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E. MOD

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

15 November 1985

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T214/85

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for your letter of 11 October. I fully share your disappointment that it did not prove possible to establish a five nation collaborative project for the next generation Fighter Aircraft.

I agree that we need to consider European requirements and the scope for co-operation over the entire range of military aircraft between now and 1995-2000. This is a matter which will need to be guided at the political level, and on which we will wish to keep in close touch with you as well as with our German, Spanish and Italian colleagues. Meanwhile, a number of important questions, including the interests of the other members of the Independent European Programme Group (IEPG), need to be considered carefully. I understand that you have now written to Heads of Government of other member States of the IEPG. I welcome this. Under the direction of our Defence Ministers, the IEPG is playing an increasingly effective role in the harmonisation of operational requirements and timescales, and indeed is already addressing the question of collaboration on the large military aircraft. I would therefore be happy to see your proposal pursued in that forum.

You raised the question of co-operation between our respective industries on the two combat aircraft currently

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being developed. I have also seen reports that you have mentioned some ideas about this in public following your recent meeting with Chancellor Kohl. We and our other EFA partners would be most interested to know the details of what you have in mind. You will understand that in order to meet the required in service dates it is necessary for work on the four nation fighter project to continue without delay on the lines already agreed.

You have suggested an early meeting of our Foreign and Defence Ministers. I would suggest that, once your experts have refined your proposals for co-operation on the two combat aircraft in more detail, the best first step might be for the National Armament Directors of the United Kingdom, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Spain and Italy to meet.

From our point of view it would then be appropriate for Defence Ministers to consider the outcome of this meeting and any recommendations the NADs may take.

I look forward to seeing you here in London on Monday.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

His Excellency Monsieur Francois Mitterrand