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EUR INSEC 56341/3 358

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FROM : AMEMBASSY LONDON

3014

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

Mar 3 1958

REF :

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	REC'D	OTHER	
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SUBJECT: Mention in Parliamentary Defense Debate of Crash of Plane Carrying Nuclear Weapons. AIR-3 USIA-10

In connection with the recent public discussion of flights over Britain by planes, including United States Air Force, carrying nuclear weapons, the enclosed self-explanatory memorandum will be of interest to the Department, giving further background information regarding the statements made during the February 27 Defense Debate in the House of Commons, first by the Labor Party speaker, de Freitas, and subsequently by the Secretary of State for War, Christopher Soames, as already reported in Embtel 5151, dated February 28, 1958.

711. 56341
EUR

For the Ambassador:

Brewster H. Morris
Counselor of Embassy

Enclosure:

Memorandum dated Feb. 28, 1958

cc: USRO PARIS (w/encl)
THURSTON PARIS (w/encl)

AS

POL/BH Morris:ls
REPORTER

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Encl. No. 1

Desp. No. 3014

From AmEmbassy London

MEMORANDUM

TO: POL - Mr. Morris
FROM: POL/AE - Howard Meyers

SUBJECT: Crash of plane possibly carrying nuclear weapons, alleged to have taken place recently

1) Mr. Hainworth, Head of the Atomic Energy Section of the Foreign Office, telephoned me at 6 PM on February 27, to say that Labor MP DeFreitas had just alleged during the debate on defense policy in the House of Commons that in a recent air crash in East Anglia the police had told the public to keep back because a military team would shortly arrive to take care of matters. DeFreitas said this led him to the conclusion that, in light of the previous statements on this subject by Butler and Macmillan, the plane which crashed was carrying a nuclear weapon. Hainworth said that the Air Ministry had asked him to ring through to me and find out whether I knew the facts or could ascertain them, and that the Air Ministry would pursue General Moore to see whether they could get an answer. He also said that this information was needed immediately for reply in the evening's debate. I promised to look into the matter, but said as far as I knew no such crash of a US plane carrying nuclear weapons had taken place.

2) I telephoned the duty officer at the Third Air Force, Major Melton, who is in the Plans Division under Col. Campbell; explained the matter; and requested that he check the situation also with the Seventh Air Division. Melton returned my call within 15 or 20 minutes, and informed me that:

(a) there was no knowledge of a crash of any aircraft carrying nuclear weapons on the part of Third and Seventh Air; (b) the situation regarding Seventh Air Division operations was as previously recounted to me some weeks ago by General Blanchard, namely, there had been no crash of any plane of the Seventh Air Division since July 1956, and never any crash in the UK of a plane carrying nuclear weapons; (c) that an F-86 fighter of the Third Air Force had gone into the sea off the coast on January 3rd, but this plane was not carrying any nuclear weapons.

3) I telephoned Frank Cooper, Assistant Secretary of the Air Ministry, who had requested that I contact him directly, and gave him the facts. Cooper said that he would suggest to the Cabinet Minister who would respond to this statement that he simply say that there had been no crash of any plane carrying nuclear weapons.

4) Secretary of State for War Scames subsequently said last night in reply to this statement by DeFreitas: "I can assure him that is not so". (Hansard, Feb. 27, Col. 663)

cc: 3rd Air-Col. Campbell
7th Air-Col. Yancy
PAO-Mr. Coaners

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