

Defence  
Cabinet

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

9 February 1983

MR 7/2  
per.

Dear John,

INF: The Zero Option

Our Embassy in Washington told us yesterday that some of the staunchest opponents to any move from the zero option within the Administration now appear to accept that a new initiative, on the general lines discussed at the Prime Minister's briefing meeting at Chequers on 30 January, may now be inescapable. They may however try to dilute the effectiveness of a move of this kind (say to 300 warheads on each side) by making it a pre-condition in the negotiations that the Russians must accept now in principle that this is merely an intermediate solution which would lead at a certain date in the future to a full implementation of the zero option.

This is clearly not a proposition which we could endorse. The Russians are no more likely to accept a zero option in principle now for execution at some future date than they are now to agree to its implementation at the outset. A pre-condition of the kind suggested would, to all intents and purposes, remove any impact which an initiative on the lines we have discussed with the Prime Minister might have, either in the negotiations themselves or more widely with Western public opinion.

It is perhaps unlikely that this will be raised at the meeting with Vice-President Bush this evening. But the Prime Minister, if a suitable occasion arises, may wish to make clear that an initiative hedged about with a pre-condition of this kind is not what we have in mind and would not in our view be helpful.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

*RB*  
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Private Secretary  
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