

copy
GenoFCS/85/56NBPM
MAY 12/3SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCEEuropean Fighter Aircraft

1. Thank you for sending me a copy of your minute of 26 February to the Prime Minister.
2. As you say, there are a number of complex issues which we will need to look at. Operational, industrial and cost considerations will clearly be important in any decision we take. But, as your minute makes clear, the next fighter aircraft provides the greatest challenge to European equipment collaboration, a concept you have done so much to advance in recent months. We are fully agreed on the need to do everything we possibly can to make this major collaborative European project a successful reality. There are obvious implications here, not only for the future of European defence cooperation, but more specifically for the UK's role in it and for our allies' perception of our commitment. This is something which you and I have tried hard, and I believe so far successfully, to impress on them, both bilaterally and in our work in the Eurogroup, IEPG and WEU. I am therefore glad to take up your offer that the FCO should be fully associated with your Department's continuing work on this issue.
3. I entirely agree that a conjunction of political will at the highest level will be necessary to make a success of EFA. This suggests that we should not miss any suitable opportunity presented by ministerial contacts with our EFA partners, particularly the French, to press our case for a solution which makes sense in military and cost terms and
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which provides a fair sharing of benefits among the participating states. Our Ambassadors in Paris, Bonn, Rome and Madrid are more than ready to take whatever action may be required with their host Governments. We should make full use both of their advice and of their day to day contacts with senior officials and Ministers.

4. I am copying this minute to colleagues on OD and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
12 March 1985

DEFENCE: Procurement: Pt 2.



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