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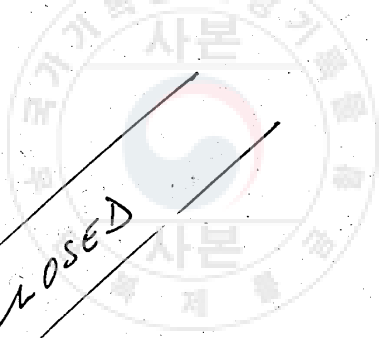
*Ambridge  
14.8.58 May 1978*

M.O.D.  
IDB/645/38  
A.H.B. (RAF)

S. AFRICAN SQUADRON IN KOREA - SUPPLY OF JETS.

~~CLOSED~~

645/38.



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Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office

FROM: U.K. HIGH COMMISSIONER IN SOUTH AFRICA

RPTD: U.K. SERVICE LIAISON STAFF, PRETORIA

D: 18th April, 1952

R: 25th April, 1952

No.79 SAVING SECRET

Addressed to Commonwealth Relations Office No.79  
Saving repeated to United Kingdom Service Liaison Staff,  
Pretoria, (No.F/600).

My telegram No.76 Saving of 9th April.

SOUTH AFRICAN AIR SQUADRON IN KOREA

Cuff, Defence Secretary, told Rumbold on 16th April  
that the Americans have not promised jets to the S.A.A.F. Korea  
Squadron at the end of the year, but they have promised to  
review the position in 3 months' time and the prospects are  
that jets will be provided towards the end of the year.

Copy to:- D.I

KOREA DISTRIBUTION

M/Defence(Chiefs of Staff  
Secretariat) Brigadier Newbank  
Foreign Office(China and  
Korea Dept.) Mr. J.O. Lloyd

ALLOTTED TO FAR EASTERN DEPT.

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Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office

645738 CAS  
BCAS  
ACAS (1)  
56  
JW

FROM: U.K. HIGH COMMISSIONER IN SOUTH AFRICA (ACTING)  
RPTD: U.K. SERVICE LIAISON STAFF, PRETORIA  
D: 9th April, 1952  
R: 15th April, 1952

No. 76 SAVING *sent*

Addressed to Commonwealth Relations Office No. 76 Saving, repeated to U.K. Service Liaison Staff, Pretoria. (No. E/600).

My telegram No. 49 of 14th February, paragraph 2.

SOUTH AFRICAN AIR SQUADRON  
IN KOREA

From Rumbold.

When I spoke to Forsyth in accordance with your telegram Z, No. 31 of 31st March regarding provision of Occupation Forces in Korea after an Armistice, I took the opportunity of asking him what the present position is regarding the South African Air Squadron. I understand the Air Adviser reported to the Air Ministry that the Union Government had told the United States Government that, owing to the difficulty of providing their Squadron with jet aircraft and of providing trained relief aircrews to fly Mustangs, they would have to stand down their Squadron for three months with effect from 1st April. Forsyth told me that in the face of this the United States Government have promised to provide the South African Squadron with jets towards the end of this year and on that understanding the Squadron has not been stood down.

Copy to:-

D. I.

KOREA DISTRIBUTION

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645/38

**TOP SECRET**

JF

39066/LRC

MESSAGE

(Received by Secure Means 5th April, 1952)

FROM:- U.K.S.L.S. PRETORIA

TO:- AIR MINISTRY LONDON

ROUTINE TOP SECRET

ATX.239 April 5

For A.C.A.S.(P) from Cracroft. Reference my ATX.100 March 6.  
U.S. Air Attache now informs me policy on grounding squadron  
delayed three repeat three months.

