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T O P S E C R E T UMBRA GAMMA
FOLLOWING FOR THOMAS FROM WRIGHT

A-1.c. 1/5

f.a.

YOUR JICTEL NO 96: SOVIET CONCERN ABOUT A SURPRISE NATO ATTACK.
1. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS NOW AGREED THAT WE SHOULD GIVE THE AMERICANS A PAPER WE HAVE PREPARED ON POSSIBLE CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES COVERING NUCLEAR COMMAND POST EXERCISES. THIS DOES NOT (NOT) DWELL ON THE SPECIFIC SOVIET RESPONSE TO ABLE ARCHER, BUT IS INTENDED TO SERVE AS A BASIS FOR GENERAL POLICY DISCUSSION WITH THE AMERICANS IN PARALLEL WITH CONTINUED EXCHANGES ABOUT THE INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT CONTAINED IN JIC(84)(N)45.

2. MY VISIT TO WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK PROVIDES A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR HANDING OVER THIS PAPER TO BURT. WE WOULD NOT EXPECT A DETAILED AMERICAN RESPONSE AT THAT STAGE. INSTEAD, I WOULD SUGGEST THAT ONCE THE ADMINISTRATION HAD HAD TIME TO DIGEST OUR PAPER, WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS IT FURTHER: AS YOU KNOW, CARTLEDGE AND WESTON WILL BE IN WASHINGTON AT THE END OF MAY AND WOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE THE MATTER FURTHER THEN, ALTHOUGH THIS WOULD NOT ALLOW US TO MEET OUR TARGET OF HOLDING DETAILED TALKS BEFORE THE SECRETARY OF STATE RAISES IT WITH SHULTZ IN THE MARGINS OF THE NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING.
£0000

- cc. PS
- PS-PUS
- Sir J. Bullard
- Mr. Cartledge
- Mr. Crabtree before
- Mr. Cole - Now 10
- Mr. G. Weill - c. Office
- Mr. Fewtrell - DS17 Mr

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

4 May, 1984

Yes
mkPrime MinisterAgree that the attached paper should
be passed to the Americans?

A & C. J.

Dear Mr Bin,

Soviet Concern about a Surprise NATO Attack

Your letter of 10 April recorded the Prime Minister's agreement that officials should urgently consider how to approach the Americans on the question of possible Soviet misapprehensions about a surprise NATO attack.

Sir Oliver Wright has now had a preliminary discussion with Mr Eagleburger (Under Secretary of State), who confirmed that US intelligence officials are urgently analysing the unusual Soviet reactions to Able Archer 83. It is fair to say that these analysts expressed initial scepticism about the conclusions reached in JIC Report (JIC(84)(N)45), and we need to ensure that we are not perceived in Washington as being the victim of a disinformation exercise designed to cause US allies unjustified concern about the effect of American policies on Soviet fears. But a full US intelligence assessment has now been commissioned, and it may be significant that as a consequence of the JIC report, the Americans deemed it wise to notify the Russians earlier this month of a series of their own nuclear exercises.

← We now need to put the discussion on to a more political level. Whatever the reliability of the judgement in the JIC assessment, its paper has served as a catalyst for consideration of the inherent advantages of agreeing some confidence-building measures relating to nuclear command post exercises along lines similar to those which already cover some nuclear and conventional field exercises. FCO and MOD officials have therefore agreed the attached paper setting out a number of themes which would serve as a basis for more detailed discussion with the Americans.

If the Prime Minister agrees, it is our intention to pass this paper urgently to the Americans and to aim at a detailed discussion with US officials in mid-May, ideally before the Foreign Secretary raises the matter himself with Shultz during the NATO Ministerial meeting in Washington at the end of the month.

/I am

T O P S E C R E T



I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram,
Sir Robert Armstrong and 'C'.

