet been able to obtain any elaboration of precisely what Mr. Heath has in mind. A quick survey of US-UK cooperation in the military utilization of nuclear energy may therefore be helpful.

History: During World War II and then beginning again in 1955, the US and the UK have worked extremely closely across a broad spectrum of nuclear research, weapons development, and military operational planning (including understandings covering prior consultation on the use of nuclear weapons). The extensive sharing of scientific data, weapons technology, propulsion information, special nuclear materials, and equipment (including the non-nuclear components of weapons) has been, and is still being, carried out under the Agreements for ATOMIC ENERGY: Cooperation for Mutual Defense Purposes signed in July 1958 and May 1959. An elaborate structure of Joint Working Groups (JOWOGs) and an extensive program of exchanges of documentation and personnel has been devised to implement this exchange of data. For nearly a decade, we shared virtually all our weapons technology with the British nuclear technicians, and supplied Britain with substantial equipment (including a complete submarine propulsion plant) and nuclear materials. In 1965, however, the US decided to begin gradually to narrow somewhat the scope of our nuclear cooperation. Since that time, we have restricted the

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transfer of data to information about weapons systems HMG already possessed or had firmly decided to acquire. Thus information about our most advanced nuclear weapons systems (e.g. Minuteman, POSEIDON) has not been given to the British.

Recent Developments: Since 1967, the need to modernize and improve the UK POLARIS force has increasingly concerned the British. In 1969, HMG requested US help in analyzing the vulnerability of their POLARIS missiles to Soviet ABM defenses and hardening them to withstand the effects of a nuclear counter attack. In 1969, the ad hoc working arrangements between the two governments were formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding that committed the US to provide design critiques, engineering assistance, and test support. In 1971, the President authorized DOD to respond affirmatively to the UK request for assistance in the Project Definition phase of the development program (Super Antelope) the British technicians had devised to meet the vulnerability/hardening problem. Last summer (1972), the President authorized DOD and AEC to provide the additional assistance the British had requested: further engineering help; participation in additional nuclear effects tests; underground tests of three or more British designed and built nuclear devices at the Nevada Test Site; and flight testing on US ranges.

Current Issues: Although the British Cabinet has authorized the Ministry of Defense staff to proceed with certain long lead-time actions in the Super Antelope program, it has not made any final decision on the whole program and is not now expected to do so until April. Meanwhile, the Royal Navy continues to press vigorously for the purchase of POSEIDON from us in place of the Super Antelope up-grading of the UK POLARIS force. We can expect requests from HMG either for still further assistance on the Super Antelope program or for the outright purchase of the POSEIDON weapons system. The working levels in State and Defense believe we should agree to assist HMG through the Engineering Development stage of Super Antelope, and that we should not make any definitive response -- whether positive or negative -- to a British request for POSEIDON until we have completed a careful study of all the issues involved.

Certain provisions of the 1958-1959 Cooperation Agreements must be reviewed during the next 18 months and appropriate actions taken to renew, renegotiate, or terminate them.

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Article II covering the exchange of information will continue in effect beyond December 31, 1974, unless one of the parties notifies the other prior to December 31, 1973 of its intention to terminate the exchange program. Article III covering the transfer of materials and equipment will expire at the end of 1974 unless positive steps are taken to renew it. The State staff has already begun an intensive study of both the bilateral US-UK aspects of the problem and the multilateral, pan-European implications (Anglo-French nuclear Cooperation, European nuclear force, European defense posture -- conventional and nuclear -- through 1995, US defense relationships with Europe through 1995, etc.) of a decision to continue or terminate our special nuclear relationship with Britain.

Ambassador Johnson has sent a memo to Mr. Kissinger informing him that Heath may raise certain nuclear questions with the President.

