



Ref.A083/2859

PRIME MINISTER

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Arms Control and Disarmament

At the conclusion of your meeting at Chequers on 9 September, you asked me to circulate a draft agenda of issues in the field of arms control and disarmament which Ministers would need to consider in the next three months, and to recommend how these issues might best be considered by Ministers. My minute of 3 October to Mr Coles contained proposals for Ministerial consideration of these issues, which you approved.

2. Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet Office have now prepared an agenda and programme of work. This can be conveniently divided into

- a. the key decisions on the Trident programme;
- b. the public handling of the United Kingdom deterrent in relation to arms control; and
- c. other arms control issues.

Trident

3. The Government has taken and announced decisions on the size of the Trident force (four boats), the number of missile tubes per boat (sixteen) and the type of missile to be procured (D5). It has yet to take decisions on the number of missiles, and of warheads, to be procured. These decisions depend on a judgment of what will, when Trident is deployed, provide a minimum credible deterrent. The JIC are accordingly undertaking an assessment of the minimum level of damage which the Soviet leadership might regard as unacceptable; the Chiefs of Staff will, on the basis of that assessment, form a judgment on the deterrence criteria that the Government should be recommended to adopt; and the Ministry of Defence will work out what mix or mixes of missiles and warheads (the latter may in turn involve a mix or mixes of live warheads and penetration aids) satisfy these criteria at minimum cost.





4. As much as possible of this work will, to save time, be done in parallel. The JIC assessment is planned to be available in January 1984 and the intention is that subsequent steps should be completed so that advice can be tendered to the Secretary of State for Defence by about mid-February 1984 for subsequent discussion in MISC 7. This proposed timetable is a little in advance of that originally forecast at Chequers on 9 September. It could be further accelerated if the JIC assessment were to be dispensed with; but since that assessment is clearly crucial to the eventual judgment that Ministers will make, this is not a course that officials would recommend. There are no immediate operational time constraints on the decisions about numbers of missiles and warheads: Ministerial approval will be required by the end of March 1984 for further financial commitments to the Trident programme as a whole, but very little of the sum involved is likely to be sensitive to the decisions of the missile/warhead mix.

United Kingdom Deterrent/Arms Control: Public Handling

5. Although pressure on the Government to clarify or refine its position on the relationship between the United Kingdom deterrent and the arms control process may increase during the run-up to cruise and Pershing 2 deployment, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary considers that the position staked out in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 28 September (excerpt attached at annex) should be sustainable until the end of 1983 and possibly beyond. The arguments, in logic and commonsense, against taking account of the United Kingdom (and French) strategic deterrents in the current INF negotiations are so strong that patient explanation, coupled with the assurance that the Government is not claiming that the United Kingdom deterrent will never be relevant to arms control, should enable the Government to hold the line until the review of the future of our irreducible deterrence requirement is completed, at the end of March 1984. In the meantime, it will be especially important to keep senior members of the United States Administration on board. Mr Shultz raised the issue with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in Washington just prior to Vice President Bush's unfortunate remarks to journalists. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is writing to Mr Shultz.





6. There are two possible developments which could change this situation. If next year there were to be a proposal from either the United States or the Soviet Union for a merger of the START and INF negotiations or, alternatively, if the United States and the Soviet Union were to move towards a Vladivostok-type framework agreement on strategic arms reductions, the debate on the relevance of United Kingdom and French systems would rapidly move on to different and more difficult ground. It is much easier to defend the exclusion of strategic systems from a negotiation on intermediate range missiles than it is to defend their indefinite exclusion from a process of strategic arms reductions. In the present East-West climate, however, neither development seems very likely to occur during the next six months. If, against expectation, the negotiating situation were to change in either of these ways, it should be possible to shade or refine the Government's present public position sufficiently to meet increased Alliance or public pressures without prejudicing the outcome of the review of our deterrence requirement. It is essential that this review should not be rushed or skimmed simply to meet short-term problems of public presentation. Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence officials are considering possible reformulations on a contingency basis which would be submitted to Ministers at the appropriate time.

#### Other Arms Control

7. The outlook for the other arms control issues which were mentioned in the Ministerial discussions on 9 September has been reviewed in order to identify questions which might require collective Ministerial decision during the next three months:-

- (a) START Apart from the aspect discussed in paragraph 6, the START talks will not call for any United Kingdom decisions, though as President Reagan's recent proposals for a "build down" of strategic nuclear forces on both sides has shown, they will continue to have a presentational aspect on other arms control negotiations.



