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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

Telephone 01-218 2111/3

MO 15/3V

31st March 1988

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Dear Peter,

USE OF LASER DEVICES BY THE SOVIET UNION

at flap

In your letter to Brian Hawtin of 20th March, you asked whether there was any evidence to support the assertion that the Soviet Union has used laser devices to blind American pilots. The UK has no evidence that US pilots have been permanently blinded by Soviet laser devices, although in the past few years there have been several incidents in which Soviet lasers appear to have illuminated Western military observers.

The incident of most concern took place in September 1987, when two US aircraft monitoring Soviet ICBMs some 1450km from Hawaii, were illuminated by a laser. The co-pilot of one of the aircraft suffered serious and persistent vision disruption for about 10 minutes due to an intense flash from one of the ships in the area. In an earlier incident in 1986, a US reconnaissance aircraft operating in the sea of Okhotsk was exposed to multiple flashes from a laser mounted on a Soviet Sovremenny class warship. No crew members were looking directly at the laser but estimates from video recordings of the event indicate that it was powerful enough to cause eye damage.

The Soviets have used lasers in ground engagements. In 1982 UK BRIXMIS patrols operating in the German Democratic Republic were targeted by Soviet laser rangefinders, which are more powerful than Western equivalents, causing damage to camera optics. There were no eye casualties. The Soviets are also reported to have used lasers to blind Chinese soldiers on the Sino-Soviet border and Mujahidin in the Afghan mountains, and there are reliable reports that the Iraqis have used lasers against Iranian infantry causing between 2000 and 4000 eye casualties.

But these incidents should be viewed against the background of the increasing deployment of laser devices in both WP and NATO forces. The fact that the Soviets have illuminated Western equipment and personnel does not prove intent to cause damage or injury. Such

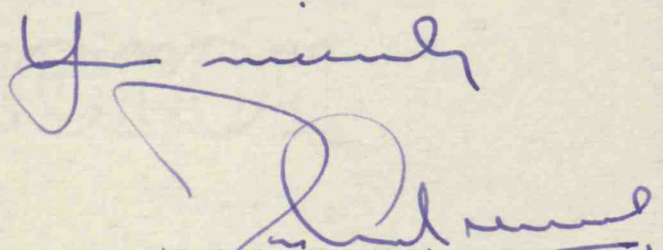
Charles Powell Esq
10 Downing Street



incidents may well increase, affecting both Western and Soviet units, as laser devices become more widely utilised particularly in weapon aiming systems.

In summary, whilst there are no known incidents in which the Soviet forces have permanently blinded Western military personnel with lasers, they appear to have used them in a way which could have done so; but whether this was by accident or design is not clear. The Defence Intelligence Staff has consistently advised that, if illuminated by a Soviet laser, ocular damage may occur and an MOD programme to develop protective devices has been running for several years.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr Hall (Assessments Staff, Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely

 (I C F ANDREWS)
 Private Secretary

*I hope it has
 by the time found
 effective protection.*



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East West

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

Telephone 01-218 2111/3

14th April 1988

MO 15/3

Dear General,

Parryson
mt

Prime Minister
COB 14/14

PROTECTIVE MEASURES AGAINST THE USE OF LASER DEVICES
BY THE SOVIET UNION

In your letter of 4th April, you asked whether any devices to protect Servicemen against the effects of lasers had been developed as a result of the programme to which I referred in my letter of 31st March.

Work on the development of protective measures started in 1982 and, during the course of this year, the Army will be bringing into service, initially in BAOR, goggles designed to provide protection against lasers in the visible and near-visible wavelengths. Laser eye protection for Service air crew will follow within three years, although some personnel engaged in maritime air operations have already been provided with spectacles to counter a specific threat in a particular operating area. In addition, standards of laser protection have been specified for optical devices which are now mandatory for all new equipment or equipment undergoing mid-life up-dating. Further work will shortly be set in hand to consider the feasibility of countermeasures to the tunable or multi-wavelength laser threat that may be expected to result from the development of Soviet laser weapons.

I hope that this is helpful. I am sending a copy of this letter Mr Hall (Assessments Staff, Cabinet Office).

Y. G. ...
[Signature]
C F ANDREWS
Private Secretary

Charles Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2JB



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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

4 April 1988

USE OF LASER DEVICES BY THE SOVIET UNION

Thank you for your letter of 31 March describing various instances of the use of laser devices by the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister was grateful for this. She has noted that the Ministry of Defence have had a programme for several years to develop protective devices against the use of such lasers. She hopes that by this time some protection has been found. Perhaps you could let me know.

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I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr Hall (Assessments Staff, Cabinet Office).

C.D. POWELL

Ian Andrews, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

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c/c

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

20 March 1988

Dear Sir,

B/F //

The Prime Minister was struck by the comment in paragraph 6 of UKDEL NATO Telegram No. 131 that the Soviet Union had been using laser devices to blind American pilots. Is there in fact any evidence for that assertion?

I am copying this letter to Mr. Hall (Assessments Staff, Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,
C. D. Powell

(C. D. POWELL)

Brian Hawtin, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

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*Have the USSR
been using laser devices
to blind pilots?*

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 131

OF 181812Z MARCH 88

INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK, WASHINGTON, MOSCOW, PARIS, BONN
INFO ROUTINE OTHER NATO POSTS, BELGRADE, BUCHAREST, BUDAPEST
INFO ROUTINE EAST BERLIN, PRAGUE, SOFIA, WARSAW, UKDEL CSCE VIENNA
INFO ROUTINE BERNE

SIC EME
MODUK FOR DUS(P), SEC(NATO/UK)(P), DACU

CARLUCCI/YAZOV MEETING: BRIEFING OF NAC BY LEHMAN

SUMMARY

1. ASSISTANT SECRETARY LEHMAN BRIEFS NAC ON CARLUCCI/YAZOV MEETING IN BERNE 15-17 MARCH. YAZOV OSTENTATIOUSLY FRIENDLY: PROFESSES IGNORANCE ON DETAIL: PROMISES MORE OPENNESS IN FUTURE. FURTHER BILATERAL CONTACTS ENVISAGED.

DETAIL

2. INTRODUCING LEHMAN, THE SECRETARY GENERAL NOTED THAT THE CARLUCCI/YAZOV MEETING WAS THE FIRST EVER SUCH ENCOUNTER AS A SEPARATE BILATERAL EVENT.

3. LEHMAN RECALLED PRESIDENT REAGAN'S 1985 STRASBOURG SPEECH CALLING FOR REGULAR DEFENCE CONTACTS, AND THE INVITATION FROM THE THEN SECRETARY OF DEFENCE WEINBERGER TO THE THEN SOVIET DEFENCE MINISTER SOKOLOV IN SPRING ON 1986. SECRETARY CARLUCCI AND ADMIRAL CROWE. CROWE HAD MET SOVIET CHIEF OF STAFF AKHROMEYEV DURING THE DECEMBER 1987 WASHINGTON SUMMIT. THE CARLUCCI/YAZOV MEETING BEGAN WITH DINNER ON 15 MARCH HOSTED BY THE SWISS MOD, AND CONTINUED WITH A SERIES OF MEETINGS ON 16 MARCH, ENDING WITH BREAKFAST ON 17 MARCH. THE ATMOSPHERE WAS BUSINESSLIKE, AND THE SOVIET SIDE WAS AT PAINS TO BE CONSISTENTLY FRIENDLY.

4. THE U S SIDE ADDRESSED THE FOUR TRADITIONAL SUBJECTS OF THE BILATERAL DIALOGUE, I.E. HUMAN RIGHTS, BILATERAL RELATIONS, ARMS CONTROL AND REGIONAL ISSUES, WITH EMPHASIS ON ITEMS OF DEFENCE INTEREST. YAZOV SAID HIS MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO DISPEL THE IMAGE OF THE SOVIET UNION AS AN ENEMY. HE AND GENERAL CHERVOV WERE THE MAIN SPEAKERS: ACCOMPANYING MOD OFFICERS HARDLY CONTRIBUTED.

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5. THE DEFENCE-RELATED AGENDA ITEMS HAD BEEN DISCUSSED IN ADVANCE THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS, COVERING DANGEROUS MILITARY ACTIVITY: MILITARY POLICY AND DOCTRINE: ARMS CONTROL: AND MILITARY/MILITARY CONTACTS. THE U S AIM, WHICH YAZOV ENDORSED, WAS TO DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING, BUT NOT TO SUBSTITUTE FOR EXISTING NEGOTIATING MECHANISMS.