Your own

Len Appleyard

(L V Appleyard)
Private Secretary

F E R Butler Esq
10 Downing Street

T O P S E C R E T

TOP SECRET

Copy No. 5 of 5 Copies SM



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

8 May 1984

Soviet Concern about a Surprise NATO Attack

Thank you for your letter of 4 May to Robin Butler.

The Prime Minister agrees that the paper enclosed with your letter may be passed to the US Government.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence), Sir Robert Armstrong and 'C'.

Len Appleyard, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

TOP SECRET

ms

SOVIET UNION: CONCERN ABOUT A SURPRISE NATO ATTACK

I INTRODUCTION

1. This paper considers whether specific options exist for minimising the risk of Soviet misinterpretation of NATO Command Post Exercises (CPXs), particularly nuclear ones. Although it has been prepared in the context of an unprecedented Soviet reaction to Able Archer 83 and other reports of alleged concern about a surprise NATO attack (JIC(84)(N)45), the paper examines the inherent advantages and disadvantages of prior notification of nuclear CPXs as an overall Confidence Building Measure (CBM).
2. Account is taken (see paragraph 8 below) of the possibility that the Russians may be using disinformation to cause US allies concern about the effect of overall American policy on the Soviet Union, to inhibit NATO activities or to condition Warsaw Pact allies to the 'counter-deployment' of Soviet missiles in Eastern Europe.
3. Although the JIC reached no firm conclusion, we cannot discount the possibility that at least some Soviet officials/officers may have misinterpreted Able Archer 83 and possibly other nuclear CPXs as posing a real threat. Quite apart from their reaction to Able Archer and human intelligence about alleged concern among certain Soviet leaders, the Russians have introduced a new state of alert in the last year or two defined as "Danger of sudden attack with weapons of mass destruction". If their response involves the taking of actual precautions against what

they judge to be threatening and ambiguous warning indicators, should we seek to establish a system which makes the holding of high level nuclear CPXs subject to an obligation to notify in advance? Should the practice of promoting military transparency through Confidence Building Measures be extended from field exercises and the movement of actual forces to CPXs themselves? Provided a proposal can be assembled which does not constrain nuclear CPX activity, (which is militarily vital for the training of commanders and their staffs in extremely complicated procedures), could there be advantage in exploring this with the Russians? If they are misleading us about their concerns, a properly balanced Western proposal may simply be rejected at no cost to ourselves, while if they are genuinely concerned they will presumably be anxious to negotiate CBMs which could effectively alleviate mutual fears. Recent Soviet notification of the testing of the SS17 emergency communications system (CIA NID 12 April) may be a significant indication of Russian interest.

II SUBJECTS FOR NEGOTIATION

4. While an element of uncertainty is implicit in the concept of deterrence, it is assumed that there is mutual benefit in ensuring that each side does not misconstrue the other's CPXs as posing a real threat. Since certain notification measures relating to test ICBM launches already exist for reducing the possibility of misinterpretation (eg SALT II, Article XVI) there seems no inherent reason why similar procedures could not be devised which extended to certain nuclear CPXs as well. Prior warning of field exercises has become an accepted feature of the conventional arms control process, and as such, could be capable

not
notified

of expansion, although not perhaps within existing fora (see paragraph 7 below). It is for discussion whether notification of nuclear CPXs would have to be balanced (the reciprocal nature of conventional notification is an important factor which needs to be taken into account) or whether notification might be asymmetric or even unilateral.

5. It is also for discussion what CPXs might be notified and the extent of information which might be provided. It may for example be asked whether awareness of the existence of a nuclear CPX would of itself generate confidence. In our view simple notification could indeed be effective in reassuring the other side if it was given sufficiently far in advance to make it clear that such exercises formed a normal pattern of activity and took place in relative isolation from the changing temperature of political relationships between the major powers. It might prove possible to construct notification in such a way as to avoid giving details of particular scenarios or inhibit in any way US or NATO exercises.

