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MESSAGE FROM M. FRANCOIS MITTERAND,
PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

TO

THE RT HON MRS MARGARET THATCHER MP, PRIME MINISTER

Paris, 11 October 1985

Madam Prime Minister

I wish to recall that in my view, the building of a joint military aviation is a project fundamental to the security and defence, and indeed for the technological and industrial future of Europe.

I cannot but regret the recent failure of the unique European fighter aircraft project, which is due in the main to the impossibility of reconciling in a single aircraft different though complementary military requirements, and to the differences in equipment renewal timetables.

Thus I have become convinced that it will not be possible to build the Europe of military aviation unless joint reflection is carried out beforehand, in the perspective of the next twenty years.

This work of reflection should in particular deal with :

• the extent and nature of requirements for aircraft of various types between now and 1995-2000

- definition of the European programmes likely to satisfy these requirements

- the various types of essential aircraft (fighter aircraft, transport aircraft, initial or advanced training aircraft) and the associated equipments

- the division of tasks between the companies, taking into account the necessity of establishing a network of interlinked cooperation on essential equipments : airframe, wing, engine, electronic equipment, weapon systems.

These considerations lead me to propose to you that a European study and programming group be set up in the field of aviation, which would group together the European countries concerned. This group would bring together periodically, at the political level, the Defence Ministers and Foreign Ministers and, at the

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technical level, the Armament Directors on the one hand and the companies on the other.

I therefore propose that the Ministers of Defence and the Ministers for External Affairs of our various countries should quickly meet on this matter.

I also wish that the participation of our respective aircraft industries may be envisaged in the two fighter aircraft programmes which are today under development, and that the complementarity of these, both from the operational and from the technological and industrial point of view, may once again be sought. The French government is ready to submit precise proposals in this connection.

I remain convinced that there is room in Europe for several projects corresponding to complementary requirements of our air forces.

I remain, Madam Prime Minister, yours very truly.

signed : Francois Mitterand

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