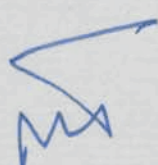


Prime Minister

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Agree recommendation at Flag 8?

PM/84/27PRIME MINISTER

Yes  A.J.C. 10/12

INF/START Merger

1. At our meeting on 14 December last I undertook, in consultation with Michael Heseltine, to bring forward an assessment of the implications for the United Kingdom of a possible merger of the INF and START talks. I am now circulating herewith a note by officials of our two Departments in fulfilment of this remit.

2. The main conclusions which I draw from this preliminary study are these. Without getting into too exhaustive a theoretical exercise, it should be possible to devise a basis for resuming nuclear arms control negotiations which both provides for some overlap between INF and START systems hitherto dealt with at separate tables in Geneva and meets overall Alliance interests. The paper suggests this might be done by enlarging START if necessary to include LRINF missiles (SS20s, SS4s and SS5s; ground launched Cruise missiles and Pershing II) and possibly also some LRINF aircraft. Since our paper was written we have learned in confidence that when Shultz met Gromyko in Stockholm, the Americans told the Russians they would consider any Soviet proposal to include Pershing II and ground launched Cruise missiles in strategic negotiations but would insist on talking about SS20s too. When the Russians were ready to say how they wished to resume negotiations the Americans would listen, but would not themselves propose new arrangements. This shows in my view that we have been thinking along very much the same lines as the Americans.

3. I am sure the paper is right not to under-rate some of the difficulties which could arise within the Alliance if the only way it proved possible to resume nuclear arms

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control negotiations were to be by some overlap of this kind. It will take skill and forbearance to devise consultative arrangements within the Alliance which give European allies a continued say, particularly on INF, without making the Americans feel that we are intruding on the more strictly bilateral ground of START. There will also be those who argue that an overlap between INF and START deprives the UK of one of its principal arguments for keeping the British deterrent out of arms control. The inclusion of British and French systems would not, in my view, necessarily be a rigid pre-condition for a Soviet return to the table once they have decided that a resumption of negotiations is in their overall interests. We (and the French) shall, of course, stick to our own guns on this important matter, using the existing arguments and adapting them as necessary.

4. The essential point seems to me that if a genuine opportunity presents itself for the resumption of nuclear arms control between the Americans and the Russians, the West should be in a position to respond positively without pre-conditions, arguing that the details as to form and substance are for negotiators at Geneva.

5. I invite my colleagues to agree the recommendations in the note by officials, which can then serve as guidance for them in the further consultations with the Americans and INF-basing countries due later this month.

/I am



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6. I am sending copies of this minute to other
OD colleagues.

(D) *

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
10 February 1984

* Typing error

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AN INF/START MERGER

1. The purpose of this paper is to examine key factors which need to be assessed before we can judge whether a merger of the INF and START talks would be in the political and military interests of Britain and the Alliance as a whole; to make preliminary recommendations and to draw conclusions on what line we should in the meantime take in public and with the Allies.

2. The concept of combining negotiations on strategic and sub-strategic systems is not new. The (classified) 1979 NATO document setting out the INF decision decreed that INF negotiations should be "conducted within the SALT III framework" (although the Allies were already moving towards agreement that the negotiations should be formally separate). The subsequent non-ratification of SALT II and the desire by European leaders (notably Chancellor Schmidt) that there should be no delay in beginning talks on INF led to the decision that this should be in a totally separate forum.

3. During recent months there has been increasing speculation in Western political circles and the media about possibilities of merging the two sets of talks in 1984. In particular the Canadian, Danish, Dutch and Italian Governments have been sympathetic to the idea publicly or privately. The French are opposed and reports indicate that the German Ministry of Defence is too (although the Foreign Ministry is clearly tempted by

it). The Americans, both State Department and Pentagon, have up to now said firmly that they would be opposed to any such proposal.

4. There has so far been no detailed examination within the Alliance of the balance of advantage of merger in terms of long term negotiating objectives, and none of the NATO advocates has adduced any detailed arguments in favour other than some dangerous loose talk about a merger serving to 'solve the problem' of the British and French systems (a point picked up by the media in the West). Clearly it would be wise to undertake a more systematic review of the whole question. Detailed discussion is due to begin in February in a restricted group of the major allies, (the existence of which is unknown to the Alliance as a whole), on the basis of a paper which the US has undertaken to provide.

