

~~SECRET~~



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

10 September 1981

Dear Mr. President:

During the 1980 exchanges on the modernisation of the nuclear deterrent capability of the United Kingdom, your predecessor assured me that the United States was willing, in principle, to supply special nuclear materials for the United Kingdom deterrent programme. Since that time, studies have been undertaken on the United Kingdom's future requirements for such materials and the potential needs have been discussed with Secretary Weinberger, Secretary Edwards and their staffs.

The point has been reached where it is certain that the United Kingdom will need to procure significant quantities of highly enriched uranium, weapons grade plutonium and tritium from the US Department of Energy, at various rates from about 1985 for some ten years, in order to implement our future nuclear deterrent proposals. Additionally, there may be a requirement for a relatively modest quantity of low enriched uranium. While the details of the procurement have not yet been finalised in terms either of the United Kingdom programme or of the Department of Energy's capacity to meet it, I would be grateful if you would authorise the Department of Energy, with the support of the Department of Defense, to undertake the necessary procurement planning which must precede the implementation of the special nuclear materials production programmes as may eventually be agreed between us. I would also value your assurance that the 1958 Agreement between the United States and United Kingdom Governments for Co-operation in the Uses of

/Atomic

SECRET

SECRET

- 2 -

Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes would be amended, as we may jointly agree, so that the necessary procurement of special nuclear materials by the United Kingdom from the United States can proceed over the duration of the United Kingdom programme.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher.

The President of the United States of America

SECRET