



19

Prime Minister

MO 13/1

Reduction of 2000 warhead  
 on shorter range nuclear weapons.

A.S.C. 24/10.

PRIME MINISTERHIGH LEVEL GROUP REPORT

During our meetings in early September we discussed briefly the review by the NATO High Level Group of officials (HLG) of the stockpile of shorter-range nuclear weapons deployed in Europe. The position was summarised in Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 11th October but as we are approaching an important Alliance decision, I think it is worth setting it out a little more fully.

2. The HLG's report will be taken at the Nuclear Planning Group meeting in Canada on 27th/28th October. It is their second main report. The first of course was the basis of the December 1979 double-track decision on longer-range INF. This one deals with the shorter-range systems (nuclear capable artillery, aircraft and missiles, NIKE HERCULES surface-to-air missiles and Atomic Demolitions Munitions). It notes a number of deficiencies in present systems and proposes measures to ensure their continued effectiveness, including in the shorter term the replacement of obsolescent warheads (though not with enhanced radiation weapons) and technical improvements to communications; and in the longer term, replacements for existing shorter-range missiles and air-delivered weapons (although there is no suggestion we shall be faced with an American request to deploy further new missiles in Europe in the short-term). The Group also took into account plans, already agreed by Ministers, to introduce conventional replacements for the aging NIKE HERCULES surface-to-air missiles and warheads.



3. On warhead numbers, the Group have proceeded from the assumption that what matters is deterrence and that if deterrence at this level (as at others) is to be credible, gaps in capability should be avoided. The difficulty with short-range systems on the one hand and a long frontier with the Warsaw Pact on the other is that if gaps are to be avoided that will tend to drive the number of short-range systems up. The alternative approach would have been to have fixed the stockpile on the (relatively much smaller) number of weapons that would, under current NATO doctrine, actually be used to restore deterrence should it fail. But circumstances are far too uncertain to make a calculation of that kind possible and, further, a very small stockpile might tempt the Russians to think that they could quickly locate and destroy it.

4. The Group are recommending an overall stockpile level (including 572 GLCM and Pershing IIs) of 4600 warheads. This would represent a further reduction of 2000 warheads in addition to the 1000 removed as part of the 1979 decision, to be completed in parallel with the deployment of the 572 Pershing II and Cruise missiles. The reductions would be drawn from all the categories of shorter-range warheads though the delivery systems themselves would not be affected nor would the British nuclear air-delivered bombs assigned to NATO. The latter were taken into account by the Group though its recommendations do not affect their numbers.

5. Such reductions would be clear evidence of NATO's determination to maintain its security whilst exercising genuine restraint - a policy which can be contrasted sharply with that of the Soviet Union - and will help to counter accusations that the West is fuelling the arms race, at a time immediately prior to the expected first deliveries of major GLCM equipment. Mr Weinberger - and perhaps also President Reagan - intends to draw attention to the positive results of the Group's work at the meeting of the NPG and subsequently. (It will however be important to ensure that the decision itself is not



announced until the NATO meeting). Following agreement at the NPG, SACEUR would undertake detailed planning to determine which warheads should be withdrawn.

6. I intend in Canada to welcome the report and its conclusions warmly, both for the reasons in paragraph 5 and as a successful collective effort to bring together the views of the Allies into an agreed report. I shall be considering how best we might, nationally, present the report's conclusions to Parliament and to the public.

7. I am copying this minute to our OD colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "H. A. A." or similar initials.

Ministry of Defence

21st October 1983



18

MO 13/1

Prime Minutes

A.J.C. 24/10

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PRIME MINISTER

HIGH LEVEL GROUP REPORT

In my minute of today's date to you and OD colleagues I reported the outcome of a review by NATO's High Level Group of the stockpile of shorter-range nuclear weapons systems in Europe. It might be useful if I set out briefly (for you and Geoffrey Howe only) a little more of the methodology which underlay the Group's analysis, and its conclusions with regard to the composition of the stockpile, than was appropriate given the more general distribution of my previous report.

