

Refers to message from Reagan of

14/3



17 March 1986

CHARLES POWELL
PRIVATE SECRETARY to the Prime Minister

CHARLES,

CDP17/3

In the rush of putting
together the briefing today
I failed to provide the
Secretary the attached letter.

Please give to the
Prime Minister.

Sincerely,
Colin Powell



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

15 March, 1986.

NUCLEAR TESTING

I enclose a copy of a message to the Prime Minister from President Reagan describing new proposals which he has put to the Soviet Union on the verification of nuclear tests.

Since the subject is relevant to the speech which the Foreign Secretary is making to the Foreign Press Association on Monday, 17 March, you will wish to ensure that he sees a copy over the weekend.

BF // I should be grateful for a draft reply in due course.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

(C.D. Powell)

The Resident Clerk,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

SECRET

cc PC
J/C



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
LONDON

March 14, 1986

CM 1173

Dear Prime Minister:

The President has asked me to deliver to you the enclosed letter which was received at the Embassy this evening.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charlie".

Charles H. Price, II
Ambassador

Enclosure

The Rt. Honorable Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,
Prime Minister,
Number 10 Downing Street,
London, SW1.

SUBJECT CC MASTER OPS.

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PRIME MINISTER'S

March 14, 1986

PERSONAL MESSAGE

Dear Margaret:

SERIAL No. T50/86

Prime Minister
A limited but useful
initiative which has now
been announced publicly
CDD
18/3

I very much appreciated our exchange of views on arms control issues as I developed my recent proposal to General Secretary Gorbachev on ways to move the Geneva negotiations toward early agreement on deep, verifiable and equitable reductions in U.S. and Soviet offensive nuclear arms. Today, I would like to share with you my thoughts on specific ways to encourage meaningful progress in the field of limitations on nuclear testing.

While I believe that we must actively investigate technologies that could one day make us less dependent on offensive nuclear arms for our security, nuclear weapons will clearly remain the key element of deterrence for the foreseeable future. During such a period, where both the U.S. and our friends and allies must rely upon nuclear weapons to deter aggression, some level of nuclear testing will continue to be required.

Nonetheless, a comprehensive test ban remains a long-term objective of the United States. We believe such a ban must be viewed in the context of a time when we do not need to depend on nuclear deterrence to ensure international security and stability, and when we have achieved broad, deep and verifiable arms reductions, substantially improved verification capabilities, expanded confidence-building measures, and greater balance in conventional forces. For our part, the United States is energetically pursuing negotiations and discussions with the Soviet Union on concrete steps in all of these areas. We have made clear our strong and continuing view that Soviet calls for an immediate and unverifiable nuclear testing moratorium are not a basis for meaningful progress to this end. Our position on the unacceptability of such moratoria remains unchanged.

In the field of nuclear testing, as in arms control generally, effective verification is a central element. It has also long been one of the most difficult problems to resolve. As you know, we are seriously concerned about the past pattern of Soviet testing as well as current verification uncertainties, and have determined that a number of Soviet tests constitute likely violations of obligations under the Threshold Test Ban Treaty of 1974. The inadequacy of the monitoring regime provided for in that agreement is underscored by the Soviet Union's own questions concerning the yields of particular U.S. tests, all of which have been below the 150 kiloton threshold.

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Therefore, the United States places the highest priority in the nuclear testing area on finding ways to enhance the means of verification of the Threshold Test Ban Treaty and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty. In 1983, the U.S. Government sought on three occasions to engage the Soviet Union in a discussion of verification improvements. In 1984, I proposed that we and the Soviet Union find a way for Soviet experts to come to the U.S. nuclear test site and for ours to go to theirs to measure directly the yields of nuclear weapons tests. I subsequently invited the Soviet Union to send experts to the U.S. test site to measure the yield of a U.S. test with any instrumentation devices they deemed necessary and with no requirement for a reciprocal visit. Last December, I further suggested to General Secretary Gorbachev that U.S. and Soviet experts on nuclear testing limitations meet to discuss our respective verification approaches and to address initial tangible steps to resolve this issue. Thus far, however, the Soviets have not responded to our concrete proposals.

It is with the continued objective of engaging the Soviets in a serious discussion of specific measures, designed to make a real contribution to resolving these verification uncertainties, that I have conveyed to General Secretary Gorbachev a new initiative. I informed him that our scientists believe that the best way of reducing uncertainties in verifying compliance with the 150 kiloton threshold is by using a method called CORRTEX -- a hydrodynamic yield measurement technique that measures the propagation of the underground shock wave from a nuclear explosion. Further, I told him that if we could reach agreement on the use of an effective verification system incorporating such a method to verify the TTBT, I would be prepared to move forward on ratification of both the TTBT and PNET.

I believe the CORRTEX method provides a reasonable and effective technique of measuring the yield of nuclear tests without compromising essential national security information on either side. Using the CORRTEX method, a coaxial cable is placed in a hole parallel to that containing the nuclear device being tested. When the nuclear device is detonated, a shock wave emanates through the ground crushing and shortening the cable. The rate at which the cable length changes is recorded via measurements of the rate of changing electronic pulse. This rate is a measure of the propagation of the explosive shock wave through the ground, which is in turn a measure of the yield of the nuclear explosion. Our scientists believe, on the basis of our extensive experience, that CORRTEX is accurate to within 30 percent of more direct radio-chemical yield measurements for tests of greater than 50 kilotons.

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To allow the Soviet Union to examine the CORRTEX system more fully, I have also proposed that the General Secretary send his scientists to our test site during the third week of April, 1986. At that time, they could also monitor a planned U.S. nuclear weapons test. I would hope this would provide an opportunity for U.S. and Soviet experts to discuss verification methods and thus pave the way for ratification of the TTBT and PNET.

In proposing this approach, I have tried to be as specific as possible in outlining what we have in mind for this important step in the process of limiting nuclear explosions. I look forward to hearing from the General Secretary soon on our concrete proposal. For our part, we will stand ready to facilitate in every way the visit of Soviet experts to our test site. I hope this can be the start of a productive dialogue on resolving our differences on the issue of nuclear testing limitations.

In recent public statements, Mr. Gorbachev has spoken in positive, but very general terms on the necessity of enhanced verification for arms control. Our new initiative will give the Soviets an opportunity to respond constructively with deeds, as opposed to public rhetoric. If the Soviet Union is ready to respond seriously to this invitation and agree to essential verification measures, I am confident that early progress in the field of nuclear testing limitations is possible.

I would ask that for the moment, you treat the details of this new proposal as confidential. As always, I would very much welcome your support, which is vital to our success as we pursue this important, new initiative.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ronald Reagan

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