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SECRET
UK EYES A

MO 12/2/5

PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister. Has seen. Amds 15/5
This is the expected minute in which the
Defence Secretary ~~comes~~ suggests a pause for
reflection if the USSR rejects the single NSS
option. The hymn does not question Lord Carrington's
road strategy which you have endorsed.

COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN

I have seen Peter Carrington's minute to you of 11th September. I agree with his conclusion that the right thing at this stage is to repeat the offer of one National Seismic Station in the United Kingdom. It is, as he says, far from certain that three stations would satisfy the Russians.

2. This decision should also clear the air with the Americans. Unless they are still aiming for a CTB in 1980 (and I agree this is far from certain) it is not entirely consistent of them to press us to increase our offer of one NSS so as to move the negotiations forward. We have, however, to recognise that simply to repeat our offer of one NSS will not be immediately welcome to them. I entirely endorse Peter Carrington's emphasis on the very important issues which are current between ourselves and the Americans. We should therefore make every effort to secure American support for our position, and indeed to ensure that we remain in close touch and sympathy with the United States on all aspects of these negotiations.

3. I am concerned, however, about the handling of the option of withdrawal from the Separate Verification Agreement negotiations if we fail to make acceptable to the Russians our renewed offer of one NSS. The fundamental difficulty of the withdrawal option is that it may well not work; it appears that in Soviet eyes the NSS issue transcends the SVA consideration, so that even if the Russians accepted our withdrawal, they would still demand that we should accept UK NSS. The immediate difficulty is that Soviet rejection of our offer of one NSS may be very quick indeed, and we shall need to be clear about our next move.

/ We shall ...



SECRET
UK EYES A

2.

4. We shall also, I suggest, need to take careful account of American reaction to the withdrawal option before we table it publicly. Accordingly we should indicate to the United States at an early stage that we see withdrawal as our most probable fall-back option. Nevertheless, I share Peter Carrington's view that withdrawal could lessen the influence which we can exert on the later stages of these negotiations. This underlines what I think is our shared belief that our current and longer term interests, both in foreign policy and in defence, are best served if we can so conduct our case as to stay in these negotiations and in close consultation with the Americans. This is especially so as the latter may well believe that for us to make the offer of withdrawal would enable the Russians to retract their offer of ten NSS and thus risk what Peter Carrington rightly identifies as the major gain in American eyes of the negotiations so far.

5. In short I accept that we may need to adopt the withdrawal option in due course. I believe, however, that we do need to consider it further in the light of the Soviet reaction to our repeated offer of one NSS, and that in taking stock before our next move we shall need to take full account of the views of the Americans.

6. Subject to this, I am generally content with Peter Carrington's proposals, and would not, therefore, ask for a discussion before a message is sent to the Americans.

7. I am sending copies of this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Home Secretary; a copy also goes to Sir John Hunt.

18th September 1979

SECRET
UK EYES A

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CONFIDENTIAL

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Red circular stamp with the date "NOV 13 1941" and some illegible text around the perimeter.



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NOV 13 1941