5. The Soviet position is ambiguous (no doubt deliberately). In press interviews in December and January senior Soviet officials seemed to rule the idea out for the time being (on the basis that as the INF talks were discontinued a merger would be logically impossible). But this is unlikely to be their last word.

6. We need to examine:

- the extent to which a merger could give impetus to the START and/or INF negotiations by removing or reducing current obstacles; or the extent to which

it would simply compound the problems which have so far blocked START/INF;

- the effect on Soviet capacity to drive wedges within NATO and decouple the United States from the defence of Europe;
- implications for continued exclusion of British and French strategic systems from the negotiations (assuming that this remains our objective) and for public presentation of the case for the maintenance of Britain's minimum viable strategic deterrent;
- the military implications of decisions on the scope of any new negotiation (eg will systems be covered which were not covered in START/INF?).

7. A working assumption is that progress in nuclear arms control will remain a major priority for the Alliance. The present position in which, with no negotiations in progress, NATO deployment proceeds as planned while the Soviet Union continues to build up SS20s facing Europe, modernise other missiles based in Eastern Europe and deploy forward the SS22 missiles, presents major and probably increasing political difficulties to the European Allies. There is likely to be increasing public pressure for a resumption of negotiations. In political terms it would be very difficult for the Allies to appear

to decline an offer to resume nuclear negotiations if the Russians make a serious offer.

8. There are some strong general arguments for a merger of negotiations on strategic and intermediate range systems. The inclusion of both in one negotiation would better reflect NATO's strategy of extended deterrence (the "seamless web") helping to "couple" the defence of the US to that of Europe by underlining the European dependence on protection from US strategic systems and the United States' national or strategic interest in the protection of Europe by INF. One drawback of the separation of the INF talks from the SALT/START process has been the encouragement of the notion of a separate European balance and its potential decoupling implications.

9. A second general argument in favour of the idea of some form of merger is that if it led to agreement on overall ceilings covering strategic and INF forces which allowed some freedom to "mix" the two the Allies would be able to work out the right balance between strategic and INF systems, thus denying to the Russians the sort of droit de regard on deployment in Europe which they have in effect claimed during the INF negotiations. (Such a freedom to mix INF and strategic systems need not prejudice the separate question of freedom to mix land-based missiles, sea-based missiles and aircraft under an strategic agreement.) An extension of this point is that the US and Soviet Union would not have to strike

separate balances of their INF and strategic systems. There could be merit, for example, in allowing the Soviet Union advantages in INF levels in exchange for US advantages in permitted levels of strategic systems.

10. There is the further point that some forms of merger could remove certain current problems of system definition (for example whether Backfire is a strategic or intermediate range bomber).

11. There are, however, important counter arguments. A merger could lead to new and difficult divisions within the Alliance.

(a) it would undoubtedly complicate the consultative process. The Americans have stuck close to their commitment to consult the Allies on all aspects of their INF negotiating position. Although they have always been reasonably forthcoming in keeping the Allies informed on progress in SALT/START it would be unreasonable for the Allies to expect (and the Americans would not provide) the sort of detailed consultations which have taken place on INF. However a formula could probably be worked out to provide for intensive consultations on those areas the merged negotiation which were the direct business of the European Allies and which required their agreement (There are precedents in the SALT negotiations);

(b) More important, it is only too likely that there would be divisions over the relative importance to be attached to strategic and INF weapons in any overall agreement. We could expect the Russians to be ready to exploit any opportunity to present offers which were attractive to the Europeans on INF but disadvantageous to the Americans on strategic arms. Similarly, there could be a temptation for the Americans to conclude a deal which gave them what they wanted on strategic systems but sold the Europeans short on INF.

