

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

Washington, June 24, 1982

SUBJECT

UK Request for 20 Harpoon Missiles—ACTION MEMORANDUM

In light of your conversation with Al Haig at this morning's breakfast² we have decided to go forward with the transfer of 20 air launched Harpoon anti-ship missiles to the UK. In addition, we will also fulfill the UK request for various equipments that will permit them to launch those missiles from aircraft.

To recapitulate, the issues surrounding this particular transfer arise from Navy and JCS opposition to the further degradation of US readiness.³ Present Harpoon inventory is about 75 percent of air and shipfill requirements with only deploying units assured of a full loadout. While it would be possible to reconfigure missiles from the Iranian Harpoon inventory, the Navy would need up to 30 days to transfer the missiles to the UK in order not to remove missiles already with the fleet. The British requested that the first eight missiles be delivered within the

¹ 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 24.

² No memorandum of conversation of the meeting has been found. However, a "debrief" paper on the June 24 Haig-Weinberger breakfast meeting, prepared in the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, indicates that arms for the United Kingdom were discussed although it does not indicate that a specific decision about the British request for Harpoon missiles was taken. In addition, the meeting discussed three other issues relevant to the Falklands/Malvinas: hemispheric relations in the aftermath of the war, Thatcher's request for assistance with plastic mines planted by the Argentines, and the restoration of military-military ties between the United States and Argentina. (Department of State, Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, Files of the Special Assistant to the Director of Politico-Military Affairs, June 1981-June 1983, Lot 83D229, Haig-Weinberger Meetings: March 1981-June 1982, Haig-Weinberger 6/24/82 S-S Submission)

³ In a June 18 memorandum to Weinberger, Iklé noted that "State counsels that we not expedite meeting the request, at least until our policy regarding the wider issues had been reviewed." Iklé continued: "A SIG on the South Atlantic has been scheduled for Tuesday [June 22]. I would, therefore, propose that we not move ahead with the transfer of the Harpoon missiles until after the SIG has met." On this point, Weinberger made the following notation: "Please let me see recommendations of SIG as soon as possible." (Ibid.) A June 18 information memorandum from Howe to Eagleburger regarding the U.K. request for Harpoon missiles is in the Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/S Special Handling Restrictions Memo 1979-1983, Lot 96D262, 1982 ES Sensitive June 16 thru 30. A memorandum of conversation of the June 22 SIG meeting on U.S.-Latin American relations following the South Atlantic crisis is in the Reagan Library, Latin American Affairs Directorate, NSC, Falklands/Malvinas: NSC & State Memos, 1982.

next week, however. I should add that CNO opposes the transfer of any Harpoons at this time because the P-3C units at Brunswick require the Harpoons every bit as badly as the British do.

The Navy also voiced its concern about the transfer of some of the support equipment, especially test set simulators. Each of the four simulators that will be transferred to the UK will deprive a Navy squadron of test capability.⁴

Fred C. Ikle⁵

⁴ Weinberger concurred with the transfer and wrote: "Ambassador indicated they could get along with 8 Harpoons at first—so let's get those + 2 sets of equipment, to the [illegible] a.s.a.p. CW."

⁵ Iklé signed "Fred" above his typed signature.