6. ON DANGEROUS MILITARY ACTIVITY, THE U S SIDE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER SOVIET ACTIONS WHICH ENDANGERED AMERICAN LIVES, SUCH AS HARRASSMENT OF THE MILITARY LIAISON MISSIONS IN THE GDR: SHIP RAMMING IN THE BLACK SEA: THE USE OF LASER DEVICES TO BLIND PILOTS: AND DANGEROUS FLYING. IN REPLY, YAZOV COMPLAINED ABOUT U S ACTIVITIES BUT ADDED THAT DEFENCE MINISTRIES SHOULD ENFORCE EXISTING PROCEDURES: IN PARTICULAR NEITHER SIDE SHOULD OPEN FIRE. (LEHMAN COMMENTED THAT THE AMERICANS REQUESTED AND RECEIVED SOVIET AGREEMENT TO PUBLICISE THIS POINT). YAZOV SUGGESTED REVISING EXISTING AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE ARMED FORCES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE AMERICANS SAID THEY HAD NO INTEREST IN DOING THIS: BUT CROWE AND AKHROMEYEV COULD EXAMINE THE WHOLE PROBLEM AT A FUTURE MEETING. GENERAL OTIS (CINCUSAREUR) MIGHT ALSO MEET HIS SOVIET COUNTERPART AS HE HAD DONE AFTER THE SHOOTING OF LT COL NICHOLSON IN THE GDR IN 1985.

7. ON MILITARY POLICY/DOCTRINE, THE AMERICANS SOUGHT BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE CHANGED IN SOVIET PRACTICE ON THE RELEASE OF DEFENCE BUDGET INFORMATION AND ON OPERATIONAL MATTERS. THE RUSSIANS REFUSED TO DISCUSS DOCTRINE IN DETAIL, SAYING ONLY THAT REASONABLE SUFFICIENCY QUOTE RELATED TO THE THREAT AND ON ARMS CONTROL SOLUTION UNQUOTE. THE RUSSIANS WERE NOT AS CLEAR ON THIS AND SIMILAR ISSUES AS THE U S SIDE HAD HOPED. THEY COULD NOT EXPLAIN HOW CURRENT, ALLEGEDLY DEFENSIVE, DOCTRINE VARIED FROM EARLIER VERSIONS, BUT CLAIMED THAT WITH TIME CHANGES WOULD BE NOTICEABLE, BOTH IN EQUIPMENT AND IN TRAINING/FIELD MANUALS WHICH WERE BEING REWRITTEN. ON MILITARY BUDGETS, YAZOV ADMITTED THAT THE OFFICIAL BUDGET DID NOT INCLUDE PROCUREMENT AND R AND D COSTS: BUT HE COULD NOT GIVE A CONSOLIDATED DEFENCE EXPENDITURE FIGURE. HE IMPLIED THAT THE U S ESTIMATE OF A GLOBAL FIGURE OF 16 PERCENT OF GNP WAS QUOTE A REASONABLE GUESS UNQUOTE.

8. LEHMAN SAID THAT YAZOV MISSED NO OPPORTUNITY TO REPEAT THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS NOT THE ENEMY, THAT THEIR DOCTRINE WAS DEFENSIVE, AND THAT MORE DETAILED INFORMATION WOULD EMERGE WITH TIME. HE PROPOSED AN EXCHANGE OF DATA ON NATO/WARSAW PACT FORCES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONVENTIONAL BALANCE IN EUROPE. CARLUCCI REPLIED THAT

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THE PROPER FORUM FOR THIS WOULD BE THE CONVENTIONAL STABILITY TALKS IN VIENNA: THE U S WAS HOWEVER PREPARED TO DISCUSS U S AND SOVIET FORCES GLOBALLY.

