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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

5 February 1986

Prime Minister
CDP
s/jz

Dear Charles,

Call by Mr Nitze on the Prime Minister

Since I wrote to you yesterday we have received Washington's telno 270 (copy enclosed) about the line which Mr Nitze is likely to take. This may include sounding us on a new INF proposal.

The most obviously objectionable feature of the Gorbachev proposal for zero-zero INF in Europe is that it puts no constraint on the mobile SS20s in Asia. The idea under consideration by the President would counter this by stipulating a 50% cut in those SS20s, plus a Soviet commitment to further reductions in the next stage. This will certainly need careful examination, and may pose problems from our point of view.

The difficulty with zero-zero in Europe alone is twofold: first, that it undermines the rationale for the NATO decision to deploy Pershing II and Cruise missiles as an essential element in the Alliance's spectrum of nuclear deterrence, and second that NATO's ostensibly preferred solution is zero-zero on a global basis. The military implications would also need careful consideration. It is likely to be argued that zero longer range INF would necessitate increased numbers of shorter range INF. Given the mobility of the SS20, additional geographical constraints, besides the 80° East dividing line, might be required. From the British national perspective, there is a real risk that the Russians might accept a new INF proposal of the sort under consideration by the President, on condition that their demands (no increase and no transfer) were met with regard to British and French nuclear weapons.

If Mr Nitze raises the question of a new INF proposal, the Prime Minister might wish to flag these possible objections and conclude that thorough consideration in the Alliance, and in its Special Consultative Group in particular, will clearly be necessary.

/Washington

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Washington telegram No 270 mentions the possibility of the US modifying their proposed ban on mobile ICBMs. We see no need to comment. You will recall the views on mobile missiles expressed in Len Appleyard's letter of 9 December 1985.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram, MOD and to Michael Stark, Cabinet Office.

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary