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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

March 14, 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR:

DAVE GOMPERT  
WALT SLOCOMBE

SUBJECT:

US / UK Nuclear Cooperation (TS)

Attached for your background are (1) the UK's suggested Prime-Minister-to President letter with our suggested alterations, and (2) the proposed Presidential reply. The reply has been changed slightly since you saw it last. Note that in both letters, I have put in squiggly brackets { } material related to SNM. Unless there is a change in the murky SNM situation, we may want to delete this material.

Jim Thomson

US Proposa

DRAFT LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT

As you will know from recent exchanges between us, the United Kingdom Government attaches great importance to the maintenance of a nuclear deterrent capability. It will be necessary to replace the present Polaris force in the early 1990s, and having reviewed the options, the Government has concluded that the Trident 17 weapon system best meets the need to maintain a viable deterrent capability into the 21st century. I write therefore to ask you whether the United States Government would be prepared, in continuation of the cooperation which has existed between our Governments in this field since the Polaris Sales Agreement of the 6th of April, 1963, to supply, on a continuing basis, Trident 17 missiles, equipment and supporting services, ~~in a manner similar to that in which Polaris was supplied;~~ and whether the United States Government would be willing to amend further the Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes of the 3rd of July, 1958, in respect of the supply of special nuclear materials for the United Kingdom deterrent programme.

The United Kingdom Government would wish to purchase sufficient missiles, complete with multiple independently targettable re-entry vehicles and less only the warheads themselves, together with equipment and supporting services, on a continuing basis, to introduce and maintain a force of British submarines, close coordination being maintained between the Executive Agencies of the two Governments in order to assure compatibility of equipment; and would also wish to procure such special nuclear materials as were needed, and were beyond their own capacity to provide, to enable them to produce the warheads.

The successor to the Polaris force will be assigned to NATO, like Polaris; and, except where the United Kingdom Government may decide that supreme national interests are at stake, the successor force will be used for the purposes of international defence of the Western Alliance in all circumstances. It is my

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understanding that cooperation in the modernisation of the United Kingdom nuclear deterrent in this way would be consistent with the present and prospective international obligations of both parties.

In particular, I should like to assure you that the United Kingdom continues to give whole-hearted support to the NATO Long-Term Defence Programme, with its emphasis on the strengthening of conventional forces. The United Kingdom Government has substantially increased its defence spending, in accordance with NATO's collective policy, and plans to make further such increases in the future in order to improve the effectiveness of its all-round contribution to Alliance deterrence and defence.

If the United States Government is prepared to meet this request, I hope that as the next step the United States Government will be prepared to receive technical and financial missions to pursue these matters, using the framework of the Polaris Sales Agreement where appropriate.

In this regard, the United Kingdom government intends to use the savings created by the cooperation of the United States Government in making the [ Trident ] missile system available to ~~expand~~ expand its efforts to upgrade <sup>the United Kingdom's</sup> ~~its~~ conventional forces.

## DRAFT LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Dear Madame Prime Minister:

In reply to your letter of \_\_\_\_\_, I am pleased to confirm that the United States attaches significant importance to the nuclear deterrent capability of the United Kingdom and to close cooperation between our two governments in maintaining and modernizing that capability. To further that objective, the United States is prepared to supply the United Kingdom [TRIDENT I] missiles, equipment and supporting services, as you propose in your letter, subject to and in accordance with applicable United States law and procedures. {In addition, the United States is willing in principle to supply special nuclear materials for the United Kingdom deterrent program which were beyond your own capacity to provide, subject of course to the United States government's ability to provide such materials in light of its requirements and availability of supply.}

I view as important your statements that the POLARIS successor force will be assigned to NATO and that you intend to use savings created by our nuclear cooperation to upgrade the United Kingdom's conventional force. As you know, I regard the strengthening of NATO's conventional and nuclear forces as of highest priority for Western security.

I agree that as the next step in implementing these agreements, our two governments should initiate negotiations on the technical and financial terms of the sale of [TRIDENT I] missile system from the United States to the United Kingdom.

Sincerely,

The Right Honorable  
Margaret R. Thatcher, M.P.  
Prime Minister  
London