

OPS
Subject filed in
Defence Pt 4 Sales



File
K
K

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

PRIME MINISTER'S

9 November 1984

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T187184

cc Subject
Master

Your Majesty,

I have a very clear recollection of my own visit to your country in 1981 and of the valuable discussions I had with Your Majesty about the situation in the area and the Kingdom's future defence requirements. I can assure you that our interest in the affairs of the Arabian Peninsula is undiminished. In particular, we share Your Majesty's concern over recent events in the Gulf and support your wise and constructive efforts to bring peace and stability in the region. I anticipate with pleasure meeting Your Majesty in Britain when you are able to pay us a visit.

In view of the close relations between our countries and our governments, I thought that I should write to you personally on a matter of great importance to our continued co-operation in the field of defence equipment. I believe that both our countries have benefited from this co-operation in the past and we in Britain have been looking forward to building on it in the future as part of our wider relationship.

I was naturally delighted to hear last May that our two Ministries of Defence had agreed on prices for the provision to your Air Force of Tornado and Hawk aircraft and for the buy-back of your existing Lightning and Strikemaster aircraft. As you may know, my Defence Secretary, Michael Heseltine, wrote to your brother, the Minister of Defence and

Aviation, on 18 October about this and explaining that I have been taking a close personal interest in the discussion and exchanges that have taken place between our Defence Ministers.

I am now writing to underline the merits of these aircraft and the mutual benefits which will derive from their acquisition by your Air Force. The Tornado is the most powerful and sophisticated aircraft of its kind in the world, a fact which has just been underlined by its performance in the United States in October when it defeated the Americans in two out of three arduous bombing competitions against the best of the US Air Force. These impressive results reflect the fact that the Tornado has been developed by the three leading European Members of NATO using their very latest technology. The Hawk has shown its worth in sales all over the world, including to the Americans and to some of your Gulf neighbours.

I trust that the final negotiations for the sale of these aircraft may now proceed to a satisfactory conclusion. Her Majesty's Government attach the very greatest importance to this project, cementing as it does the extensive co-operation between our two Air Forces. It will, in addition, ensure the continuing presence of the large body of British experts and technicians who are already working in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As a mark of my desire to bring this message directly to Your Majesty's attention, I have asked Michael Heseltine to bring it in person to Riyadh and I look forward to hearing his report of his discussions.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

His Majesty King Fahd bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud