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Prime Minister 2
for information
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FCS/81/92

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE

MT

Algeria

1. Thank you for your minute of ~~8~~ June in which you suggested that we should seek the views of our post on security aspects of defence sales to Algeria. This has been done and the Ambassador's assessment is being considered by officials.

2. I am convinced that the Algerian interest in buying arms from British manufacturers is genuine, as one element in their search for a more credible non-aligned position. They appear to have learned the lessons of Afghanistan and of the Soviet volte face in Ethiopia and Somalia and to be casting round for alternative suppliers. Prospects for British manufacturers are good. Britain's armed forces and defence equipment enjoy a high reputation and we have the added advantages, in their eyes, of being neither a super-power nor French.

3. At the moment Algeria's security rating is so low that a wide range of equipment would be unavailable to them. I hope that a review will enable the Algerians to purchase some more sophisticated equipment. We are otherwise unlikely to make any headway in the Algerian market, which looks increasingly promising, and in changing Algeria's present dependence on the Soviet Union as her principal arms /supplier.



supplier. Release up to 'Restricted' as enjoyed for example by Libya is, I think, the minimum requirement, and we should if possible be prepared to consider 'Confidential' on occasions (this would put Algeria on a par with, say, Morocco, Pakistan and India).

4. So far as political clearance is concerned our line has been up to now that, in addition to general constraints, we should not wish to upset the military balance in the Maghreb or to supply controversial weapons. This has, in effect, meant parity with Morocco. I see no reason why we should not be able to continue to adopt this line.

5. I understand that Mr Jeffs, Deputy Head of Defence Sales, is due to visit Algiers at the beginning of August for high level talks. It would clearly be useful if a decision could be reached on security clearance before then. We appear well placed to make ground with the Algerians and should not wish to see any delay.

6. It would be helpful therefore if your officials, with any help they require from mine, could put in hand as soon as possible a review which would enable us to adopt a positive policy on arms sales to Algeria.

7. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister, John Biffen and Sir Robert Armstrong.

C
(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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