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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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copy on: Germany, June '79, PM's mtgs with Schmidt in Germany.

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30th October 1979

MO 20/3/4

Prime Minister

Dear Michael,

31/X

BONN VISIT: DEFENCE MATTERS

At yesterday's briefing meeting for the Prime Minister's visit to Bonn, the Prime Minister asked for a clearer explanation of the meaning and interrelationship of the references (at the end of paragraph 2 of the brief on defence matters) to the arms control element of the TNF package and to linkage with SALT 2 ratification.

My Secretary of State sees the position as follows. Most of our Continental Allies, including the Germans, believe that if TNF modernisation is to be put over in their own countries it needs to be accompanied by some kind of offer to bring such systems eventually within an arms control negotiation. The details of any offer are undefined and still under discussion. But:

a. The United Kingdom is in no way committed to the inclusion of any UK systems - Polaris or its successor, any future UK Ground Launched Cruise Missiles force, or our other capabilities - in any negotiation. At present NATO's modernisation plans for Long Range Theatre Nuclear Forces are limited to United State-owned systems and the arms control move contemplated would be similarly limited.

b. We should not negotiate from weakness and must not therefore make any arms control offer in advance of a firm and specific decision to go ahead with modernisation.

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c. We should make it clear to public opinion that the Soviet Union has a substantial advantage in terms of its existing weapons - their LRTNF modernisation, in effect, is already far advanced.

It is envisaged that a comprehensive report on the position, covering both LRTNF modernisation and the accompanying arms control components, will be put to MISC 7 after the mid-November Nuclear Planning Group and before NATO decision-taking meeting on 12th December.

There is also a question about SALT 2 which may be raised. If SALT 2 were not ratified by the United States some of our Continental Allies try to say this would make it impossible to get TNF modernisation through their Cabinets and Parliaments. The Dutch in particular have been inclined to push matters to the point of making prior SALT 2 ratification a condition of TNF decisions on 12th December (you will have seen my letter to George Walden of 25th October). This needs to be quashed. It implies a SALT 2 timetable which the US Senate may find genuinely hard to meet; it might actively provoke Senators to resentment and so prove actually counter productive; and it could entail a further defeat for the West in the nuclear field.

Mr Pym believes that the Prime Minister might wish to urge the Chancellor not to support any conditions which give ground to the Russians but to remain ready (as the UK will be) to go ahead robustly with the TNF decisions even if SALT is not in the bag by 12th December.

I am copying this letter to Paul Lever (Foreign & Commonwealth Office) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever
Brian Norbury

(B NORBURY)

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Prime Minister Defence

The objective of TNF modernisation is to re-establish military balance in the European theatre. This is a pre-requisite for arms control discussions or agreements. Arms control measures are, of course, highly desirable. There is therefore a link. I am prepared to see that link acknowledged by NATO in December.

I acknowledge the importance of SALT II, both for its own sake and as a prelude to SALT III. I want to see SALT II ratified. But I am not prepared to see SALT II made a condition for TNF modernisation.

Yours
MTX