

334. Memorandum From the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (Iklé) to Secretary of Defense Weinberger<sup>1</sup>

Washington, June 11, 1982

SUBJECT

UK Inquiry on KC-10 Aircraft (TS)—ACTION MEMORANDUM

On 27 May the Joint Staff received an informal inquiry on the potential purchase, lease or hire of KC-10 aircraft from the U.S.<sup>2</sup> The attached JCS package, based on the recommendations, conveys the view that the U.S. should discourage a formal U.K. request.<sup>3</sup> This view

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Washington National Records Center, OSD Files, FRC 330-86-0042, UK 1982. Top Secret; Eyes Only. A stamped notation at the top of the memorandum indicates that Weinberger saw it on June 14.

<sup>2</sup> Attached but not printed is a May 27 note for the record signed by Dick regarding the U.K. MOD's preliminary inquiry into the "purchase, lease, or hire" of KC-10 aircraft.

<sup>3</sup> Attached but not printed, the JCS package consists of an undated memorandum from the JCS to Iklé and a point paper on the impact of KC-10 lease or purchase.

is based on the concern that a sale would significantly degrade our capability to support contingencies directly involving the U.S. Furthermore, meeting the request in any form would be a highly visible sign of U.S. support for British operations. From a policy viewpoint, the Air Force is concerned that the British could not operate the refueling system without first receiving appropriate training. Thus, at least initially, U.S. aircrews may be needed to provide instruction to the British on the operation of the system.

Support of the KC-10 itself would probably require either direct U.S. involvement or the use of civilian contractors. The sale of KC-10s would require Congressional notification under Section 36B of the Arms Export Control Act and could prompt Congressional concern as to why Service recommendations were overruled. A lease is more palatable to the Services and it would not require Congressional notification.

The argument against sale of the KC-10s is cogent, but the case against a lease is weaker. The possibility of a direct U.S. role in the aircraft's operations should be avoided, however, in order to be consistent with the President's directive.<sup>4</sup> The addition of KC-10s to the support force would greatly increase British ability to deploy rapidly aircraft and equipment to the Falklands. Since we are not being asked to provide the aircraft at this time, our response should be that a number of important details, in particular the question of avoiding U.S. involvement in either the aircraft's support or operations, would need to be worked out if a formal request was received.

The British request was recently changed to the purchase of two aircraft. Thus, I would further recommend that we inform the British that, while a purchase does not appear feasible in light of U.S. operational requirements, we would be willing to discuss the possible lease of two KC-10s for a period not exceeding 90 days. A lease in excess of 90 days would adversely impact plans that incorporate KC-10 support.<sup>5</sup>

**Fred C. Ikle**

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<sup>4</sup> See Document 263.

<sup>5</sup> Weinberger highlighted the paragraph with a vertical line drawn in the right-hand margin. Next to this, he wrote: "agree." At the bottom of the page, he initialed his approval of the option "Approve Positive Reply on Availability for Lease."