



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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6th October 1983

Prime Minister

Important.

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Dear Roger,

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Mr Weinberger telephoned Mr Heseltine at 1345 today. He said that his Government were aware of the German request to delay the deployment of INF in this country and were most concerned about the political and technical implications of any delay. The President would be sending a message to the Prime Minister about the political aspects. He wished to express his concern that, if there were to be delays, it would no longer be possible to achieve the deployment timetable of the end of the year. The Defence Secretary reminded Mr Weinberger of their earlier conversation on 13th September at which this problem had been discussed. He said that we had now heard from the Germans that they were concerned. Discussions were proceeding at present within the British Government about what might be done to meet these concerns. He hoped that we could come up with a proposal under which virtually all of the equipment was delivered on the present timetable. If there were to be a gesture in the direction of German anxieties, it would concern only the last and most critical equipments.

Mr Weinberger emphasised the importance of meeting the December date. He said that President Carstens and Herr Genscher had been in Washington for discussions about the INF timetable in Germany. The Americans were very concerned about the reasons for the delay in the timing of the Bundestag debate. It appeared to them that Genscher had so delayed discussion by the FPD of the issue to ensure that the debate had to be delayed and Chancellor Kohl had gone back on earlier assurances to the Americans that this would not happen. Mr Weinberger's view was that Genscher was expecting the Russians to make some last minute gesture (of a meaningless kind) which would provide an excuse for further delay. He understood that the motion for the Bundestag debate had been posed in terms of "Had anything happened since the original decision to deploy INF which would now make delay desirable?", which also suggested the Germans were seeking some way out. Everyone in the German Government whom the Americans



consulted said that the Bundestag vote would be favourable but that did not take account of the possibility of this last minute development. He was therefore worried that any delay now could become open-ended and was anxious to proceed directly on what was in any case a very tight timetable.

The Defence Secretary commented that there was no suggestion that the vast bulk of the deliveries should not proceed on time. If any equipment was to be held back, this would be on the basis that it would be delivered on 22nd November, which would be a firm date to be stuck to regardless of what happened between now and then in Germany. Mr Weinberger commented that he could see the possibility of the last few items of equipment being held back for delivery straight after 21st November. His preference was to stick to the present timetable. The Defence Secretary emphasised that, as Mr Weinberger knew from their earlier conversations, there was no doubt or hesitancy over INF on the part of the British Government. We had to consider German views and we hoped to reach a view on the way forward shortly. There followed a brief, friendly exchange about other defence issues and about their forthcoming meeting in Canada at the NPG.

I am copying this letter to John Coles (No 10) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

Richard

(R C MOTTRAM)