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Defence  
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Prime Minister

BRITISH UNDERGROUND NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAMME

The Defence Secretary sent me a copy of his minute to you of 3 September. I agree with his proposal that we should now confirm to the Americans our intention to proceed with the 1981 test programme and to meet the American request for an early financial commitment.

Francis Pym assesses the prospects for an agreed cessation of testing during 1981 as being remote. I think that this is right. For reasons similar to those explained when we last considered the test programme (Peter Carrington's minute of 3 January), there remains a chance that the Dingbat II test, now delayed until December 1981, could be at risk if the CTB negotiations were given a real push by both the Americans and Russians in 1981. But I do not think this possibility is firm enough to hold up our confirmation to proceed with our programme.

I am sending copies of this minute to the Defence Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Sir Robert Armstrong.

1.49.

9 September 1980

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