Attachment: Johnson-Kissinger memo of January 30.

cc: ISP
EUR/NE

AS/S # 7301756

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Drafted: ~~PM/AE~~:HGHandyside:rg
21835 1/29/73

Clearances: EUR/NE - Mr. Burns (in draft) ~~4~~
PM/ISP - Mr. Terrell ~~4~~

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Reviewed by: *John Brogan*
Date: *January 30, 1973*

7301756

UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

Queen
10/30 78

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER
THE WHITE HOUSE

COPIES TO
EUR
PM

Subject: Possible Request from Prime
Minister Heath for POSEIDON

M
B
-WH/PND or
PW

Over the past two weeks, State and Defense have picked up a number of indications that Prime Minister Heath has decided to raise certain "nuclear questions" in his forthcoming meetings with the President, and specifically that he may ask the President whether the US would be prepared to sell the POSEIDON missile system to the United Kingdom. If Mr. Heath in fact decides to raise the POSEIDON matter, he will in all likelihood, to avoid the danger of a premature rejection, put it as a hypothetical question: "If we were to ask you to sell us POSEIDON, Mr. President, what would your reply be?"

In his January 18 letter to you, Secretary Laird strongly urged that the US not make a commitment of any sort to the British should the latter make an approach at the White House level on POSEIDON. This seems to me sensible for a variety of reasons, and I should therefore like to record here the Department of State's strong support for Mel Laird's recommendation.

We believe that it would not be desirable at this stage to give either an affirmative or a negative response to the UK on the sale of POSEIDON. Any definitive response, even to a hypothetical question, at this stage would fore-close options we believe should be kept open up to another twelve to fourteen months.

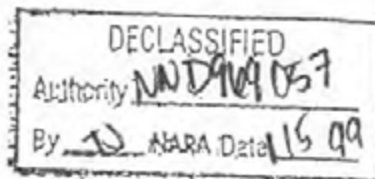
There are two evolving situations which have a direct and immediate impact on the question of the sale of the POSEIDON system to the United Kingdom. Both should be

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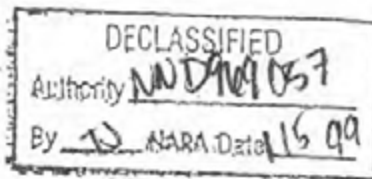
allowed to develop naturally for roughly a year. Only then, after we are further into the transition, will we be able to perceive the direction of evolution sufficiently to permit us to make sound and sensible recommendations to the President on our future course.

First -- The controversy between the advocates of the Super Antelope route to the up-grading of the British strategic nuclear force and the partisans of POSEIDON is still going on within the British Government. Although the Cabinet authorized the staff of the Ministry of Defense to proceed with a number of long lead-time actions for the Super Antelope program, it has made no final decision on the program and is now not expected to do so until April. Meanwhile, the Royal Navy continues at every opportunity to press for the purchase of POSEIDON.

According to the DOD technicians who are familiar with the British program, Super Antelope is an imaginative new approach which successfully resolves the vulnerability/hardening problem confronting the UK POLARIS force. DOD's preliminary technical analysis suggests strongly that Super Antelope is -- from the British viewpoint -- by far the better system. It is designed to meet precisely the strategic goals the British have set for themselves; it could be on line two to three years sooner than POSEIDON; it would be significantly less costly than POSEIDON; and the required expenditures would be made largely within the UK and spent through nuclear installations which the British wish to keep alive in any event.

So far, however, the internal maneuvering within HMG appears to have obscured these technical judgments and kept them from the Ministers. If we were to provide a firm "yes" answer to a POSEIDON request at this stage, we might halt the internal process of discovery in mid-passage. Eventually, however, officials in the British Government could come to realize that as a result of our forthcoming response on POSEIDON they had opted for a costly weapons system that was something less than the optimum solution to their problem. If we were not very careful in presenting our response, our decision to sell POSEIDON could be represented as a commercial "coup" for the US that had significantly aggravated the UK's Balance of Payments problem.

