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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

18 October 1985

Dear Mr Hram,

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EUROPEAN FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

The French Ambassador called on Mr Renton on instructions yesterday to draw attention to President Mitterand's purpose in writing to the Prime Minister on 11 October (Charles Powell's letter to you of 15 October).

The Ambassador placed the initiative in the context of France's conviction that Europe needed to assert its industrial and technological identity more forcefully. Going over the ground in the President's letter, Mr Viot said the EFA negotiations had shown the difficulty of reconciling the different approaches and requirements of different countries in a single project; hence the idea of looking at the entire range of military aircraft requirements until the end of the century. As a first step, President Mitterrand thought it would be useful for Foreign and Defence Ministers to hold an initial meeting; the same Ministers might then meet periodically as one group.

Mr Viot said that similar messages had been sent to the Heads of Government of the Federal Republic, Spain and Italy; no final decision had yet been taken on whether Heads of other IEPG Governments, which might be interested, should also be approached. Our views on this question, as well as the specific issues raised in the message, would be welcome.

Asked about the President's reference to the involvement of the British and French aerospace industries in the two current fighter programmes, Mr Viot said he thought his Government had in mind the development of common equipment for both aircraft. He also suggested that British industry might provide equipment for the French fighter and vice versa.

Mr Renton reminded the Ambassador of our strong commitment to defence equipment collaboration with our main European partners. We would give serious and urgent consideration to the President's proposals with a view to responding at an early date.

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R C Mottram Esq
PS/Mr Heseltine
Ministry of Defence
Whitehall

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I should be grateful if you would ensure that the reply to President Mitterrand is prepared in close consultation with the FCO. It will be important for us to be seen to be responding positively to the French ideas, while at the same time ensuring that work on EFA is not held up or driven off course. It will also be important to co-ordinate our approach closely with those of our other EFA partners. Our view is that, as a first step, we should instruct our Embassies in the relevant capitals to explain our initial thinking to German, Italian and Spanish officials and to seek their views. / I attach a draft telegram. I suggest we aim to despatch it by Monday, 21 October.

I am copying this letter to Charles Powell.

Tommy L.W.

Peter Westmacott.

P J Westmacott
Private Secretary to
Tim Renton MP

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