2. An illustrative table of how the stockpile of warheads for intermediate and short-range nuclear weapons in Europe might be constituted in five years time, as compared to present levels, is given below:

	<u>1983</u>	<u>1988</u>
GLCMs		
Pershing II		
F111 aircraft (bombs)		
Pershing I missiles		
Dual capable aircraft (bombs)		
LANCE missiles		
HONEST JOHN missiles		
Nuclear artillery rounds		
NIKE HERCULES surface-to-air missiles		
Atomic Demolition Munitions		
TOTAL		

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I would stress that the second column of figures is illustrative only, since the task of deciding precise levels of deployment for each system within the reduced stockpile level will properly fall to SACEUR. The figures have however been agreed at official level with the US. You will also note that the current stockpile has already fallen below 6000, due primarily to early retirement of NIKE HERCULES warheads.

3. You might like to note the following points in elaboration of the Group's methodology:

a. for the shortest range systems (nuclear artillery, LANCE and HONEST JOHN missiles) relatively high numbers are required in order to maintain adequate coverage along the long NATO border with the Warsaw Pact. The Group assumed that for deterrence to be credible the Soviet Union should judge that we had the means to impose significant military damage on all of their forward divisions using our short-range weapons (although short of all-out nuclear war NATO's capability would of course never be used in full within our overall requirement at this range). The Group assumed that all LANCE missiles - the most flexible of our short range systems - would be maintained, numbers of the ageing and inaccurate HONEST JOHN systems would be halved, and reductions of 2-300 warheads achieved in nuclear artillery shells;

b. for dual-capable aircraft which are of longer range and thus more flexible in their target coverage, the Group assumed that we needed to retain an ability to mount a wide range of selective nuclear strikes against important military targets in the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact, as well as reserving a significant number of systems for general nuclear response. For aircraft, the Group also took into



account the likely availability of aircraft to mount such strikes. For Pershing I, the plans to replace US Pershing Is in Germany (leaving only 72 German operated missiles) were reflected;

c. the existing plan for conversion of our high altitude surface-to-air missiles from nuclear-armed NIKE HERCULES to conventionally armed PATRIOT was reflected; and reductions in atomic demolition munitions - which have few effective applications and hence little deterrent value - were assumed;

d. the reduced stockpile includes full deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles, and retention of the current force of Flls. (Nothing significant should be read into the increase in Flll warheads; this is a consequence of the mathematical approach adopted and is unlikely in practice to lead to any substantive change). It also includes the British nuclear bombs assigned to NATO. The approach adopted leaves their numbers unchanged.

4. I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*WJH*

Ministry of Defence  
21st October 1983

CONFIDENTIAL

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24 October 1983

High Level Group Report

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's two minutes of 21 October on this subject.

AJC

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

CONFIDENTIAL

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Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG  
01-233 3000

25 October 1983

Richard Mottram Esq  
Private Secretary to the  
Secretary of State for Defence

Dear Richard,

A.S.C. 26/10

f.a.

**HIGH LEVEL GROUP REPORT**

The Chancellor has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 21 October, and has asked whether the recommendations which Mr Heseltine proposes to support, at this week's NPG meeting, have any expenditure implications for this country.

Copies of this letter go to John Coles (No.10), Brian Fall (FCO), and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office.)

Yours ever,  
John Kerr

J O KERR  
Principal Private Secretary



Reference,  
Atms Control,  
Pt 4

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MO 13/1

7th November 1983

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7/4

Dear John

HIGH LEVEL GROUP (HLG) REPORT

Thank you for your letter of 25th October about the recommendations in the HLG Report.

While the details of the proposed reductions in the stockpile of shorter range nuclear weapons deployed in Europe have yet to be worked out by NATO, it is very unlikely that any UK weapons will be involved. This being so there will be no expenditure implications for this country in the short term. In the longer term it is possible that extra expenditure might be involved in enhancing the security and survivability of the reduced stockpile; but it is not yet possible to estimate what this might be or indeed what part of it might fall to the UK rather than to the NATO infrastructure budgets.

Copies of this letter go to John Coles (No 10), Brian Fall (FCO and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

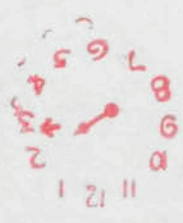
*Richard Mottram*

(R C MOTTRAM)  
Private Secretary

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