

Prime Minister
 Moving very slowly but
 in the right direction.

Ref. A084/2408

PRIME MINISTER

Inertial Confinement Fusion Research

att With my minute A01433 of 15 February 1980^{pt 3} I submitted to you an assessment made by the Nuclear Advisory Panel chaired by Lord Penney of the implications of Inertial Confinement Fusion (ICF) research for the proliferation of nuclear weapon technology and possible action to control information emerging from such reserach. Subsequently (my minute A02803^{pt 3} of 4 August 1980) I reported on exploratory discussions with the United States Administration of the Panel's assessment and proposals. Although the United States initially saw a need for a more restrictive policy for ICF research, domestically and internationally, than the Panel believed to be either desirable or practicable, they agreed to review their position in the light of our proposals.

2. For a number of reasons the United States were not ready to resume discussions until April this year; but, when they did so, they had come much closer to acceptance of the Panel's view that ICF is neither necessary nor sufficient for the development of nuclear weapon technology, and they took a more sympathetic view of its central proposal to decouple ICF work in the defence field from that in the civil field. There was, however, an increased fear of criticism if the United States Administration was not seen to have acted against the disclosure of ICF information that might assist, or be thought to assist, the development of an initial nuclear weapon capability.

3. Although the UK delegation remained less optimistic than the United States about the practicality of inhibiting, much less controlling, the release of ICF information in other countries without disclosing the very information to be



protected, they recognised the domestic pressure on the United States to be seen to be doing something about the perceived dangers and also the importance of the very close collaboration with the United States on defence nuclear matters. They therefore offered to continue our low-key monitoring and guidance of civil research in this field and, on the basis of clear definitions of the sensitive and non-sensitive areas of ICF work, to agree to low-key approaches to selected non-nuclear weapon countries urging restraint on open publication of sensitive information, provided that this could be done without disclosing the significance of the information to be protected, and subject to review of necessary. The United States welcomed this offer as compatible with, though less rigorous than, their own preferred policy and it formed an agreed basis for subsequent trilateral discussion with the French.

4. In the trilateral discussions the French expressed similar views to our own, both on the assessment of the implications of ICF work for nuclear weapon technology and on the feasibility of controlling information and generally took the attitude that "the less said the better". The United States once again urged the need to be seen at least to discourage the publication of certain ICF information emerging from some countries, particularly Japan, and argued that any representations would be more effective if they were seen to be based on the joint technical judgments of the three countries rather than on a unilateral United States approach, and they therefore no longer sought to press their differences over the technical assessment of the implications of ICF research for proliferation.

5. Against this background the French and United Kingdom delegations did not oppose a United States approach to Japan at senior diplomatic level inviting the Japanese Government to encourage restraint over the publication of potentially



sensitive information arising from their ICF programme. It was also agreed, ad referendum, that similar action should be taken by France with Germany and by the United Kingdom with Spain, but that approaches to other countries would not be made unless and until developments in their ICF work suggested that such action was required.

6. A full list of the conclusions of the trilateral --- discussions, agreed ad referendum, is attached. They are consistent with the recommendations of the Nuclear Advisory Panel and from our point of view represent a satisfactory, if belated, outcome.

REA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

7 September 1984

CONFIDENTIAL

ANNEX

INERTIAL CONFINEMENT FUSION (ICF)

Conclusions agreed, ad referendum, at trilateral meeting of US, French and UK delegates on 15th June 1984.

Participants considered it would be useful:

- (1) to use the already trilaterally agreed list of sensitive and insensitive areas of information in exercising control over civil ICF work within their own countries and in seeking to influence other countries where necessary. The list would not be classified but it would not be published as such;
- (2) to continue guidance to civil ICF researchers within their own countries in order to divert them from sensitive areas of ICF work;
- (3) to continue national restraints on ICF researchers in the military field, regarding publications and attendance at open ICF discussions;
- (4) to refuse comment on the potential relevance of ICF data to nuclear weapons;
- (5) to arrange for senior diplomatic but low-key approaches to selected countries with advanced ICF programmes to encourage them to act as in (1) and (2) above;
- (6) to approach Japan, West Germany and Spain, with action resting on US, France and UK respectively, who should inform each other when action is completed;

CONFIDENTIAL

- (7) to inform USSR and China, in due course, about the common list of sensitive and insensitive areas and the action based on it. In this case US, France and UK should act as opportune but inform the others when action has been taken;
- (8) to discourage, whenever possible, meetings organised by IAEA or other bodies from entering upon discussion of sensitive areas of ICF work, if action can be taken without adverse effect. More thought to be given on how to achieve this objective.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL



6

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

Sir Robert Armstrong

Inertial Confinement Fusion Research

The Prime Minister was grateful to be brought up to date on this matter by your minute (A084/2408) of 7 September.

ep

11 September, 1984.

CONFIDENTIAL

NR