

Prime Minister

Your Press Conference

Your press conference has been transformed by your announcement this morning that after examining the SNF text produced overnight you felt able to say snap because it fully meets your requirements and safeguards the security of the Western Alliance.

Consequently, the media will do their best to pick holes in the SNF passage; to suggest, in any case, that you only fell into line when the Americans pulled the rug from under you and went over to the Germans - ie you fought to the last drop of US support; and that, at best, you have had to compromise a very great deal indeed, and have lost the certainty of SNF modernisation and the explicit exclusion of a third zero.

Against this background I think the trick with the media is to appear entirely relaxed; not to oversell your achievement - or at least not to bring too much passion to the defence of your achievement; and to explain patiently its strengths.

It might be helpful to know how I have sold it and the reception it got.

First, your decision has been received remarkably quietly and respectfully. It has been probed for weaknesses but I have not been subjected to the kind of questioning I might have expected. This is because partial is seen to mean what it says and because SNF negotiations are tightly linked with the implementation of conventional force reductions.

We can however only expect an increase in the number of questions as to how both you and the Germans can be happy.

Second, my presentation I stressed that any text produced by Van den Broek's group was ad referendum. You had complete confidence in your negotiators. You saw the SNF document for the first time at

7.20am and after reading it through you felt your position - and what is more the security of the Alliance - was fully safeguarded. Moreover, both you and President Bush made it explicit in the conference that partial ruled out a third zero. We had never insisted specifically on "exclusion of a third zero"; only on words which secured that objective. Partial secured that.

From there the media, looking for clues as to why the Germans had signed up, tried to establish when SNF negotiations would begin. I said it was impossible to say because no-one could predict how well the CFE negotiations would proceed, notwithstanding American hopes. It takes two to tango.

At your press conference I expect the media will also pursue you on:

- whether you are sceptical about the Americans' conventional force negotiations "timetable"
- what makes you confident LANCE will be modernised - is this not the Germans' real victory today?
- your marker on President Bush's initiative about dual capable systems.

*Whole thrust of document*

You may also get questions on:

- visas for Turks (on which you know the line)
- Ted Heath's speech (which I have dismissed by saying:  
|| I'm afraid this is the sort of speech we have come to expect ||  
|| from Mr Heath)

Charles has advised against producing a full opening statement for the press conference because you have so much in your head. I attach, however, a few points for inclusion in your remarks.

Finally, I have managed to secure a TV studio in the NATO building for your interviews so you won't have to go to the Holiday Inn.