

cc Mr. Sanders. 11



PM/79/56

PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister

This may come up at  
 Questions tomorrow. Confer  
 with this general line?

SALT II: The Government's Public Response

Today - see, 18/6

1. The SALT II Agreement will be signed in Vienna today. We need to consider how we should react to it both nationally and in NATO.
2. Our line so far has been to welcome the conclusion of the negotiations and express the hope that the Agreement will be ratified. We have rightly taken the view that we should not comment on the substance of SALT II until we have studied the texts. We can maintain this line in response to any enquiries immediately after signature. But the Americans will release the texts to the Alliance immediately after its signature and will press hard for an early Alliance statement (on which they are already wanting to enlist our help).
3. I am arranging for my officials to carry out a thorough scrutiny of the agreement, in conjunction with MOD, and will let you know the result. Subject to the outcome of this, I suggest that the Government should have a somewhat more substantive line ready for the period after we have had time to study the Agreement. I propose that this should be based on the draft at Annex, which flows from our present position and from the two NATO Communiqués of last month in which the Allies "welcomed" the Agreement.
4. I am sending copies of this minute to other members of OD and to Sir John Hunt.

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(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

18 June 1979

Government Response to SALT II

The British Government welcome the Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union which was signed in Vienna on 18 June.

Successive British Governments have strongly supported the efforts of the US Administration to negotiate balanced and verifiable agreements limiting strategic arms.

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SALT II must be seen as a carefully balanced compromise between the different interests and attitudes of the two sides. It breaks new ground in placing equal limits on both sides, in reducing the overall number of strategic weapons and in applying qualitative limits to new types of systems. It is thus an important step in the continuing process of arms control, which the Government see as complementary to the Alliance's defence capability. For this reason they hope that it will be ratified.

Throughout the negotiations leading to the new agreement, the United States has kept its Allies informed of progress and has consulted them particularly on aspects of special concern to them. The Government are satisfied that the agreement will not interfere with continued nuclear and conventional co-operation between the United States and its allies and that the essential security options of the Alliance are safeguarded.