Time of Origin: 051015Z

Copies to:- A.C.A.S.(P)(ACTION)(3 copies)

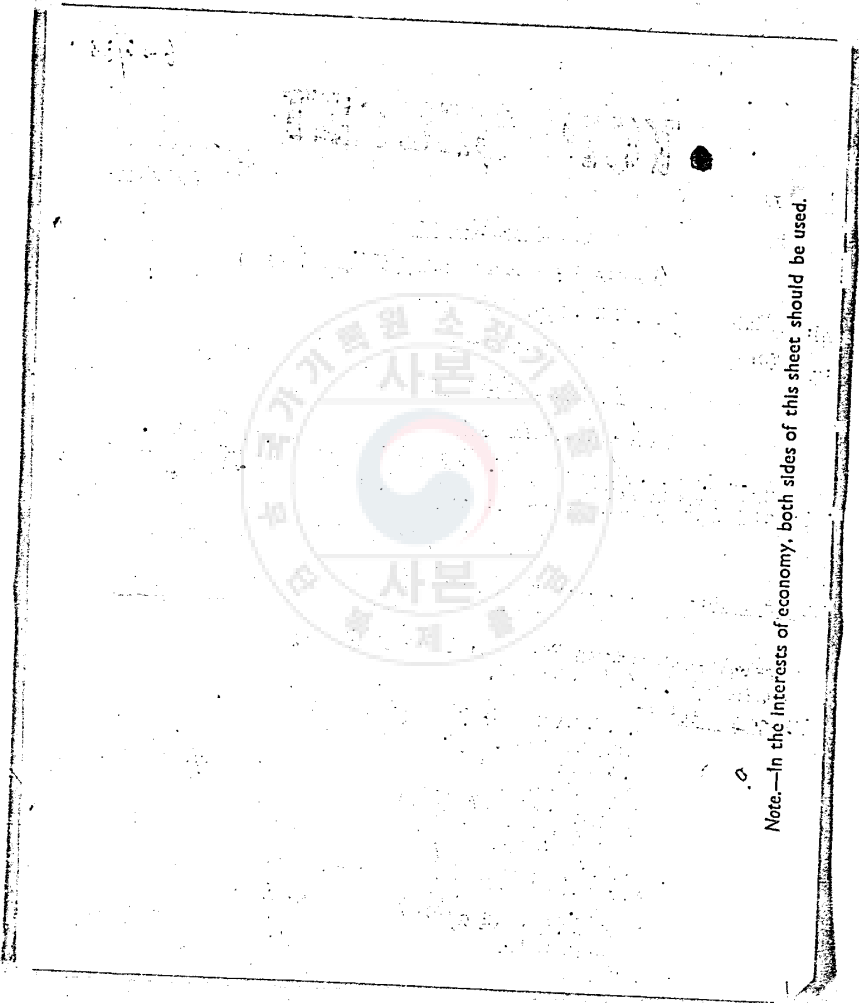
Recirculated Registry Telegrams April 8th 1952.  
Authority P.A./A.C.A.S.(P).

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  - P.S./U.S. OF S.
  - P.S./P.U.S.
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  - P.S./V.C.A.S.
  - P.S./D.C.A.S.
  - P.S./A.M.S.O.
  - A.C.A.S.(OPS)
  - D.G.O.
  - D. POL.(AS) (2 copies)
  - D. OF PLANS.
  - S.6.

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**TOP SECRET**

643/38

Seen by CAS

MESSAGE

37831/ATC.

(Received By Secure Means)

10th March, 1952.

AC.

FROM - UKSLS PRETORIA.  
TO - AIR MINISTRY, LONDON.

PRIORITY TOP SECRET  
ATX 100 MAR. 06

For A.C.A.S. (P) FROM CROCROFT.

The U.S. Air Attache informed me this morning that the South African Attache in Washington on behalf of the South African Government has officially informed the American Foreign Under Secretary that Number Two Squadron S.A.A.F. operating in Korea is on the Orders of CGS to be grounded for three months with effect from 31st March, 1952. Reasons given are (A) that the Squadron has not (repeat not) been re-equipped with Jet Aircraft. (B) With the present high casualty rate on Mustangs replacement Pilots can not (repeat not) be provided by the Union.

Time of origin: 061500.

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- PS/P.U.S.
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- PS/V.C.A.S.
- PS/D.C.A.S.
- PS/A.M.S.O.
- A.C.A.S. (Ops).
- D.C.O.
- D. POL. (AS) (2)
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TOP SECRET

P.S. to C.A.S. ✓

P.S. to A.M.S.O.

A.U.S. (S)

A.C.A.S. (P)

D.Pol. (AS)

C.E.E.

D.O. (FP)

S.6

MINISTERIE VAN VERDEDIGING  
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE.

