

010
TOP SECRET

UK EYES A



4
Copy No 1 of 5 Copies

Ref. A083/2920

Prime Minute

PRIME MINISTER

A.J.C. 19/10

Anglo-French Nuclear Co-operation

--- I submit an interdepartmentally agreed brief on Anglo-French nuclear co-operation for the Anglo-French Summit. It is being submitted separately from the other briefs because of its sensitivity.

2. I am sending copies of this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

17 October 1983

TOP SECRET

UK EYES A

Anglo-French Summit: 20-21 October 1983

Anglo-French Discussions on Nuclear Topics

Points to make (defensive)

The exchanges between senior officials have been particularly valuable in keeping both sides informed of developments in their national nuclear programmes. The series of talks should be continued at about the same level, and the same frequency as recently. It should also be the intention to broaden the scope of the discussions to include matters other than nuclear defence.

Background

2. You had a brief discussion at your tete-a-tete meeting with President Mitterand on 4 November 1982. It was agreed that co-operation should continue. President Mitterand said he had no reason to complain of the British attitude.

3. President Mitterand agreed to the continuation of Anglo-French discussions on nuclear defence issues on an extremely restricted basis between senior officials; three such exchanges have taken place in March 1981, March 1982 and September this year. In April 1982 the French Minister of Defence, Monsieur Hernu, took the opportunity to raise the question with Sir John Nott. He suggested that the discussions might be extended to cover operational matters such as targetting. But he has not subsequently pursued the proposal in his discussions with Mr Heseltine.

4.

THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

5. Nevertheless, we are both nuclear powers and our strategic nuclear deterrent forces should in the last resort be our guarantee of national survival. We have approached the problem of ensuring that our deterrents perform this function by different routes, and the French are well aware of our close links with the Americans. Even were that not the case, the very fact of the national independence of both countries would inevitably limit the degree to which we could operate or indeed co-operate. There is reason to think, following the last exchange with the French, that this is very much how they see things too.
6. But there are matters, even in this sensitive area, that we could profitably discuss. These include the position of our national deterrents in arms control; our broader philosophy for the use of national strategic deterrents; and the possibility of co-operation at some stage on sub-strategic systems. More generally, there are undoubted political benefits in maintaining this dialogue. President Mitterrand told you last year about his discussion with the Germans. If we were to give the French the impression that we were not interested, they might look more towards developing their security links on a more exclusively Franco-German basis.
7. Because of the practical limitations as to what can be discussed in the area of nuclear defence issues, and in the light of the desirability of continuing the dialogue, our intention is to attempt to broaden future exchanges to include other items of mutual interest such as emerging technologies.

17 October 1983