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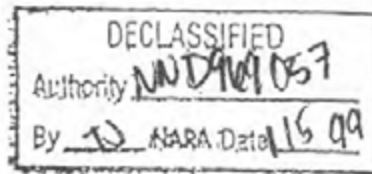
On the other hand, we believe the likelihood is great that HMG will reach a sound decision if the Super Antelope/POSEIDON debate continues through to the end. Clearly, it is very much to our advantage to await that conclusion. Meanwhile, we can profitably use this interval to weigh the substantial contribution to our own Balance of Payments position which the sale of POSEIDON would represent against the undesirable effects of the release of this sophisticated weapons technology.

Second -- The sale of POSEIDON to the UK could adversely affect our efforts to achieve a SALT Two agreement with the Soviet Union. (While the Super Antelope up-grading of the UK POLARIS force could be kept secret, the sale of POSEIDON would, for technical reasons, ultimately become public knowledge.) The sale would be regarded by many as MIRV proliferation and would almost certainly be portrayed by some as a step-up in the arms race. Many vocal observers -- private citizens and Members of Congress alike -- would make no secret of their unhappiness. Other legislators, particularly several members of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, would vigorously oppose the transfer of our POSEIDON technology to the UK. Moreover, the conclusion of a POSEIDON Sales Agreement might well set off another round of the Executive Branch/Legislative Branch quarrel over treaties and executive agreements.

Finally, the sale of POSEIDON to the UK would clearly constitute the transfer of an offensive strategic nuclear system, and as such would directly affect the SALT non-transfer question. Whether or not the Soviets would react vigorously against such a decision by the US, they would undoubtedly intensify their insistence on their asking-price for an agreement on strategic offensive systems. We have up to now taken the position with the Soviets that we will not accept any non-transfer provision until we can see the outline of a total offensive arms limitation package. Until we have a much clearer appreciation of the kind of agreement we might be able to reach with the Soviets, it would not appear desirable to foreclose at this stage any of the options that are open to us. A firm commitment now to the UK to sell POSEIDON would do just that.

Equally important -- looking at the problem from the opposite vantage point -- a definite "no" answer to a POSEIDON request would also produce adverse results. Many in Britain would resent our refusal to make one of our sophisticated modern weapons available to such a close and long-time ally and would question whether the "special

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relationship" which has existed for so long between us had been terminated by US fiat. Moreover, it is conceivable, even though not now likely, that circumstances might arise over the next year or so that would argue in favor of the maximum possible expansion and improvement of the British strategic deterrent.

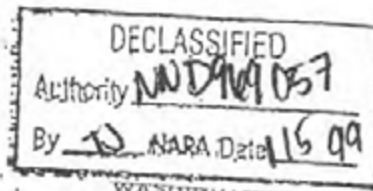
All these considerations argue strongly for the most careful and thorough study of the full range of issues and ramifications before we reach either a negative or a positive decision on selling the POSEIDON missile system to the British. Thus a warm, sympathetic, but non-committal response to a Heath request for POSEIDON would seem to best advance US interests at this point. Accordingly, we would urge this course upon the President.


U. Alexis Johnson

Attachment:

Laird-Kissinger letter of January 18.

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SENSITIVE

DEFENSE

301

18 JAN 1973

Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
 Assistant to the President for
 National Security Affairs
 Executive Office of the President
 Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Henry:

There are some potential developments in connection with the British Polaris Improvement Program of which you should be aware.

In brief summary, the UK Ministers are presently considering several possible alternatives regarding updating their sea-based deterrent:

Continue the Super Antelope Program for improving their Polaris

Ask the U. S. to sell Poseidon

Ask the U. S. to sell a Poseidon hybrid

The latter two of these alternatives cannot be considered seriously without having an idea of the position the U. S. might take. We understand that, in consequence, there is a high probability of a high political level approach, to explore our view on this point, in the very near future. We have been unable to ascertain specifically where or when, but understand further that the approach could be made directly to the White House during Prime Minister Heath's visit in early February.