PRETORIA

3rd July, 1951.

Dear Mr. Shinwell,

I must thank you for your letter of the 29th ultimo.

It is unfortunate that you cannot accede to our request for jet aircraft for our Korea Squadron.

We fully appreciate your difficulties, however, and hope that the optimism expressed in respect of developments in Korea will be justified.

As I have made a further statement to the effect that the Government has decided to re-equip the Squadron, I shall, unless a settlement in Korea is arrived at have to approach America to assist us in this matter.

The Rt. Hon. E. Shinwell, M.P.

/I

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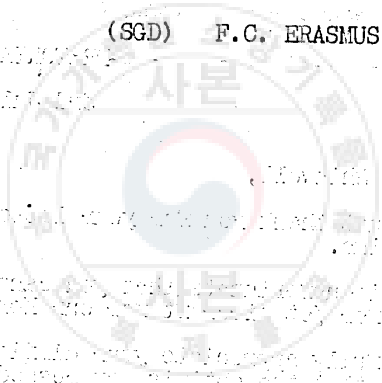
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I have noted the contents of your letter on the matter of the supply of jet aircraft to the South African Air Force and sincerely hope that the speed of production will be such that the period mentioned will be considerably reduced.

The scheme envisaged for giving South African Aircrews practical experience in a theatre they will have to operate in, will receive my sympathetic consideration.

Yours sincerely,

(SGD) F.C. ERASMUS



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P.S. to C.A.S.  
P.S. to A.M.S.O.  
A.U.S. (S)  
A.C.A.S. (P)  
D.Pol. (AS)  
C.E.E.  
D.O. (FP)  
S.6

29th June, 1951.

Dear Mr. Erasmus,

I undertook to put on record the main points of our talk yesterday about the supply of jet aircraft to the Union of South Africa.

First, we have most carefully examined the possibility of meeting your Government's wish to acquire a number of Vampire aircraft in the very near future for the re-equipment of the South African squadron now serving in Korea. I have, however, most regretfully to say that this could not be done at this time without delaying the build-up of the front line squadrons of the R.A.F. in the vital European theatre, thus reducing the strength of the forces which we have committed to General Eisenhower's command. We feel sure that your Government will agree with our view that such action could not possibly be justified in present circumstances, and imagine that the Union Government will in any event wish to give further consideration to the matter in view of recent developments in the Korean situation.

/Secondly

The Hon. F.C. Erasmus.

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Secondly, we fully appreciate the necessity of providing the South African air force with jet aircraft as early as possible, in order that they may build up, at an early date, squadrons which would be operating in the Middle East in war. We are hoping that production will go well enough to enable us to begin delivering additional Vampires to South Africa in about eighteen months from now. I am afraid, however, that in present circumstances we are not able to improve on this.

Although as you know we consider that it would be extremely valuable if South African squadrons could be stationed in the Middle East in peacetime, we appreciate that if such a plan were acceptable to your Government, it could not be put into effect until sufficient aircraft for these squadrons had been supplied. It has, however, occurred to us that, in order to give South African aircrews operational experience with jet aircraft in the Middle East theatre in advance of the time when complete squadrons could be formed, it might be possible for them to serve in that theatre with Royal Air Force squadrons which will be equipped with Vampires as part of our expansion programme. This would give the aircrews excellent training and experience and would also assist the R.A.F., which will be very tightly stretched for aircrew during the next year or two. The Air Ministry is now examining in more detail the practicability of a scheme of this kind, and I shall be writing to you further about it in due course. I should, however, be most interested to learn, as soon as you have had time to give the matter some further thought, whether you feel that, provided such a scheme could be shown to be practicable, your Government would be prepared to regard it with favour.

Yours sincerely,

(SGD) E. SHINWELL

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**SECRET**

CAS. 1178

Sir Harold Parker

Copies (less attachments) to: A. H. S. C.  
A. C. S. S. (P)  
A. U. S. (S)

The South Africans have been taking soundings about the possibility of our supplying to them 24 Vampires and 8 spare engines for the Squadron which they are operating in Korea and which is at present equipped with American Mustangs.

2. I am not clear if any official request has yet been made, but suggest that if it has not been done already such a request is likely shortly to be received in the Ministry of Defence.

