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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

28 November 1986

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Dear John,

Implications of the Elimination of Ballistic Missiles

You kindly sent us a copy of your letter to Charles Powell of 24 November, enclosing the summary paper CDS has provided the US Joint Chiefs of Staff following the Prime Minister's discussion in Washington with Secretary Weinberger. As you know, we had earlier provided your officials with some comments on the fuller paper, including some particularly relevant to the United States audience. The Foreign Secretary is glad to note that MOD and FCO officials are at work on a fuller analysis. He hopes that our previous comments and any further thoughts we may have will then be factored in.

He is pleased that we have already begun to follow up the Prime Minister's initiative with Weinberger in this way. He has noted the terms of CDS's letter to Admiral Crowe, and the suggestion for further contacts. He is sure that it is right to press this on the Americans, and trusts that CDS himself will be able to do so when he sees Admiral Crowe next week. While the summary paper is a useful start, we shall certainly need to deploy some detailed arguments in support of its assertions if we are to move the American military in the direction we would wish.

Discussion on the service-to-service basis will obviously be an appropriate step. At the same time, the Foreign Secretary believes that we should aim to keep Secretary Weinberger informed of what is happening, given his earlier encouraging remarks to the Prime Minister. I understand that the Defence Secretary will be seeing him on a number of occasions over the next week. Sir Geoffrey Howe hopes that he will take the opportunity these meetings present to secure a further commitment from Weinberger for a detailed UK input to the JCS work.

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While it would be over-optimistic to expect the eventual outcome of this to be a straight abnegation of the current US negotiating position at Geneva, the scope for qualifying that proposal to the point that in practice it begins to fall away is obviously very great; and we should seek to exploit it to the maximum in the Foreign Secretary's view. As part of that exercise, it may be useful to offer the Americans, in addition to a further analysis of a more detailed nature, the opportunity of discussions between respective military experts, for which some MOD representatives might visit Washington. The sort of questions we hope the JCS will address may be more easily emphasised in discussion than on paper.

I am sending copies of this letter to Charles Powell (No 10) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

*Yours Sincerely,
Colin Budd*

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

J F Howe Esq
PS/Secretary of State for Defence

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