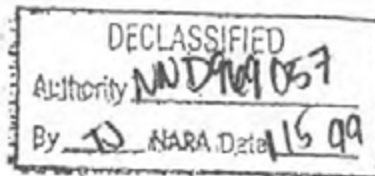
As you know, we have been assisting the U. K. in the Project Definition Phase of the Polaris Improvement Program (generally referred to as Super Antelope). This phase is essentially complete now, and the results have been submitted to the Ministers for decision as to the next course of action. I have had a request from Lord Carrington to continue our assistance on the program during the period of Ministerial deliberation, approximately through March, 1973, to avoid a disruption in the program should they decide to go ahead. I have agreed to such a continuation with the proviso that it does not constitute a commitment by the U. S. to support any follow-on Engineering Development phase.

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The intent of Super Antelope is the development of an improved reentry system for the British Polaris A-3 missile, to provide a better capability to penetrate defenses. The scheme requires a major redesign of the reentry system, and includes hardening the reentry vehicles to nuclear effects and provision of exoatmospheric decoys.

While the official British position has been consistently that of wanting to improve their Polaris A-3T missile in this manner, the Royal Navy has advocated a different course. They wish to abandon Polaris and replace it with Poseidon or, more recently, with perhaps a hybrid version of Poseidon, which will be described below. Their rationale is not over convincing -- the case being based primarily upon how bad and expensive things might become if the U. S. were to discontinue deployment of Polaris, and they are left to go it alone. Their studies seem to ignore almost completely the availability of surplus Polaris components as we make the transition to Poseidon, and do not make equivalent assumptions in estimating cost of Polaris upkeep compared to Poseidon. They cite also an improvement in range capability, which would amount to approximately 250 NM in the case of Poseidon, with ten RVs, compared to their Polaris.

Recognizing the possible difficulties associated with a request to purchase the MIRV-capable Poseidon, they (the Royal Navy) have recently begun to build up enthusiasm for a hybrid version of Poseidon, in which their improved Super Antelope reentry system would be placed upon the Poseidon in lieu of the U. S. Poseidon multiple RVs. They seem to view this as a means of avoiding the MIRV problem. I do not believe that it does, however, since the hybrid still would require the MIRV-capable bus, and would be capable of carrying a MIRV payload.

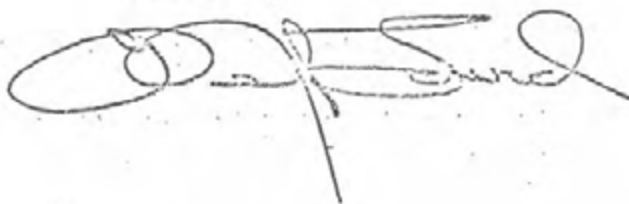
The bus is an inherent part of Poseidon, and any attempt to "de-MIRV" it would be either relatively simple to undo, or else be so major as to constitute essentially a new and different missile, requiring a major development test program. The latter alternative probably would vitiate the reasoning which led the Ministers to allow the "hybrid" as one of the alternatives to be considered.

For the U. S. the issue we face is whether supplying a MIRV capability to the British is in our overall best interests. This issue is complex, with both domestic and foreign implications. For the British, the issues include: a judgement on whether they actually need, on their own, a capability to penetrate a defended target like Moscow; a judgement on whether this could be achieved best by Super Antelope or Poseidon; and the cost implications of the several alternatives.

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Because of the complexity and serious nature of the question, I have constituted a special study effort within DOD for its assessment, and am asking Bill Rogers to appoint a member to participate. We intend to give you at least a preliminary recommendation by the end of January. If the British make an approach of this nature at the White House level, before we have forwarded our recommendations, I strongly urge they not be given a commitment of any sort, but rather that they be told we will take it under advisement.

Sincerely,



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