12. The effect of a merger on the position of British and French systems in relation to arms control is not clear cut. A merger would make it less easy for the Russians to highlight the British and French systems as a significant factor in the East/West balance because they would be a smaller proportion of the whole (although they could be expected to make the most of the planned modernisation of these systems). It would be in some senses easier for the Americans to argue, as they did throughout the SALT process, that the British and French systems were an incidental and relatively insignificant problem which should not be allowed to impede the central purpose of the talks - viz the negotiation of balanced reductions of US and Soviet forces. On the other hand it could be more difficult for us to maintain our current position viz that by definition our forces have no place in the INF process and that the time has not yet come when they would be of sufficient significance in the

strategic balance to warrant their inclusion in any form of strategic balance. The Russians could claim that it was only just to include third party systems in the new, broader negotiation. This argument would fall on fertile ground in some Western European capitals. There are sound counter-arguments, in particular:

- the priority in strategic arms control must be to reduce the arsenals of the superpowers;
- arms control is likely to promote East/West stability only if it provides for equality between the superpowers. Taking British or French forces into account would seem to break that principle;
- if INF systems are added to START, British and French forces are an even more tiny proportion of the whole;
- British and French systems cannot be included in a negotiation where neither Britain nor France is present.

But these arguments may not be easy to put over publicly, although the French too can be expected to make strong use of them.

13. The overall balance of advantage in any merger would depend to a considerable degree on the categories of

weapon systems included. The following are possible formats:

- (a) it would be compatible with the Russians' negotiating position in the SALT/START process for them to demand that START be expanded to include both British and French systems, and US medium range systems in Europe including the new INF missiles (ie those weapons which can reach the Soviet Union and which the Russians therefore argue to have a strategic role). This would be clearly unacceptable to NATO. At a minimum the Allies would need to insist that any new forum should address the SS20 (and SS4s and SS5s) on the basis of the principles in the existing NATO position, since restrictions on these weapons must remain a first priority in the Western arms control position;
- (b) the enlargement of START to address all medium range missiles viz those with a range of over 1,000kms - SS20s, (SS4s and SS5s) GLCMs and Pershing II or;
- (c) to include in addition medium range nuclear capable aircraft - ie Backfire, Badger, Blinder, (?Fitter and Fencer), F1-11, FB1-11, Mirage IV;
- (d) including INF down to a range of 500km. This would have the advantage of drawing in the new SS22 (range around 950km) which, deployed forward in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, have the range to reach most of

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Western Europe including Britain. It would also draw in large numbers of Soviet shorter range INF aircraft (Fitter, Fishbed, Flogger, Fencer, Foxbat) where they enjoy a superiority in Europe of over 4:1. But it would raise old problems of negotiating limitations on dual capable aircraft with important conventional roles (including on the NATO side F16, F4, Jaguars and Tornado) and the diversity of such aircraft and size of global figures presents negotiating problems which are almost certainly unmanageable. The problem of the forward deployment of the SS22 would have to be met. But it would be easier to include it in collateral constraints to be negotiated under scenarios (b) and (c) above;

(e) it is common ground amongst the Allies that inclusion of short range systems, ie bringing in battlefield systems, would be quite unmanageable given verification problems, dual roles etc.

14. Given the problems of possibilities (a), (d) and (e) the Alliance is likely to focus on (b) and (c). The advantages for NATO/Britain of (b) or (c) would be:

(i) it would catch Soviet systems of particular concern to Europe (SS20, Backfire);

(ii) however the Russians attempted to present the figures we should be able to demonstrate a considerable global disparity in their favour;

- (iii) the Soviet lead in medium range systems is so considerable as not in realistic terms to be totally removeable by negotiation. There would thus be room for the Americans to argue that they should be allowed compensating right to numerical superiority in strategic systems;
- (iv) it would at least in theory be open to the Americans to accept that they should not take this compensation in full in recognition of the contribution of French and British systems (although there would be considerable domestic political constraints on their accepting inferiority in strategic systems).

15. The disadvantages to NATO of a merged negotiation on the lines of (b) or (c) would be:

- (i) any blurring of the principle of right to parity in INF could lead some European Allies to seek to wriggle out of supporting the full programme of NATO INF missile deployments on the grounds that the full programme, of 572 Pershing II and cruise missiles, was no longer necessary;
- (ii) we could come under considerable pressure from European Allies if the Russians were to demand the inclusion of British and French systems as a pre-condition for negotiations on this basis.

