

Prime Minister

A.J.C. 4/3.

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PRIME MINISTERCHEVALINE

1. MISC 7 will be meeting on Thursday 4th March. I felt that it would be useful if I were to circulate a note, as background, on how Chevaline fits in with our plans.

2. As you know, we undertook a series of Chevaline missile firings from HMS RENOWN at sea off Cape Canaveral between 30th January and 8th February.

3. The series was highly successful and completed the Chevaline development trials programme. Preliminary analysis of each of the four trials indicates that the flight performance of the missile and its payload was entirely satisfactory. The series culminated in a very successful long range (1700 miles) demonstration of a full tactical (operational) missile less its warheads. These successes have confirmed the belief that the earlier trials failures with Chevaline were not caused by any fundamental design faults. Steps were, however, taken to review and tighten up manufacturing and assembly standards, and introduce some hardware modifications. All this reflects great credit on all those associated with the Project who have worked hard to achieve this success.

4. Full analysis of the results of the trials will take some weeks to complete. But, on the basis of the data we have already, work is now going ahead to prepare recommendations that Chevaline should be handed over to the Royal Navy for initial deployment and formal acceptance firings. Tactical missiles are already in preparation; and it is hoped therefore that the first



operational deployment of Chevaline will take place this summer. This assumes that the missile processing will be free of any labour disputes which, of course, cannot be guaranteed and which, if they arose, could place a question mark over our ability to meet the very tight processing programme. On present plans continuous deployment would be achieved in summer 1983 following formal acceptance firings in Spring 1983. Our ability to penetrate the present Moscow ABM system, with only a single submarine deployed, will then be assured.

5. The successful completion of the Chevaline development trials programme has led some commentators to raise again the question of whether it is feasible to run on the Polaris/Chevaline system rather than go for Trident. The main arguments against this were set out in the Open Government Document which accompanied the original Trident decision in July 1980. Our existing Polaris submarines are ageing with all the attendant maintenance and operational problems which these will pose for us in the years ahead. As we have discussed during our consideration of my recommendations for the adoption of Trident II D5, the best judgement is that for these reasons we must begin to replace our Polaris submarines in the first half of the 1990s. The arguments against running on the Polaris/Chevaline system in new submarines are also cogent. It would extend the period for which we would have no commonality with US deployed submarine ballistic missile systems. The substantial cost and operational problems of "uniqueness" have already been well rehearsed in our consideration of Trident IID5. For Polaris they would be very considerable given, not least, that the technologies involved are so old, and the US manufacturing capabilities have long been dismantled. And finally, Chevaline would only continue to provide a credible deterrent beyond the mid-1990s if improvements in Soviet ABM defences proved unexpectedly modest.

6. In short, while the successful development of Chevaline makes a key contribution to maintaining the credibility of our

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deterrent into the 1990s, the case for Trident is unchanged.

7. I am sending copies of this minute to the members of MISC 7, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

JW.

Ministry of Defence
2nd March 1982



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