(b) INF There could be developments at Geneva requiring adjustment of the United States negotiating position.

(c) Battlefield Nuclear Weapons NATO has since 1979 reviewed its stockpile of shorter range nuclear weapons (the so-called battlefield nuclear weapons) in Europe. Subject to approval by NATO Defence Ministers at the end of October, it has been agreed that the minimum requirements of this element of NATO's deterrent permit substantial reductions - in the order of 2,000 warheads - to be made in the stockpile. Although this is not an arms control measure as such, it will be important to make the best possible presentational advantage out of these reductions when they are announced.

(d) MBFR The possibility that the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany might, in order to inject new movement into the MBFR negotiations, come forward with proposals unacceptable to the United Kingdom has temporarily receded. If it re-emerges, the United Kingdom may, in the interests of preserving Alliance unity in the negotiations, wish to table within the Alliance counter-proposals designed to move the negotiation forward without detriment to Western security interests. If this becomes necessary, Ministers will be asked to approve the United Kingdom proposals.

(e) Chemical Weapons The Defence Secretary proposes to circulate a paper on this subject before the end of October. Ministers will need to decide, in the light of that paper, whether the United Kingdom should continue to take a leading role, in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, in seeking a verifiable agreement on a chemical weapons ban.





(f) Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security Building Measures in Europe (CDE) The Alliance is engaged in elaborating a set of proposals which would be tabled as a common Alliance position when this new forum opens in Stockholm in January 1984. This will probably be the first Western arms control initiative after the beginning of deployment of NATO's INF missiles. Ministers will, at the appropriate stage, be invited to give the United Kingdom's approval to that position.

(g) Outer Space Further discussions with the Americans are needed before a firm United Kingdom policy can be established towards the various arms control proposals, including that of the Soviet Union. Ministers may be asked to review the options before the end of this year.

(h) Non-Proliferation Treaty Ministers will, before the end of this year, be invited to approve proposals which the United Kingdom might put, in the first instance, to its close allies on ways in which the Non-Proliferation Treaty might be revitalised, in order to help the NPT regime to survive the NPT Review Conference in 1985.

(i) Comprehensive Test Ban No requirement for Ministerial decision is envisaged on this subject.

(j) Radiological Weapons Again there is unlikely to be any requirement for Ministerial decision.

#### Handling

8. The Trident procurement issues should be ready for discussion in MISC 7 in about March 1984. The remaining issues would fall to the new Disarmament Sub-Committee of OD. Unless it proves necessary to reformulate the Government's public position on the relationship between the British deterrent and the arms control process, the only subjects which at present seem likely to require Ministerial decision in the next three months are:-





- (a) chemical weapons, in the light of the Defence Secretary's forthcoming paper;
- (b) the Alliance's position on the Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security Building Measures in Europe;
- (c) outer space (possible);
- (d) non-proliferation.

9. I should be grateful to know whether you are content to proceed on this basis.

10. I am sending copies of this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Defence Secretary.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'R' and 'A' in a stylized, cursive font.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

11 October 1983



ANNEX

OUR OBJECTIVE IN THESE AND OTHER NEGOTIATIONS IS SIMPLE: WE WANT REALISTIC, BALANCED AND VERIFIABLE MEASURES OF ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT WHICH WILL ENHANCE PEACE AND SECURITY. NOT JUST FOR OURSELVES, BUT FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS. WE DO NOT SEEK UNILATERAL ADVANTAGE. NOR SHALL WE GIVE IN TO THOSE WHO SEEK IT AT OUR EXPENSE.

THAT, FOR THE MOMENT, IS WHAT THE SOVIET UNION IS TRYING TO DO BY CLAIMING THAT BRITISH AND FRENCH SYSTEMS SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE INF NEGOTIATIONS. THE TWO PARTICIPANTS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION, HAVE AGREED THAT THEIR OWN STRATEGIC SYSTEMS SHOULD BE EXCLUDED. THERE CAN BE NO REASON IN EQUITY OR LOGIC WHY THE STRATEGIC SYSTEMS OF NON PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE INCLUDED. THE SOVIET ATTEMPT TO SUGGEST OTHERWISE SHOULD PERHAPS BE DISMISSED AS A SMOKESCREEN, DESIGNED TO HIDE WHAT I HOPE IS ONLY A TEMPORARY UNWILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE SERIOUSLY.

