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cc NO

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

17 March 1983

From the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Dear Norman,

FUTURE OF CONCORDE

Your letter of 3<sup>4</sup> March to Iain Sproat reported recent developments on the future of Concorde. I am pleased to learn that our officials reached agreement on the text of your answer to the inspired Parliamentary Question and that the French have been given the necessary explanations. I am also grateful for your assurance that the notice of termination of contracts issues to the British manufacturers could be withdrawn if Ministers wished. I understand that there will be no further talks with the French until your exploratory discussions with British Airways have made progress, when our officials can review the position together.

Meanwhile I should like to comment briefly on Leon Brittan's letter to me of 2 March. We all hope that your negotiations with BA will succeed, and that it will be possible to gain French agreement to the Anglo/French aspects of the arrangements. I am glad that there is general approval for my idea that we should seek to commit BA to giving us notice of any intention to terminate Concorde operations once they are responsible. However, I do not think that we can presume anything at this stage about our policy should the talks fail. We do not know whether it would then be politically wise to stop Concorde flying. And even if we wished to do so, we would still have to carry the French with us. I cannot predict now what their position would be. I therefore believe that we must leave the question open.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of the earlier correspondence.

Yours ever,  
Malcolm Rifkind

Malcolm Rifkind

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Parliament,  
Dec '80, Concorde.

18 MAR 1983

