

BLUE STREAK

Statement by the Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies

The United Kingdom Government have issued a statement concerning the long range missile Blue Streak. The statement was discussed with the Australian Government. The Australian Government concurred in it. Text of the statement is attached.

CANBERRA,

14th April, 1960.

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The Government have been considering the future of the project for developing the long range ballistic missile Blue Streak and have been in touch with the Australian Government about it in view of their interest in the Joint Project and the operation of the Woomera range.

The technique of controlling ballistic missiles has rapidly advanced. The vulnerability of missiles launched from static sites and the practicability of launching missiles of considerable range from mobile platforms has now been established. In the light of our military advice to this effect and of the importance of reinforcing the effectiveness of the deterrent we have concluded and the Australian Government have fully accepted that we ought not to continue to develop as a military weapon a missile that can be launched only from a fixed site.

Today our strategic nuclear force is an effective and significant contribution to the deterrent power of the free world. The Government do not intend to give up this independent contribution and therefore some other vehicle will in due course be needed in place of Blue Streak to carry British manufactured nuclear warheads. The need for this is not immediately urgent since the effectiveness of the V-bomber force as the vehicle for these warheads will remain unimpaired for several years to come, nor is it possible at the moment to say with certainty which of several possibilities or combinations of them would be technically the most suitable. On present information there appears much to be said for prolonging the effectiveness of the V-bombers by buying supplies of the airborne ballistic missile Skybolt which is being developed in the United States. H.M. Government understands that the United States Government will be favourably disposed to the purchase by the United Kingdom at the appropriate time of supplies of this vehicle.

The Government will now consider with the firms and other interests concerned as a matter of urgency whether the Blue Streak programme could be adapted for the development of a launcher for space satellites. A further statement will be made to the House as soon as possible.

This decision of course does not mean that the work at Woomera will be ended. On the contrary there are many other projects for which the range is needed. We therefore expect that for some years to come at least there will be a substantial programme of work for that range.