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Such a pre-condition is likely. But it would be open to us to try to deflect any such pressure by some evolution in the British public stance, as will almost certainly be necessary when HMG announces further procurement decisions on UK Trident D5. For example, it should be possible to show that our Trident missiles will involve no greater total explosive force than that first deployed with Polaris in 1970.

16. Provided that we keep these two dangers clearly in mind there would seem to be a strong argument for discussing possible negotiating models of formats (b) and (c) with our closest Allies. We could do so in advance of whatever offer to resume negotiations is eventually made by the Soviet government, without suggesting that NATO should itself propose a merger on these lines, at least in the near future. The restricted group of major allies mentioned in para 4 above would be a natural forum. In the discussion we might start with the simplest model: the minimum changes to the US START position needed to accommodate the medium range systems which we wish to limit and reduce.

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Illustrative Approach

	Current forces (end 1983)		US START proposals	US/NATO INF proposals	Possible proposal under a START/INF merger
	US	Soviet Union			
Strategic ballistic missile warheads	7400	7900	5000	-)) 5400
Land-based INF missile warheads of ranges 1800-5500kms	25	1380	-	420)) with no) sub-) divisions)
Sea-launched cruise missiles (accurate of ranges over 1800kms not available)	? 44	0	un- specified limits offered	-)) ?
Strategic bombers	410	356	400	-) c. 700) possibly) with sub-
Land-based INF aircraft of ranges 1800-5500kms	330	485	-	un- specified) limits offered) divisions) con-) straining) ALCMs

The chart addresses warheads, rather than launchers as in SALT II and the Soviet START proposals. Some earlier studies have looked at the questions from the point of view of launchers. The distinction may be more apparent than real in so far as the US and Soviet START proposals are moving towards each other (independently of any question of merger).

CONCLUSIONS

17. (a) It is possible that there could be benefit in terms of substantive negotiating possibilities in merging START and INF. But the issues are complex and there are important counter-arguments;
- (b) any form of merger could lead to problems in the Allied consultative process;
- (c) merger would better reflect Allied strategy with its emphasis on extended deterrence, but it might present new practical opportunities for the Russians to play the Europeans and Americans off against each other;
- (d) our preliminary view is that merged talks would be more likely to complicate our position on the exclusion of British and French systems from current arms control negotiations. But we cannot expect this consideration to be conclusive for

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all the Allies; nor are any such complications necessarily unmanageable from the UK point of view;

(e) the Russians may not necessarily see it as in their overall interests to propose an early merger. Despite the advantages this would present them in complicating the NATO consultative process and perhaps in causing further divisions within NATO on the position of British and French systems, they may conclude that it is not to the advantage of their long term security interests to bring INF into the strategic arms control process, which they probably regard as more important. (It is particularly difficult to forecast Soviet intentions in a US election year);

(f) if however the Russians do propose some form of renewed nuclear negotiations which amount to merger of some kind the Alliance will face complex decisions. Much will depend on the precise form of merger proposed, and the degree to which the motives behind the proposal are seen to be serious rather than mere propaganda.

RECOMMENDATIONS

18. (a) that British representatives at NATO meetings where the subject is discussed should be

instructed to outline the potential difficulties,
treading carefully on the issue of the impact on
the position of British and French systems, but
pulling no punches on problems over future
consultations within the Alliance;

- (b) that in restricted meetings with the closest Allies British representatives should explore the substantive merits of possible formats for a merged negotiation on a contingency basis;
- (c) there is a requirement to keep European Allies aware of the dangers of public advocacy of a merger before full implications have been thought through, and terms of any proposals precisely defined;
- (d) the Alliance must also coordinate a public line, against the possibility of a Soviet proposal, which does not pre-judge the substantive issues before full military and political implications have been analysed in NATO;
- (e) that meanwhile our national public line in response to questions on our view of merger should remain the same as it has been in recent months: viz that we do not believe we would have objections in principle to a merger if both the Soviet Union and NATO believed that this would facilitate agreement on the control of strategic

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and intermediate range nuclear weapons; but we doubt that time has yet come - the risk of a premature merger would be that the problems which have hitherto prevented agreement in START and INF would simply be compounded.

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