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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1

Telephone 01-~~2307022~~ 218 2111/3

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19th April 1983

MS

Prime Minister

A.J.C. 20/4.

Dear Jim,

In your letter of 6th April you asked to see what information we had about a surface-to-air missile which had been brought to the Prime Minister's attention.

The missile concerned, the SA-X-12, is still under development. It comprises two types of missile (type A and B), a fire control radar and a surveillance/early warning radar. Each part of the system is mounted on a tracked vehicle, making the system extremely mobile. The type A missile is a long-range strategic surface-to-air missile (SAM); the type B is similar, but has a larger booster which gives it higher acceleration and even longer range. Maximum range for the type A missile is some 90km, whilst that of the type B is greater than 200km. The important aspects of the SA-X-12 system are its high mobility and its dual-role capability against aircraft and some tactical ballistic missile targets. The type A missile system will probably enter service with the Soviet armies in small numbers in the late 1983. The type B is currently undergoing system tests and may enter service in 1985-87.

The type A missile has been observed engaging aircraft-type targets and slow speed ballistic targets. These latter are thought to represent battlefield systems such as LANCE and PLUTON. We assess the type A as having only a marginal capability against Pershing.

The type B missile has only been observed engaging aircraft-type targets, but it has a performance far superior to that of the type A. Evidence suggests that a Pershing I-type target has recently been flown into EMBA, the test range where SA-X-12 is being developed. However, the radars must be able to detect and maintain track on the re-entry vehicle from long range to allow sufficient time for a successful intercept to occur. There is currently a shortage of data on these radars but nevertheless we assess that the type B missile system will have some capability against Pershing I. It will also have a capability against Pershing II when a similar flight profile to that of Pershing I is used, but the greater speed, and manoeuvrability of Pershing II will generally make it a much more difficult target.



You also asked whether the deployment of SA-X-12 would in any sense constitute a breach of the 1972 ABM Treaty. The short answer is that, although Article VI(a) of the ABM Treaty specifically prohibits the conversion of non-ABM missiles to an ABM role, the existence in new Soviet SAM systems such as the SA-X-12 (and SA-10) of a theoretical capability against some strategic missiles would not in itself constitute a breach of the Treaty.

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21 April 1983

The Prime Minister was grateful for the information provided in your letter of 19 April about the present state of development of the SA-X-12 and its military significance.

A. J. COLES

Nick Evans, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

6 April 1983

The Prime Minister's attention was recently drawn to a report (not from official sources) about the development by the Soviet Union of a SAM 12 missile which is apparently seen as a counter to Pershing.

B/11 I should be most grateful if you could let me have a brief account of the information we possess about this missile and its significance.

gc

Richard Mottram, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

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