

MR. POWELL

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SALE OF PTARMIGAN TO THE UNITED STATES

Lord Weinstock rang me this afternoon to make a point about sale of the Plessey system Ptarmigan, which Defence Sales are promoting.

Lord Weinstock said that it was being presented in the press that it was a battle between Ptarmigan and a French system called Rita. The impression was being created that it was a struggle between a wholly British and a wholly French system. Lord Weinstock wanted to emphasise that it was not like that. If Ptarmigan was sold, the United States would insist on quite a lot of the equipment being made in the US. He had discovered that 40 per cent of Rita was supplied by Marconi UK: not all of that 40 per cent might be made in the United Kingdom, but it was reasonable to assume that about 30 per cent was.

The point he wanted to make was that the UK's interest in favour of Ptarmigan was not as clear as the briefing offered to the Prime Minister might suggest.

I said that we would have this point in mind and make her aware of it if this question was raised with her again.

F.E.R.B.

25 January 1985