3. I therefore attach for your information copies of minutes on the subject by A. H. S. C. and myself. My Secretary of State has since agreed that for the reasons set out in those minutes, we should not accede to any South African request for these aircraft.

*[Handwritten signature]*

26th June, 1951.

**SECRET**

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**SECRET**

CAS. 1178

Sir Harold Parker

Copies (less attachments) to: A.R.S.O.  
F.C.S.S.(P)  
F.U.S.(S)

The South Africans have been taking soundings about the possibility of our supplying to them 24 Vespers and 8 spare engines for the Squadron which they are operating in Korea and which is at present equipped with American Mustangs.

2. I am not clear if any official request has yet been made, but suggest that if it has not been done already such a request is likely shortly to be received in the Ministry of Defence.

3. I therefore attach for your information copies of minutes on the subject by A.R.S.O. and myself. My Secretary of State has since agreed that for the reasons set out in those minutes, we should not accede to any South African request for these aircraft.

*John G. ...*

26th June, 1951

**SECRET**

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O.A.S. 1178

MINUTE SHEET

Air Ministry File No.

S. of S.

**SECRET**

3037

Copy to:- A.M.S.O.

You should see the attached minute from A.M.S.O. on the S. African request for 24 Vampires for their squadron in Korea.

2. I think you will agree that it would be madness still further to weaken our position when we are already far too weak - i.e. in Europe, in order to strengthen the U.N. position in Korea where already we are overwhelmingly strong relative to the enemy.

3. The logistic troubles of having yet another British type in Korea would be serious.

4. If the S. Africans comment on our having given the Australians Meteors, you could make two points:-

(a) We did that at a time when the military position in Korea was very serious. Things have now changed - and may change still more after Malik's balloon d'essai;

(b) We wanted to get experience of Meteors in action. We have already some useful experience with Vampires in Malaya.

5. In general, it is quite clear that we can not accede to the S. African request.

25th June, 1951.

C.A.S.

**SECRET**

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SECRET

-2-

P.S. to C.A.S.

M. 5306

Copy to: P.S. to A.M.S.O.

S. of S. agrees with the views expressed by C.A.S. in his minute overleaf.

2. S. of S. assumes that the reasons for the Air Ministry being unable to provide these Vampires for South Africa will be conveyed to the Ministry of Defence.

*T.C.G. James*

(T. C. G. James)  
P.S. to S. of S.

26.6.51



SECRET

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O.A.S. 1178

MINUTE SHEET

Air Ministry File No.

AMS079350

G.A.S.

Copy to D.Pol.(A.S.) A.U.S.(S)  
C.E.E. D.O.(F.P.)  
D.G.E.

You have asked me what would be the implications on the R.A.F., especially on the build up of B.A.F.O., of giving the South Africans 24 Vampires now plus 8 spare engines for their squadron in Korea.

Aircraft

2. My staff have already given D.Pol.(A.S.) certain information on this subject but the following gives the broad answers.

3. Assuming that the South Africans want this equipment within the next six months or so, the only way of providing them with the aircraft is to reduce the planned U.E. of one of the operational Commands, or to reduce the training U.E. by 24 aircraft. The following alternative methods have been suggested:-

- (a) To take 2 Vampire Squadrons out of the front-line, leaving Fighter Command with one R.A.F. Vampire Squadron, or
- (b) To stop the re-arming of 2 Auxiliary Spitfire Squadrons (Nos. 603 and 612) due to take place by mid-July, 1951, or
- (c) To cancel the build up to 16 U.E. of 2 squadrons in B.A.F.O., due to take place in the December quarter of 1951, or
- (d) To cancel the expansion of one of the above squadrons, and also one squadron in M.E.A.F. due to take place in the September quarter of 1951, or
- (e) To reduce the planned training U.E. of Vampires by 24. This would be the equivalent of one O.C.U. or one A.F.S.

4. You will note that South Africa are asking for one squadron of 16 U.E. plus 8 I.R. The 8 reserve aircraft should last about two months at gross war wastage rates in the Ground Attack role; subsequent wastage would, presumably, have to be made good by further diversions from R.A.F. sources.

