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Press  
SS  
MA

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D/S of S/PS/9436C

14th June 1984

Dear Charles,

PT saw for  
R. Kennedy questions  
briefing on 14/6

PD 15/6

In your letter of 12th June addressed to Richard Mottram you asked for a note on the significance of the Americans' reported success in destroying a test missile outside the earth's atmosphere with another missile.

I attach a note covering both the military and arms control implications (the latter having been provided by the FCO), together with a suggested line-to-take for use, if necessary, by the Prime Minister this afternoon.

A copy of this goes to Roger Bone in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Yours sincerely,  
Barry Neale

(B P NEALE)  
Private Secretary

Charles Powell Esq

## THE US MISSILE INTERCEPTOR TEST

### Line to Take

- . The US missile intercept test was part of a well established research programme. The technique demonstrated would form only one component of any future ballistic missile defence system.
  
- . The US authorities are keeping us fully informed about developments in the Strategic Defence Initiative.
  
- . The US have repeatedly stated their commitment to the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty and have assured us that the test was conducted in full conformity with it.

[/If pressed on likely parallel Soviet developments:

- . We are confident that Trident will remain a viable deterrent well into the next century\_7

BACKGROUND NOTE

1. Military Implications On 11 June The Pentagon announced the successful test over the Pacific of a missile interceptor vehicle against an incoming dummy warhead. The interceptor vehicle scored a direct hit on the warhead at an altitude of more than one hundred miles. The interceptor vehicle consisted of two modified stages of a Minuteman 1 ICBM. The test was the fourth and final test in a series. Three earlier tests (in February, May and December last year) were unsuccessful.
  
2. In view of the very limited information currently available to us in the UK it is not possible to produce a detailed assessment of the military implications of this test. In particular, it is not clear in what conditions the interception took place and what level of discrimination the defending missile had to exercise to find and kill the target.
  
3. On the face of it, however, it is a considerable <sup>technical</sup> achievement in that the US have accomplished a non-nuclear kill in space after successfully guiding an interceptor missile accurately to its target.
  
4. The test was part of a programme called the Homing Overlay Experiment (HOE). This programme predates <sup>by many years</sup> President Reagan's 'Star Wars' project announced in 1983. <sup>conceivably</sup> The technique demonstrated could form one component to support what is now called the Strategic Defence Initiative; it is not however the

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main technology which would have to be employed in any comprehensive ballistic missile defence - the Strategic Defence Initiative relies on a multi layered system, in which the main weight of an enemy attack would be eliminated in the early boost phase of missile flight by directed energy weapons based in space.

5. HOE, of course, is not foolproof. Identification of targets, for example, is made by infra red sensors; the obvious Soviet response would be to introduce infra red decoys into their war-head package. Another drawback is that HOE can take out only one incoming object in space at a time; a large number would therefore be required to cope with a mass attack.

6. Although the Americans have said that HOE is not an anti satellite system, it should be technically feasible to use the interceptor head as an ASAT weapon given the appropriate launch vehicle.

7. Arms Control Aspects Although they have not yet done so, it is possible that the Soviet Union may claim that the test represents a breach of current arms control treaties. Article VI of the 1972 ABM Treaty signed by the United States and Soviet Union says " ... each Party undertakes:

(a) not to give missiles, launchers or radars, other than ABM interceptor missiles, ABM launchers or radars capabilities to counter strategic ballistic missiles or other elements in flight

trajectory, and not to test them in an ABM mode ..." Article II.

1.(a) defines interceptor missiles as "interceptor missiles constructed and deployed for an ABM role, or of a type tested in an ABM mode".

8. Although as an offensive missile Minuteman I would not fit into these categories, the Americans say they have never given the Minuteman I a capability to counter ballistic missiles or their elements in flight trajectory nor has the missile been tested in an ABM mode. Two modified stages of the Minuteman I ICBM, but not the whole missile, were used as part of a technology demonstration they say is permitted by the Treaty. They therefore claim the interceptor was observably a distinct missile that falls within the treaty definition of an "interceptor missile". (In parenthesis they also argue that as Minuteman I is no longer deployed in an operational role it is plainly a research craft not intended for operational deployment as an ABM weapon). The Soviet Union already possesses a layered system of ABM defences around Moscow involving missiles capable of hitting incoming warheads outside the atmosphere. Currently these do not breach the ABM Treaty.

puts to visit Liverpool to confirm the situation—and next time she visits Liverpool, will she come in broad daylight?

