



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

From the Private Secretary

24 May 1986

*Dear Charles,*MESSAGE FOR PRESIDENT REAGAN:  
COMPLIANCE WITH ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS

Thank you for your letter of 23 May enclosing a copy of a message from President Reagan about his decision on future compliance with the SALT II Treaty.

The Foreign Secretary is exasperated that the President should have accepted Mr Weinberger's advice; anticipated decisions which do not need to be taken ahead of any 1986 Summit meeting with Gorbachev; and largely disregarded the considered advice in the Prime Minister's message of 24 April. The difficulties with the American approach is that their case against the Russians is nothing like as strong as the President makes out; that their response - a plainly proclaimed intention to break out of the SALT limits - is a good deal more significant than even the sum of the alleged Soviet violations of which they complain; and that the result, whether or not the Russians go the same way, is likely to be much more damaging to Washington than to Moscow. For the reasons given in the Prime Minister's message, both the security and the political consequences of the President's decision are liable to be adverse; if he cannot be rowed back from it, then it is all too likely, in Sir Geoffrey's view, to be seen as the last nail in the coffin of US credibility over arms control.

In the Foreign Secretary's opinion there is no prospect of altering the President's decision to make his proposed announcement on Tuesday; our approach must be aimed at minimising divisions within NATO, whilst maximising the incentives for the Russians to respond positively; and for the President to think again between now and the autumn about virtually automatic break-out at the end of this year. For this purpose, Sir Geoffrey recommends:



SECRET

-2-

- (i) a measured public response;
- (ii) a short but sharp reply to the President;
- (iii) messages to the French and the Germans so as to maximise the chances of a coherent and constructive European response.

I enclose drafts for all three; since the Prime Minister received her message ahead of other leaders, I suggest that (ii) and (iii), if agreed, should be despatched around mid-day on Monday, 26 May.

I am sending copies of this letter and its enclosures to John Howe (Ministry of Defence) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

*Yours sincerely,*

*David Richmond*  
*(Resident Clerk)*

*for* A C Galsworthy

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

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## SALT CONSTRAINTS: PUBLIC LINE FOR USE ON 27 MAY

1. The Government has frequently made clear its belief in the importance of the strict observance of Arms Control Agreements by all parties. We have drawn to the attention of the Soviet Union on a number of occasions the need to comply strictly with such agreements and to be seen to do so. We have done this most recently in the message from the Prime Minister to Mr Gorbachev which Lord Whitelaw has taken to Moscow.
2. The Government welcomes President Reagan's decision to continue to respect for the time being the constraints of the unratified SALT agreement by dismantling two Poseidon submarines.
3. The President's statement on 27 May makes it clear that if the Soviet Union takes constructive steps between now and the end of the year to alter the current situation, the President will take this into account in reviewing whether the US should itself exceed SALT 11 limits. Thus the door has been left open, and there is a clear opportunity for the Soviet Union to respond positively.
4. We trust therefore that it will be possible for the US itself to avoid exceeding the SALT 11 limits at the end of this year. This would leave the way open for real progress to be made in arms control, as envisaged by both leaders at Geneva last year. We would much regret it if the provisional decision by the President to exceed the limits had to be implemented.



DRAFT MESSAGE FROM PR. MINISTER TO PRESIDENT REAGAN

SALT CONSTRAINTS


Thank you for your message of 23 May, which I have considered with great care.

C I am very glad that you will announce next week your intention to continue your interim restraint decision for the time being, by ordering the necessary dismantling of two submarines. But you will know from my message of one month ago that the other part of your decision - provisionally not to abide by the limits at the end of this year - causes me great concern.

This is not the moment for a debate between us about the merits and flaws of the SALT agreements. And you will know my views about Soviet non-compliance from my earlier message. I must however tell you that at this "important juncture" (to use your own, very true words) - when relations between the Allies have undergone the difficulties of the Libyan episode; when we have just made another controversial but necessary decision on the US production of modernised chemical weapons; when we are about to try at the NATO Halifax meeting to bring home to Western opinion that it is us, not Gorbachev, who really seek progress in arms control; and when public hopes are pinned on further progress at your next meeting with Gorbachev - at that moment I can only say that I have to regard as unwelcome your planned announcement about ending US restraint later this year.

You have asked for my understanding and support. I shall certainly welcome the positive side of your decisions, and I shall urge the Russians - as I have in the past - to respond to your concerns. I think it essential to preserve Alliance unity on this as on other issues. Perhaps I may take some encouragement from your suggestion that the decision to end your interim restraint decision later this year is not irrevocable. I certainly hope so.

1



DRAFT MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT MITTERRAND/  
CHANCELLOR KOHL

SALT CONSTRAINTS

You will have received a message, as I have, from President Reagan about his announcement tomorrow on continued compliance with the SALT II agreement. I welcome the positive step he has taken to abide for the moment by its terms, but I am *much* concerned by the provisional intention to exceed the limits later this year. I believe it crucial that this should not cause further dissension within the Western Alliance, and I therefore thought it would be useful to let you know how I intend to respond publicly to the President's announcement.

As indicated above, I propose to welcome the positive steps, as another demonstration of US commitment to the arms control process. I will re-emphasise the importance of all parties to agreements complying with their obligations. I will underline the legitimacy of US concerns about Soviet behaviour, and the need for the Russians to answer the case. And I will express the hope that, over the next six months, especially with another US-Soviet Summit in the offing, scrupulous compliance by the Russians to match continued American restraint will offer a preferable alternative to either side exceeding the current SALT limits.

I trust that this sort of public approach will help to avoid sharp differences within the Alliance, at Halifax and subsequently; that at the same time it will send a clear signal to the Russians of the need for them to respond more seriously both at Geneva and to US concerns on non-compliance; and that it will <sup>help to</sup> convey to President Reagan the message that he should not assume his decision as it stands is welcome to the Allies or will enjoy their whole-hearted support.

I am writing in similar terms to Helmut Kohl/Francois Mitterrand.



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(Telegraphed to Israel Party).