5. You asked particularly about the position in B.A.F.O. Four of the existing Vampire Squadrons are still at 8 U.E. instead of 16, owing to shortage of aircraft and backing. According to present plans they are due to be built up to 16 U.E. in the December quarter of this year. We have also planned to form 2 new squadrons of Vampires in B.A.F.O. at 16 U.E. in the December quarter of this year but this date has now had to be postponed until March 1952.

Spares and Equipment Backing

6. The above broadly presents the effect of supplying aircraft to meet this requirement; provision of the necessary equipment packups and spares backing for this squadron for war operations would, I consider, have an even more serious effect on the R.A.F. The general reason is that we are now trying to maintain a very /much

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4000 4100 G.S.S. 1218-121 (12/52)

SECRET

much augmented U.E. of Vampires with the spare engines and spares of all ranges originally ordered before the present expansion was decided upon. We still have to meet the needs of further expansion in Flying Training Command and the expansion of the front line referred to above.

7. De Havillands are seriously behind with the repair of engines and some 160 engines are awaiting repair at the works. To date, they are about 80 engines behind on their programme of deliveries and we shall not catch up on this for several months. Overseas Commands are 55 reserve engines short and home units are working without their normal holding of spare engines. It is clear, therefore, that any allocation of serviceable engines for this new commitment would be very serious to the R.A.F. until De Havillands' repair output catches up in several months' time.

8. As to spares, in addition to the fact that our recently expanded U.E. of Vampires is greatly above what our general stock was provisioned to support, there is a small range of items (airframe, instrument and particularly engine spares) which are in critical supply and on which we cannot foresee that the position will appreciably improve for several months. We are having extreme difficulty in keeping the present U.E. flying and the Air Ministry and the Commands concerned are having to adopt every expediency to make the available resources go as far as possible. This is already beginning to have an effect on flying and it would obviously be unsound to re-arm a squadron in the Far East on the basis required unless we can send them a complete supply of everything and meet all their subsequent needs. If, therefore, we are faced with despatching a pack up of even, say, six months' requirements behind this squadron, we should have to give them their proper quota of these critical items and the effect on all the Vampire Units of the R.A.F. during this lean period would be extremely serious and would lead to an unacceptable degree of unserviceability for several months to come.

9. We could supply ground equipment for normal maintenance but we definitely could not supply fourth line servicing equipment and jigs, and major repairs would have to be evacuated to the nearest existing base equipped for Vampires and Goblins, i.e. Singapore.

Explosives

10. Another most important point is the supply of 20 mm. ammunition. You will be aware from the reports we have rendered to the Minister of Defence that we are critically short of this ammunition. We should have to send at least 500,000 rounds with the South African pack up which would have a calamitous effect on our small war reserve which will continue to shrink until the Royal Ordnance factory at Swynnerton begins to produce in significant quantities. In view of the current international situation I do not think we can possibly accept this loss of reserve or face this unexpected additional consumption during the critical months ahead.

Conclusion

11. I must advise you that if we have to meet this request, and wish to ensure that our squadrons are at full effectiveness, the R.A.F. must reduce its existing and projected front line by the equivalent of approximately three full squadrons for a period of about six months when we hope the engine and spares backing will improve.

21st June, 1951

*W.D.*  
A.M.S.O.

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PRIVATE AND SECRET

675/18

20th March, 1951.

*My dear Strad,*

Many thanks for your letter of the 13th. I wish I could try out some British jets, other than the Meteor, in Korea, but I'm afraid it isn't on. First, I can't spare them from our own very large expansion, particularly of our Tactical Air Force under Ika. Secondly I'm sure S. Africa would not pay for them. Pretorius is wrong in saying they are re-equipping their units with Vampire V. All they have done is order a very few, and I think they live in the deluded hope that we are going to give them a lot more. For your private ear, the trouble is that the S.A.A.F. are under the Army and a particularly ignorant Army at that.

I'm so glad the S.A.A.F. boys are doing you well. I had practically the whole S.A.A.F. under me in the Mediterranean the last 18 months of the war and they were a first class lot.

I'm so grateful for your suggestion, which on the face of it was an excellent one, but I'm afraid it isn't practicable at present.