BUT, TAKEN LITERALLY, WHAT THE SOVIET LEADERS ARE ASKING FOR IS EITHER THE UNILATERAL STRATEGIC DISARMAMENT OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE, OR A MONOPOLY OF INTERMEDIATE RANGE MISSILES IN EUROPE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE UNITED STATES AND ITS ALLIES.

THESE DEMANDS ARE UNACCEPTABLE AND WILL REMAIN SO. NOT BECAUSE BRITISH WEAPON SYSTEMS WOULD BE AFFECTED - BUT BECAUSE WHAT IS PROPOSED IN UNBALANCED AND INEQUITABLE, AND WOULD BENEFIT ONE SIDE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE OTHER.

WHEN IT COMES TO ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT, WE IN BRITAIN CLAIM NO SPECIAL PRIVILEGES AND NO SANCTUARY. THE RECORD MAKES THIS CLEAR, AND WE REMAIN READY TO PLAY A FULL PART IN THE ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT PROCESS.

AS FAR AS THE BRITISH DETERRENT IS CONCERNED, WE MUST NATURALLY TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THAT OUR FORCE IS A STRATEGIC ONE, AND THAT IT REPRESENTS LESS THAN 3 PERCENT OF THE STRATEGIC NUCLEAR FORCES AVAILABLE TO THE UNITED STATES OR TO THE SOVIET UNION. IT WOULD BE ABSURD AS THINGS STAND FOR US TO SEEK TO TRADE REDUCTIONS WITH A SUPER POWER. BUT WE HAVE NEVER SAID "NEVER". ON THE CONTRARY, WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT, IF SOVIET AND US STRATEGIC ARSENALS WERE TO BE VERY SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED, AND IF NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES HAD OCCURED IN SOVIET DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES, BRITAIN WOULD WANT TO REVIEW HER POSITION AND TO CONSIDER HOW BEST SHE COULD CONTRIBUTE TO ARMS CONTROL IN THE LIGHT OF THE REDUCED THREAT. THAT REMAINS OUR POSITION.





cc FCO  
MOD

17 tel

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Arms Control and Disarmament

The Prime Minister has read your minute of 11 October setting out an agenda of issues for Ministerial consideration in the next three months and proposals for handling the various discussions.

Mrs. Thatcher is content to proceed on the basis you describe.

BF) But the Prime Minister also considers that it is desirable that Ministers should have, from time to time, an opportunity to consider our general strategy in the field of arms control and disarmament as they did at Chequers in September. To this end, she would like a paper to be prepared soon describing the stage which we have reached in the most important arms control talks, especially INF and START, and considering whether there is any scope for a British initiative, either in suggesting changes to the Western position, or in putting new forms of pressure on the Soviet Union. The Prime Minister would like this paper to be discussed by an appropriate group of Ministers in the next few weeks.

I am copying this minute to Mr. Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Mr. Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

A. J. COLES

17 October 1983

SECRET



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PRIME MINISTER

ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

I attach a minute by Sir Robert Armstrong which proposes, following the Chequers meeting, a draft agenda of issues for Ministerial consideration.

The list of likely decisions for Ministers seems alright as far as it goes. But I think it is minimalist. There is no suggestion that Ministers should at any stage collectively review where we have got to in the most important arms control talks - INF and START - and decide whether there is any scope for a fresh initiative, either in suggesting changes to the Western position, or in putting new forms of pressure on the Soviet Union. This in my view is the strategic element which has been missing from internal discussion in the past.

*I agree - that is why we had the seminar and must continue to pursue these matters.*

I wonder therefore whether, in endorsing the agenda proposed by the Cabinet Secretary, you might wish to ask that a paper on INF and START on the above lines be prepared for discussion by Ministers in the next few weeks.

*Yes please*

On another matter, I have, as you asked, requested the FCO to consider whether we can take the initiative in tabling a U.N. Resolution in this field. They will be supplying advice. We shall have to bear in mind that any Resolution we table risks being defeated in the U.N. General Assembly.

*A.J.C.*

*MS*

12 October 1983