**The Prime Minister:** I seem to remember that last time I went to Liverpool it was very broad daylight.

**Mr. Wareing:** And everybody was asleep in bed.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**The Prime Minister:** I hope that, for the moment, the hon. Gentleman is awake. With regard to the more serious aspect of his question, as the hon. Gentleman knows, a joint paper has been produced by officials of the Liverpool city council and officials of the Department of the Environment on options for achieving a balanced city council budget for 1984-85. It has been presented to the city councillors and the Secretary of State. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is due to meet councillors to discuss it. In the meantime, I understand that the auditor has written, strongly advising the council to set a rate by 20 June. I hope that it will do so.

**Viscount Cranborne:** Has my right hon. Friend noticed the announcement in this morning's press that the Americans have managed to shoot down a warhead in space? Will she take time today to consider whether that event has any implications for the purchase of the Trident missile?

**The Prime Minister:** It would be extremely unwise to rush into any conclusions on the basis of a press report or to make any statement without considering its full implications. The difference between one event and turning it into working technology is enormous, especially in this sphere.

**Dr. Owen:** In view of the Prime Minister's proven involvement in British Rail's pay offer, will she spare the House the humbug of pretending that she is not involved in decisions about whether British Rail should now invoke the civil law in relation to secondary picketing by members of the National Union of Railwaymen? Will she now tell us what she thinks should be done?

**The Prime Minister:** I have already said, in case the right hon. Gentleman has not noticed, that should the great nationalised industries invoke the civil law, the Government will not override their decision.

**Q3. Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 12 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Atkinson:** Is the Prime Minister aware that Mr. Denktash and some other Turkish-speaking Cypriots are shortly to host a dinner at the Savoy hotel which 40 or 50 of the Prime Minister's Back Benchers will attend and which will be addressed by the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) who will associate the Tory party with the Turkish annexation of Cyprus? Will she dissociate herself from that annexation and assure the House that no Government facilities will be made available for any trade negotiations during Mr. Denktash's visit to the United Kingdom?

**The Prime Minister:** As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the Government have condemned the attempts to declare

an independent northern Cyprus. The Government wish there to be a unitary state of Cyprus and have supported and will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations to bring both sides together to achieve the restoration of a unitary state of Cyprus. With regard to other matters, right hon. and hon. Members are free to do as they wish.

**Sir Peter Blaker:** Has my right hon. Friend any comment to make on the deafening silence of the opposition parties when the Prime Minister of South Africa was received by the Pope?

**The Prime Minister:** No. I sometimes prefer the deafening silence to the other thing.

**Q4. Mr. Marlow** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 12 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Marlow:** Does my right hon. Friend agree with this summary of the European election campaign that, whereas the Labour party, quite properly for it, puts Socialism first and the Liberal and Social Democratic parties put Europe first, Conservative candidates are putting Britain first? Does she further agree that every Conservative candidate is committed to the retention of the national veto, favours increasing free trade in the Community, and is against a federal system for Europe?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree broadly with my hon. Friend. With regard to the veto, our manifesto makes it clear that we wish to retain it as it is. With regard to our attitude to trade in Europe, we wish to reduce the internal barriers. Of course, I am against a federal Europe.

**Mr. Parry:** Will not the Prime Minister agree that the House was deliberately deceived by the Government about intervention in the miners' dispute? Will she state now whether the Secretary of State for Energy actually saw the letter from Andrew Turnbull to Henry Derwent? Will she not also agree that the Secretary of State yesterday treated the House and the National Union of Mineworkers with contempt by saying that he could not remember seeing it because it was not important?

**The Prime Minister:** With regard to the precise papers that the Secretary of State for Energy sees, I suspect he has seen a great deal more than I have because he is the sponsoring Minister. With regard to intervention, right hon. and hon. Members are still urging me to intervene by getting them all to No. 10. I have not done so, and will not do so. I have repeatedly said that this Government have set—[Interruption]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**The Prime Minister:** If the hon. Member wishes to call it intervention, this Government have provided £2 million per day for investment in the coal industry. They have seen to it that money is there for a very good deal for the mineworkers, and that the best voluntary redundancy terms are available. They have seen to it that there are extra subsidies and extra prospects for manufacturers who wish to turn from oil to coal. If that is intervention, yes, I have intervened, but asking them to No. 10 and beer and sandwiches, no, never.

**Q6. Mr. Wallace** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 12 June.

MJ

*File*

12 June 1984

Today's press reported the American success in destroying a test missile outside the earth's atmosphere with another missile for the first time. The matter was raised at Prime Minister's Questions this afternoon. It would be helpful to have an assessment of the significance of the event both in military and arms control terms. If possible this should be available by 14 June in case there are further Questions then.

I am copying this letter to Roger Bone (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

CP

Richard Mottram Esq  
Ministry of Defence.

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