

264. Memorandum From the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (Iklé) to Secretary of Defense Weinberger¹

Washington, May 14, 1982

SUBJECT

UK Request for AIM 9L Missiles (TS)—ACTION MEMORANDUM

(TS) Yesterday the British officially requested 300 AIM 9L air-to-air missiles, with a priority on delivering 100 missiles to Ascension Island by today.² In keeping with our alternative financial arrangement, the British requested that the missiles be kept in US stores at Ascension until they were needed.

(TS) The JCS, together with the Air Force and the Navy, have recommended that the request not be approved (Tab A). Their rationale is: (1) the Service inventories are currently far below requirements; (2) adequate facilities for storage, etc. at Ascension are not available; and (3) since the UK currently has 200 AIM 9Ls, their requirement is questionable without further knowledge of their strategy. The JCS propose as an alternative the transfer of 50–80 missiles for delivery to the UK either at Charleston AFB (preferred) or at Ascension. If the missiles are not required immediately, we could provide pre-positioned storage at Charleston AFB from which delivery could be made to the British at Ascension within 24 hours of notification.

(TS) Since Service inventories total more than 9,000, I see little meaningful difference between the 50–80 missiles the JCS have offered as an alternative and the 100 that constitute the immediate request. My recommendation is that you agree to the transfer of 100 missiles to the British with delivery at either Charleston AFB or Ascension, *or* US storage of 100 missiles at Charleston AFB to be available for delivery to the British at their request. We would honor the British choice of delivery alternatives.

State (PM) concurs with this recommendation.³

Fred C. Ikle⁴

¹ Source: Washington National Records Center, OSD Files, FRC 330–86–0042, UK 1982. Top Secret; Eyes Only.

² Attached but not printed is a copy of United Kingdom Defense Procurement Office Letter P-1025, sent from the British Embassy on May 13, formally requesting the missiles.

³ Weinberger initialed his approval of the recommendation.

⁴ Iklé signed “Fred” above his typed signature.

Tab A

Memorandum From the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Hayward) to Secretary of Defense Weinberger⁵

CM 1262-82

Washington, May 14, 1982

SUBJECT

United Kingdom OP Corporate Request for AIM-9L Missiles (S)

1. (TS) Reference United Kingdom Defence Procurement Office letter P-1025 of 13 May 1982⁶ which requested the US provide 300 SIDEWINDER AIM-9L Air-to-Air missiles under "United Kingdom OP Corporate".

2. (TS) The Joint Staff and Services have seriously considered the UK request for 300 AIM-9L missiles including 100 to be pre-positioned at Ascension Island as soon as possible. In view of current inventory shortfalls, procurement leadtime, impact upon sustainability of US Forces, and other reasons outlined below, it does not appear to be in the US' best interest to fulfill this request.

3. (TS) The current status of US and projected UK inventories of AIM-9L missiles and supporting data is at Enclosure 1.

4. (TS) In addition, a serious problem exists with control, security and storage of sensitive ordnance at Ascension. Without adequate storage capability at Ascension, any ordnance transferred to the USAF Facility would have to be delivered immediately to the British upon arrival, unless elaborate and expensive facilities are constructed and additional US personnel are assigned. Equally significant, it is unclear as to the UK requirement for AIM 9-L missiles beyond the 200 already obtained from the USG. Further, it is questionable if the USG should support a requirement for 300 AIM 9-L missiles without knowing more about the UK grand strategy. Additional UK justification seems appropriate.

5. (TS) If the decision is made to transfer these missiles to the UK, a possible alternative is to provide a maximum of 50 to 80 missiles which could be ready for delivery to the UK at Charleston, S.C. This proposal would satisfy our stated policy to provide material support to the UK. This lesser number would significantly reduce the impact upon US inventories and leave open the door to later procurement should circumstances dictate.

⁵ Top Secret.

⁶ United Kingdom Defence Procurement Office ltr of 13 May 82. [Footnote in the original. See footnote 2 above.]

6. (TS) If US delivery to Ascension is required, we can pre-position these 50 to 80 missiles at the Naval Weapons Station Charleston, S.C. Adequate storage can be provided at this location and delivery directly to the UK at Ascension can be made by the Military Airlift Command through Charleston AFB. If a decision is then made, delivery can be accomplished within 24 hours.

7. (U) At Enclosures 2 and 3 are Position Papers prepared by the USN and USAF.⁷

Adm Thomas B. Hayward
*USN Acting Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff*

Enclosure 1

Paper Prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff⁸

Washington, undated

US AIM-9L (SIDEWINDER) STATUS

	<u>REQUIRED</u>	<u>ON HAND</u>	<u>% REQUIRED</u>
(1) USAF	8800	5498	65%
USN	<u>6460</u>	<u>3575</u>	<u>55%</u>
TOTAL	15260	9073	59%

(1) Represents 1982 requirements. USAF 1988 requirement increases to 15,620 missiles.

⁷ The position papers are attached but not printed.

⁸ Secret.

UK AIM-9H & 9L (SIDEWINDER) STATUS

QUANTITY ON HAND
(FMS ESTIMATE)

AIM-9H
AIM-9L
TOTAL

750
200
950