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10 DOWNING STREET

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cc FCO Defence
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From the Principal Private Secretary

25 January 1982

Dear David,

EXPORT OF PLUTONIUM TO FRANCE

I have shown the Prime Minister your letter of 21 January 1982 to Willie Rickett, and she has noted that BNFL will not now be leasing plutonium to the CEA and that if the French were to renew their request for plutonium, Ministers would be able to consider it afresh in the light of reactions to the proposal to export plutonium to the United States.

I am sending copies of this letter to Francis Richards (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Peter Jenkins (Treasury), Nick Evans (Ministry of Defence) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

David Lumley

David Lumley Esq.,
Department of Energy.

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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY
THAMES HOUSE SOUTH
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Prime Minister.

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W F S Rickett Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

21 January 1982

Dear Willie

EXPORT OF PLUTONIUM TO FRANCE

In your letter to Francis Richards of 17 August 1981, you confirmed that the Prime Minister was willing to let the export of plutonium by BNFL to the CEA to go ahead. I am writing to let you know that this deal has not gone through. BNFL were informed recently by the CEA that they do not now wish to lease this plutonium. The reason given was that a re-examination of the Superphenix fuel fabrication programme had shown that the CEA no longer needed to lease any plutonium.

This proposed export of plutonium has not yet been announced, and there have been no reports or rumours about it either. There is therefore no need for anything to be said about the deal falling through. We have, however, written to the Company informing them that the approval in principle to lease plutonium to the CEA has been withdrawn, and that if the CEA wish to renew their request the matter will have to be referred to Ministers afresh. It seemed desirable to do this in view of the concern expressed recently in Parliament and in the media about the export of plutonium to the US. We would wish to be able to say, if asked about the export of plutonium to France, that there is no commitment to sell or lease plutonium to the CEA.

If the request is renewed Ministers will be able to consider it again in the light of the reactions to the proposal to export plutonium to the US. That proposal is, as you know, being kept as low key as possible, both by us and the US Government.

I am copying this letter to Francis Richards (FCO), Brian Norbury (Defence), Peter Jenkins (Treasury) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever
David Lumley
DAVID LUMLEY
Private Secretary

22 JAN 1982



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