

MEMORANDUM

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

March 6, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

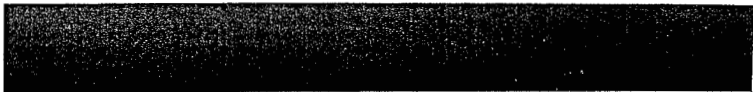
HENRY A. KISSINGER *HK*

SUBJECT:

U.S. Support for British Submarine Missile

Several discussions have been held recently with the British on alternatives for upgrading their Fleet Ballistic Missile strategic deterrent force. The British wish to decide on an upgrade option, acceptable to both governments, during the spring of 1973. The point has now been reached where they are ready formally to approach you on those alternatives requiring U.S. assistance of one form or another. However, they wish to avoid making a request which might cause you -- or them -- any embarrassment.

SANITIZED
6.2(a)



The British believe that they will have a suitable deterrent if they are able to penetrate the ABM system permitted by the SALT Agreement of 100 interceptors around Moscow. Their current capability, 3 soft and slow multiple re-entry vehicles per POLARIS missile, is generally agreed to have poor capability against the current Moscow GOLASH ABM system. A credible penetration capability against expected improvements in the Soviet ABM system requires more re-entry vehicles in order to saturate Soviet defenses. A greater lift capability, as represented by the POSEIDON or ULMS-1 missile, may also be necessary to afford stand-off range and minimize submarine vulnerability to Soviet ASW improvements. The British, however, do not necessarily need to penetrate the Moscow ABM system to have a credible deterrent. Other Soviet cities (Leningrad, Kiev, etc) are vulnerable.

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By *ES* *WMLK* NARA, Date *11/22/2022*
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[63/5/1]

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FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1969-1976, VOLUME E-15, PART 2,
DOCUMENTS ON WESTERN EUROPE, 1973-1976

219. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon ¹

Washington, March 6, 1973.

SUBJECT

U.S. Support for British Submarine Missile

Several discussions have been held recently with the British on alternatives for upgrading their Fleet Ballistic Missile strategic deterrent force. The British wish to decide on an upgrade option, acceptable to both governments, during the spring of 1973. The point has now been reached where they are ready formally to approach you on those alternatives requiring U.S. assistance of one form or another. However, they wish to avoid making a request which might cause you—or them—any embarrassment.

The current discussions have centered around the possibility of providing more sophisticated U.S. nuclear weapons technology and the sale of warhead and re-entry vehicle components not covered by the current agreements.

The British believe that they will have a suitable deterrent if they are able to penetrate the ABM system permitted by the SALT Agreement of 100 interceptors around Moscow. Their current capability, 3 soft and slow multiple re-entry vehicles per POLARIS missile, is generally agreed to have poor capability against the current Moscow GOLASH ABM system. A credible penetration capability against expected improvements in the Soviet ABM system requires more re-entry vehicles in order to saturate Soviet defenses. A greater lift capability, as represented by the POSEIDON or ULMS-1 missile, may also be necessary to afford stand-off range and minimize

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Adverse reactions to providing assistance are possible in several areas: Congressionally, because of disclosure of advanced nuclear weapons information; domestically or internationally, over the sale of POSEIDON or ULMS-1 missiles (even without MIRV capability which the British do not desire in any case); and by the USSR in SALT based on "strategic technology transfer" interpretations. It could be charged that the U. S. is escalating the arms race in direct contradiction of its avowed aims under SALT.

Another possible issue relates to underground nuclear testing. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] They are concerned that a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty may be sought by the U.S. before they could accomplish testing, probably in 1976. If it is decided to provide warhead technology we should give assurances to the British that we would not sign a treaty barring testing during your term of office.

Despite these potential problems I believe it is important for both military and political reasons to support our British ally in efforts to improve their missile capability against our major potential enemy. The Soviets continue to improve their own strategic missile capability, both qualitatively and quantitatively. As you know, they are building new missile submarines with a 4300 nautical mile range missile.

The choices for providing assistance, in ascending order of capability and political costs, are:

- a. Provide only further assistance to the SUPER-ANTELOPE program (hardened and improved warhead and re-entry vehicle) and the STAG program (allows larger submarine operating area by providing a non-MIRV POSEIDON missile). With the SUPER-ANTELOPE improvements, missiles could probably penetrate the existing Moscow ABM system. No further Congressional approval would be necessary.
- b. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This option provides a high confidence of penetration of current and future Moscow ABM. [REDACTED]

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[63/5/2]

submarine vulnerability to Soviet ASW improvements. The British, however, do not necessarily need to penetrate the Moscow ABM system to have a credible deterrent. Other Soviet cities (Leningrad, Kiev, etc) are vulnerable.

Adverse reactions to providing assistance are possible in several areas: Congressionally, because of disclosure of advanced nuclear weapons information; domestically or internationally, over the sale of POSEIDON or ULMS-1 missiles (even without MIRV capability which the [Page 714.] British do not desire in any case); and by the USSR in SALT based on "strategic technology transfer" interpretations. It could be charged that the U.S. is escalating the arms race in direct contradiction of its avowed aims under SALT.

Another possible issue relates to underground nuclear testing. The British will want to test a warhead of their own manufacture, although it may be a direct copy of a U.S. warhead. They are concerned that a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty may be sought by the U.S. before they could accomplish testing, probably in 1976. If it is decided to provide warhead technology we should give assurances to the British that we would not sign a treaty barring testing during your term of office.

Despite these potential problems I believe it is important for both military and political reasons to support our British ally in efforts to improve their missile capability against our major potential enemy. The Soviets continue to improve their own strategic missile capability, both qualitatively and quantitatively. As you know, they are building new missile submarines with a 4300 nautical mile range missile.

The choices for providing assistance, in ascending order of capability and political costs, are:

- a. Provide only further assistance to the SUPER-ANTELOPE program (hardened and improved warhead and re-entry vehicle) and the STAG program (allows larger submarine operating area by providing a non-MIRV POSEIDON missile). With the SUPER-ANTELOPE improvements, missiles could probably penetrate the existing Moscow ABM system. No further Congressional approval would be necessary.
- b. Provide MK3 warhead technology (fast warhead that could exhaust upgraded ABM defenses) and sell RV and warhead parts for UK manufacture and for application to UK POLARIS missiles. (Because the re-entry vehicle is light, 4 or 5 could be put on a POLARIS missile.) This option provides a high confidence of penetration of current and future Moscow ABM. Congressional approval would be needed for MK3 warhead assistance.

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c.



d.

Recommendation:

Due to the high costs of options c. and d. (over 1/2 billion dollars), the British will probably select the improved warhead (option b) if given a choice. However, I recommend that we offer them all of the above options.

Approve 

Disapprove _____

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[63/5/3]

c. Sell non-MIRV POSEIDON missiles and MK3 RV's and warhead parts. (Congressional approval needed and possibility of Soviet charge of "strategic technology transfer".)

d. Sell non-MIRV ULMS-1 missiles and MK3 RV's and warhead parts. (Same political considerations as in c. above.)

Recommendation:

Due to the high costs of options c. and d. (over 1/2 billion dollars), the British will probably select the improved warhead (option b) if given a choice. However, I recommend that we offer them all of the above options.

1. Summary: Kissinger requested Nixon's guidance on U.S. support for a British submarine missile.

Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Kissinger Office Files, Box 63, Country Files, Europe, General, Exchanges with the UK—Nuclear. Top Secret; Sensitive. A stamped notation on the memorandum indicates the President saw it. Nixon initialed his approval of Kissinger's recommendation.

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