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Authority: <u>NNN 959232</u>
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

Subject: Operational Status of THORS

Distribution: RA - Mr. Magill

BNA - Mr. Dals

Tuttle - I believe -

I attended a briefing for Air Vice Marshal Tutbill of the Royal Air Force this morning at the Pentagon. The Air Vice Marshal was accompanied by a number of staff officers. The U.S. spokesman was Lt. Gen. Moore, United States Air Force, who in turn had a number of staff officers present.

At the outset it was agreed that the purpose of the briefing was for the two Air Forces to reach some agreement ultimately as to a joint statement regarding the operational status of the THORS in the United Kingdom. Subsequently, such a statement would be submitted to the appropriate political authorities in both countries.

The British, from a strictly military point of view, have a number of problems which call for answers before the missiles could be said to be operational. For example, there is the problem of the warheads. The United Kingdom doesn't have any. Without warheads, such missiles could hardly be called operational. The British appreciate that the United States law says the custody remains with the U.S., but there are a number of other problems to work out so that the British can "rehearse" more realistically. The RAF needs to know "who literally does what to what" regarding the warhead problem. There is a great deal of ignorance in this field. The RAF would like to have "dry runs" with dummy warheads but to do so needs to know much more about actual planning in this field than is presently known.

There were a number of other problems before the British could consider the missiles operational. These problems include the obtaining of accurate and up-to-date manuals outlining the technical procedures for firing the missiles, including all the latest developments and modifications (the U.S. side agreed it was desirable to speed up the security process involved in releasing these manuals more quickly). The RAF representatives pointed out that they did not even have the latest U.S. survey which showed exactly "where the sites are". They furthermore pointed out that they don't even know what their own people have been trained to do. They can, of course, ask each individual but it would be helpful to have an over-all picture (U.S. side agreed to correct this matter). There were a number of other technical questions the British felt called for some clarification, such as, how long can a missile be maintained in a pressurized state and ready to go. To this the U.S. replied it did not know but was researching the problem. Again the British felt this was an illustration of the difficulty of declaring

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-2-

a missile operational. They pointed out furthermore that so far they have had no experience on "getting on the target." (The U.S. replied that it was about to issue a handbook which would be helpful on this problem.)

Air Vice Marshal Tuthill stated there were three questions presently before the House of Commons regarding the THOR. He said that if possible Duncan Sandys wished to be in a position to make a statement some time in July regarding their operational status. It was agreed that with our help (i.e., U.S. personnel), British personnel, and the contractors, the missiles could be presently launched. It was further agreed, however, that as of this stage, the British could not do this alone. Further training and access to additional data would hopefully correct much of this by July.

There was a lengthy description of the technical capabilities of the THOR which disclosed that the accuracy on the target was within a range of two miles.

Air Vice Marshal Tuthill said he would go back to the U.K. and recommend to his superiors that the two Air Forces agree before July to a statement that would convey an optimistic impression as to the operational capabilities of the THORS in the U.K.

After the meeting broke up, I spoke briefly to General ^{Wilson} Moore whom I had known in London when he was head of Third Air Force there. He observed that the British did not raise what they were really worried about. What concerns them is that they cannot, under British regulations, ship nuclear warheads over British roads. Therefore, in a strict sense, the missiles could hardly ever be declared operational. According to General Moore, the RAF was trying to keep this bit of information from the Prime Minister.