*Yours ever,  
(S) Jacked.*

Lieutenant General G. F. Strattonoyor,  
The Commanding General,  
Far East Air Forces,  
APO 925 c/o Postmaster,  
San Francisco,  
California.

PRIVATE AND SECRET

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SECRET

THE COMMANDING GENERAL  
FAR EAST AIR FORCES  
APO 925, C/O POSTMASTER  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

13 March 1951

Dear Jack,

As you know, the 77th Royal Australian Air Force Fighter Squadron is being re-equipped with jet airplanes - the Meteor VIII's. That leaves the other British Commonwealth unit, the South African Air Force Squadron, Number 2, which operates under my control, equipped with F-51's.

I have just had a talk with the Senior Liaison Officer, Colonel Jan Daniel Pretorius and he indicated to me that he has suggested back to his Government in South Africa the re-equipping of the 2d Fighter Squadron with the new Vampire Mark V's. He also indicated to me that the South African Air Force is re-equipping its fighter units with the Vampire Mark V.

I, therefore, suggest to you that it might be possible in your position as the head of the Royal Air Force to divert as soon as possible to the 2d South African Squadron here in the Far East sufficient new Vampires to equip them in order that they may be tested under combat conditions. This South African fighter squadron contains the cream of the South African Air Force fighter pilots. They were hand picked and are a wonderful group of gentlemen who have been hard at this air fighting in Korea since their arrival. There is no better operational training unit in the world than the United States Far East Air Forces.

As you know, Vandenberg is testing out, under my command, besides the F-80, the F-84E, the F-86A, and soon, the F-94A All-Weather Interceptor.

If I am out of turn, Jack, in making this suggestion to you, please understand that it is done to improve our fighting ability out here and to improve the efficiency and better the equipment of the British Commonwealth fighter units operating under my control.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

GEORGE E. STRATEMEYER  
Lieutenant General, U. S. Air Force  
Commanding

Marshal of the Royal Air Force  
Sir John C. Slessor, G.C.B., D.S.O., M.C.  
Air Ministry  
King Charles Street  
Whitehall, S.W. 1  
London, ENGLAND

SECRET

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FILE

Additional copies to: A.C.A.S.(P)  
D.Pol.(A.S.)  
C.E.E.  
D.O.(F.P.)

SECRET 0.A.S. 1178

S. of S.

Copy to:- A.M.S.O.

You should see the attached minute from A.M.S.O. on the S. African request for 24 Vampires for their squadron in Korea.

2. I think you will agree that it would be madness still further to weaken our position when we are already far too weak - i.e. in Europe, in order to strengthen the U.N. position in Korea where already we are overwhelmingly strong relative to the enemy.

3. The logistic troubles of having yet another British type in Korea would be serious.

4. If the S. Africans comment on our having given the Australians Meteors, you could make two points:-

(a) We did that at a time when the military position in Korea was very serious. Things have now changed - and may change still more after Malik's ballon d'essai;

(b) We wanted to get experience of Meteors in action. We have already some useful experience with Vampires in Malaya.

5. In general, it is quite clear that we can not accede to the S. African request.

25th June, 1951.

SECRET C.A.S.

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C. of S.

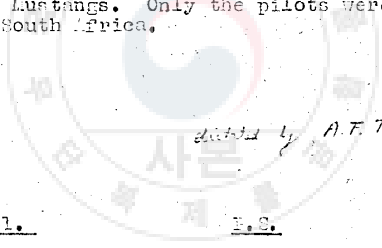
I assume that in the light of A.M.S.O's advice attached, you will agree that we can not meet the South African request for 24 Vampires for their Squadron in Korea. You will, no doubt, wish to put this minute to S. of S. through P.U.S. since S. of S. will presumably expect to be informed on this matter, bearing in mind that the Minister of Defence may discuss it with him.

2. I am sure that you are aware that the South African Squadron in Korea is at present operating aircraft which were supplied by the U.S.A.F. i.e. Mustangs. Only the pilots were sent out from South Africa.

*Handwritten signature: A.F. Thompson*

22nd June, 1951.

P.S.



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C. de S.

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*Delivered by A.T. Timp*

22nd June, 1951.

E.S.

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