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*File this  
cc Sir R*

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

12 January 1988

REPLY TO PRESIDENT MITTERRAND

I enclose the Prime Minister's proposed reply to President Mitterrand's message of October about Anglo/French defence co-operation. As you will see, it is substantially revised from the version enclosed with your letter, the main purpose being to tighten up the text.

Subject to any comments from the Foreign Secretary and the Defence Secretary, I should be grateful if it could now be despatched as soon as possible.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Ian Andrews (Ministry of Defence) and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

CHARLES POWELL

Lyn Parker, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T4/88

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

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c Fro  
MOD  
CO  
PC

THE PRIME MINISTER

*SUBJECT is OPS  
MASTER*

12 January 1988

'T' message

*Dear Mr. President,*

I wanted to think carefully before replying to your letter of 6 October dealing with our cooperation in defence matters.

We have to recognise that in some ways we approach things from a different viewpoint because France is not part of NATO's integrated military structure.

But there are many areas of common ground: firm commitment to the principle of nuclear deterrence, determination to maintain the independence of our national deterrent forces, the importance we both attach to a strong Western alliance. We are also in close agreement about the right priorities for the next steps in arms control.

Both our countries have a close defence relationship with the Federal Republic of Germany. Ours is illustrated by the fact that one third of the British Army and half of the Royal Air Force's active units are based forward to defend German territory, indeed that of France and other European members of NATO as well. France too maintains some troops in Germany although not based forward. You have recently taken steps to develop closer Franco/German cooperation in this field.

NATO has developed very effective consultative and force planning procedures, which have a vital role in Europe's

*ds*

defence. My concern is that separate defence arrangements between France and other European countries, either bilaterally or in small groups, may give the appearance of substituting for these or diminishing their importance. That would undermine NATO's cohesion which is not in the interests of any of us. I know that this is not your intention. But I very much hope that ways can be found of associating France more closely with these collective defence arrangements. The fact that the main European members of NATO were able to set out clearly in the WEU Platform the key points on which they agree was a useful step.

Against this background of efforts to strengthen collective defence, I believe that there is more that we can do together bilaterally. I welcome the discussions which Mr. Younger has had with M. Giraud about nuclear defence cooperation, as well as our growing practical cooperation in the equipment procurement field.

There are also other areas which we might encourage our people to discuss. For instance we could look at ways in which French forces could be more closely involved in the forward defence of the FRG, particularly whether they could make a contribution in the NORTHAG area. Because of the numerical advantages enjoyed by the Warsaw Pact, assuring an adequate forward defence of this region is vitally important. This is also an area where the forces permanently deployed in peacetime come from the European members of the Alliance. In times of crisis or war it would be of great value to have French forces actively committed to its defence.

There is also the area of reinforcement, where plans have existed for some years to allow British reinforcements destined for Germany in times of crisis or war to use certain French facilities, subject to the agreement of the French Government of the day. I should like to see us exercise these plans on a contingency basis by deploying

British forces through French Channel ports and by the use of French airfields by RAF aircraft. I believe that our military experts should also examine other ways in which our current joint exercises could be further developed.

I would also like to see consideration given to the scope for further joint naval planning and exercises in the Eastern Atlantic and Channel areas, where our two Navies have particular responsibilities.

More generally, I would hope that France might be able to consider ways in which the Alliance's major military commanders could take greater account of France's own force plans in their defence planning.

I believe that cooperation in all these ways would serve to supplement the important work already done on nuclear and other matters and would contribute to the strength of the NATO Alliance as a whole. They could have a particularly important influence at a time when the United States is likely to be looking ever more closely at how to tailor its overseas commitments to its resources.

These ideas are put forward in a positive spirit. I would be interested to hear your personal reaction to them at our forthcoming Anglo/French Summit.

Yours sincerely  
Margaret Thatcher

His Excellency Monsieur François Mitterrand, G.C.B.

  
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MR POWELL *CDD*

Message to Mitterrand

Thank you for showing me the slimmer version of the draft message.

2. My only comment concerns the reference in the fourth paragraph to French troops in Germany. There are 50,000 French troops in the area around Baden-Baden adjacent to France. It is therefore arguable whether the French presence is "not on this scale" in comparison with our forces of 66,000 in the Federal Republic. You could either say "France too maintains troops in Germany"; or "France too maintains troops in Germany, although not based forward".

*CLG*  
C L G Mallaby

12 January 1988

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10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

(I think it's  
a little and sharper  
and

Prime Minister

Anglo / French Defence Cooperation

This is a draft reply

to President Mitterand's message to  
you of last October about  
defence cooperation.

We have been arguing with FCO  
on the

the MOD for some months  
substance. I have considerably damaged

their latest effort, to produce the  
attached draft.

I think that it is now  
about right and puts the

French on the spot.

In any case, we ought  
to get a reply off before the  
Anglo-French Summit at the end  
of the month.

If you are content:

" Dear Mr. Resider "

" With warm regards "

CDI  
"11"