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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

10 June, 1983

Prime Minister  
You will I wish to be  
aware of the new US  
position on START.

A.J.C. <sup>13.</sup>/<sub>6</sub>

You John,

Strategic Arms Control: Change to US START Proposals

You asked for a commentary on President Reagan's speech on 8 June in which he announced amended proposals for the START talks.

The President announced that he was prepared to relax the US proposal for a limit of 850 strategic ballistic missile launchers. Although no figure has been made public, a possible limit of 1250 has been given to the US START negotiator to work on at Geneva. The announcement brings the US position into line with the recommendations of the President's advisory commission (the Scowcroft Commission) on the future of US land-based strategic missiles.\* The Commission recommended that the primary focus in arms control should be on restricting warheads rather than launchers, on the grounds that the growth and development of MIRVed systems is threatening the survivability of land-based missiles. The Commission therefore proposed the development of a new small land-based missile with a single warhead. A switch to single warhead missiles would be impossible to accommodate under a ceiling of 850 for all strategic ballistic missiles. The Americans' proposal for reductions in the number of strategic missile warheads remains as it was - viz a limit of 5000, as compared to current levels of about 7,500.

The US proposals for limits on aircraft and air-launched cruise missiles are also unchanged. The President made clear that the further main US requirement to reduce Soviet superiority in the throw-weight (a major element in calculating destructive power) of strategic nuclear forces, also stands. In this context the President did not indicate any change in US proposals for highly restrictive sub-ceilings for the heavier Soviet land-based missiles. But he conspicuously avoided a rigid position on throw-weight and there are indications, including remarks by Mr Shultz at the North Atlantic Council on 9 June, that the Americans may be prepared to be more flexible on this. This would further increase the negotiability of their position.

The President's statement was marked by an important change in tone, indicating that the new proposals are not made on a take it or leave it basis and that the Americans are prepared to negotiate seriously. This to some extent reflects Congressional

\* It also has the effect of narrowing the gap between the US and Soviet position on this specific point.

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pressures. The President also announced that the Scowcroft Commission would remain in existence; this could have an important contribution to make to the restoration of an effective bi-partisan approach in Washington to arms control issues.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*R B Bone*

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