6. Although the Russians appear to have reacted in an unprecedented way to the NATO exercise Able Archer 83, their concern, if indeed it exists, is likely to be about the American ingredient of any perceived threat rather than its general NATO-wide context. This, coupled with the fact that the Soviet Union is the only nuclear power in the Warsaw Pact, indicates that super-power nuclear CPXs should form the centrepiece of any notification procedure, supplemented perhaps on the West's side with notification of NATO-wide exercises involving a substantial American nuclear role. We do not consider that every exercise

involving simulated nuclear release would require notification since both sides regularly practice such releases at a low level in a whole range of exercises. In the immediate future it might be enough to attempt early discussions with the Russians, and possibly to notify as an earnest of our intent this year's Able Archer (November 84) and the NATO-wide WINTEX exercise early in 1985. Consideration would however need to be given to the risk that in notifying in this way one might set a precedent from which it would be difficult to retreat subsequently if the Russians refused to reciprocate.

III FRAMEWORK FOR DISCUSSION

7. If it is accepted that there would be advantage in reducing possible misapprehension about nuclear attack, and that substantive proposals could be devised, consideration needs to be given to appropriate frameworks for discussion. There may be a requirement for speed (Able Archer November 84, WINTEX early 85). This effectively rules out most of the existing arms control negotiations as suitable fora since discussion of CBMs in any of these is likely to be unduly prolonged (MBFR), complicated by an involvement of extraneous participants (CDE, CSCE) or indefinitely delayed (START). A number of existing bilateral US/USSR agreements theoretically provide a framework ('hotline' agreements 1963/71, Article XVI of SALT II or Prevention of Nuclear War Agreement 1973), but none of them seem easily adaptable to current requirements.

8. An ad hoc forum may therefore be required. A special contact between the US and the USSR seems the most practical

option in terms of speed, simplicity and security. Although it was a NATO CPX about which the Soviets appear to have been concerned, prior consultation within a NATO forum, no matter how restricted, would inevitably be insecure and cause public speculation about a highly sensitive matter. Although we could fully justify attempts to increase confidence about nuclear matters and anticipate considerable support for such efforts, on balance the search for CBMs is likely to be more effectively pursued in secret since the refocussing of public attention on the issue of "nuclear survival" is in general unlikely to prove helpful. However recent experience suggests that a bilateral discussion involving possible notification of NATO and US national nuclear CPXs is unlikely to cause problems within the Alliance provided it is subsequently or simultaneously explained to a number of selected NATO Permanent Representatives in restricted session that such contacts were designed to promote a greater sense of confidence between the two superpowers. Soviet attempts to drive a wedge between the United States and its European allies, and the possibility that their alleged fears about a surprise attack may comprise disinformation, strengthen the case for discussion of CBMs relating to Command Post Exercises, specifically nuclear ones, to be conducted bilaterally between the United States and the Soviet Union. This would also reduce opportunities for the Russians to put pressure on American policy through US allies.

9. The President's Commission on Strategic Forces (the Scowcroft Report, 21 March 1984) proposes a bilateral exchange

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UMBRA GAMMA
US/UK EYES ONLY

Page No 6 of 6
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information between US and Soviet Defence officials about steps which could be misconstrued as indications of an attack. The Report proposes that a variety of measures should be constructed to improve communication and predictability which would 'contribute to stability by improving mutual understanding and reducing surprise and misinterpretation'. It is our view that General Scowcroft's recommendations should be acted upon as soon as possible.

TOP SECRET
UMBRA GAMMA
US/UK EYES ONLY

Prime Minister.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

for information.

London SW1A 2AH

M¹¹₄

13 April 1984

Dear Tom

Soviet concern about a surprise NATO attack

Your letter of 10 April recorded the agreement of the Prime Minister and her colleagues that officials should proceed urgently to consider how to approach the Americans. The Prime Minister may wish to be aware that FCO and MOD officials have already begun preliminary work and will be looking at detailed options in the next few days with the aim of discussing a paper with the Americans soon after Easter. Sir Geoffrey Howe has meanwhile asked Sir Oliver Wright to raise our concerns with Larry Eagleburger in order to ensure that our own thoughts take due account of American views: I attach a telegram which has just been sent to Washington.

I should also clarify a point raised during the Prime Minister's meeting on 10 April about recent Russian notification of some ICBM flights within the Soviet Union. Subsequent investigation by the Americans and ourselves now shows that although such notification is rare, it is not, as had earlier been thought, entirely unprecedented. Similar notification was given in 1980/81. We should not, therefore, want too much importance to be attached to the event, although of course it does indicate that at a certain level the Soviets attach importance to minimising the possibility for misinterpretation by the other side.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence), Sir Robert Armstrong and 'C'.

Yours ever,

Len Appleyard

(L V Appleyard)
Private SecretaryA J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

File No.

Department DEFENCE

OUTWARD

Drafted by

(Block Capitals) C D CRABBIE

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[TEXT]

ABLE ARCHER

1. The Prime Minister has agreed that UK officials should urgently consider what options may exist for reducing the possibility of Soviet misinterpretation of NATO Command Post Exercises (CPX), especially nuclear ones. Work on this is in hand, but it may take a short while to agree on what detailed ideas we might put to the Americans. I intend to speak to Shultz about this next month, but in the meanwhile I should like you to speak personally to Eagleburger.

2. You should say that the JIC Report has raised a number of important questions to which we are giving careful consideration. We do not totally exclude a possible element of Soviet disinformation (though /the

Copies to:-

PS
PS/PUS
Mr Wright
Mr Cartledge
Mr Weston
Mr Macgregor (Soviet
Dept)
Mr Blelloch, DUS(P),
MOD
Mr Fewtrell, DS17,
MOD
Mr Goodall, Cabinet
Office

the reports referred to in the JIC report are of a high degree of reliability), and are well aware of Soviet traditional caution in nuclear matters.

However we cannot afford to ignore the possibility that at least some Russians in responsible positions may be reacting to what they mistakenly perceive as a real threat posed by NATO Command Post Exercises. Whatever the Soviet response really was, we need to consider whether there are ways open to us for avoiding possible misunderstandings in future.

3. FCO and MOD officials are therefore studying what if any confidence building measures might be devised to cover nuclear (and possibly conventional) CPX. We are approaching this with an open mind and have not at this stage reached any firm conclusions. However before we go much further it will be important to take full account of American views as to the significance of the JIC Report and whether it is advisable or possible to take some follow up action. We hope therefore to be in a position to have a preliminary exchange of views with appropriate US officials before the end of April.

4. I would not (not) like you to go into any further detail about our thoughts at this stage. Strictly for your own information, we are considering whether there would be advantage in encouraging the Alliance to propose a confidence building measure covering Command Post Exercises in the CDE: this might involve, for example, prior notification of such exercises. Another /possible

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possible course might be for the Americans to discuss the matter on a purely bilateral basis with the Soviet Union, possibly using as a basis the working group on CBMs which they evidently established last year during the START negotiations.

5. I am particularly anxious that we should not (not) give the Americans the impression that we are pressing them into precipitate action. It is important that we act closely in concert with one another. However the Prime Minister and I do not think we can overlook the potentially serious consequences which could arise from Soviet misapprehensions, and we should do everything possible to prevent those from arising. In the light of your discussion with Eagleburger, I would welcome your advice on the best way to pursue the exchange of views envisaged in paragraph 3 above.

Jh
13/4



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SSS
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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

17 April 1984

Soviet concern about a surprise NATO attack

The Prime Minister has seen and noted the contents of your letter to John Coles on the above subject.

I am sending copies of this letter to the recipients of yours.

(David Barclay)

Len Appleyard Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

TOP SECRET UMBRA GAMMA

MK