9. TURNING TO ARMS CONTROL, LEHMAN SAID THAT CARLUCCI STRESSED THE NEED FOR A GOOD START AGREEMENT TO BE REACHED BEFORE THE MOSCOW SUMMIT, OR IF THIS WERE NOT POSSIBLE, IN 1988. BUT THE U S WAS NOT ENVISAGING ANY DEADLINES. ON SDI, CARLUCCI STRESSED THE ADVANTAGES OF PREDICTABILITY AND A CONFIDENCE-BUILDING REGIME. HE ALSO EMPHASISED THAT KRASNOYARSK WAS AN IMPORTANT ISSUE AND AN UNDOUBTED VIOLATION OF THE ABMT. THE RUSSIANS COUNTERED THAT IF THE U S DISMANTLED ITS INSTALLATION IN THULE, THEY WOULD DISMANTLE KRASNOYARSK: ALTERNATIVELY, BOTH INSTALLATIONS COULD REMAIN. THE U S REJECTED THIS LINKAGE. (LEHMAN COMMENTED THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE DEFENSIVE ON THIS POINT, YAZOV DENYING PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EXISTENCE OF KRASNOYARSK, AND CHERVOV REMAINING SILENT).

10. LEHMAN SAID THAT BOTH SIDES AGREED THAT INCREASED MILITARY/MILITARY TALKS WERE DESIRABLE: BUT CARLUCCI SAID THAT SCOPE AND PACE OF SUCH CONTACTS HAD TO REMAIN DEPENDENT ON FACTORS SUCH AS THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN, AND DANGEROUS SOVIET ACTIVITY. A MEASURED APPROACH WOULD BE ADOPTED. INCREASED ACCESS FOR ATTACHES, AND EXCHANGES AT DEFENCE COLLEGES MIGHT BE POSSIBLE: BUT IT WAS PREMATURE TO ENVISAGE SHIP VISITS OR EXCLUSIVELY SOCIAL CONTACT. CROW AND AKHROMEYEV WOULD CONSIDER THIS ASPECT ALSO AT THEIR MEETING LATER THIS YEAR.

11. ON REGIONAL ISSUES, LEHMAN SAID THAT YAZOV DID NOT ELABORATE ON THE CONDITIONS FOR OR THE TIMING OF WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN. ON NICARAGUA, CARLUCCI STRESSED THAT SOVIET EQUIPMENT WAS BEING USED TO INVAD A DEMOCRATIC STATE. THIS WAS DANGEROUS FOR THE REGIONAL PEACE PROCESS. YAZOV CLAIMED NOT TO BE WELL INFORMED.

12. IN CONCLUSION, LEHMAN SAID THAT YAZOV INVITED CARLUCCI TO VISIT MOSCOW.

13. LORD CARRINGTON ASKED ABOUT YAZOV'S PERSONALITY. LEHMAN SAID HE WAS VERY BRIGHT AND CONFIDENT: HE SHOWED NO ARROGANCE, AND APPEARED TO HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH JUNIOR COLLEAGUES.

14. SMITH (CANADA) ASKED WHETHER THE TWO SIDES HAD COMPARED THEIR ALERT SYSTEMS: AND WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN DISCUSSION OF RULES OF ENGAGEMENT. BOTH MIGHT BE SUITABLE SUBJECTS FOR A FUTURE MEETING. LEHMAN REPLIED THAT THE ONLY MENTION OF ALERT SYSTEMS WAS A

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REFERENCE BY CARLUCCI TO A CRISIS STABILITY PROPOSAL IN THE START CONTEXT. THE AGREEMENT ON NUCLEAR RISK REDUCTION CENTRES WAS BEING IMPLEMENTED. THE U S SIDE SUGGESTED NOTIFICATION OF ICBM/SLBM TESTS GOING BEYOND THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF NOTAMS. IN RESPONSE TO A SOVIET QUERY, THE U S REPLIED THAT EVEN TEST FIRINGS WHICH LANDED ON NATIONAL TERRITORY COULD GIVE RISE TO CONCERN. ON RULES OF ENGAGEMENT, CARLUCCI HAD SAID THAT THE RAMMING OF SHIPS WAS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE SIGNAL. YAZOV DENIED DETAILED KNOWLEDGE.

15. BERG (NORWAY) ASKED WHETHER FORCE LEVELS AND ASYMMETRIES HAD BEEN RAISED IN THE CONTEXT OF CST. LEHMAN SAID THAT THERE WAS NOT MUCH DISCUSSION OF CST. THE EXCHANGES ON DOCTRINE TOUCHED ASYMMETRIES, AND THE RUSSIANS SAID THEY WERE PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE ON THIS, AND BY IMPLICATION ON OTHER ISSUE SUCH AS DATA AND MILITARY BUDGETS.

16. ROBIN (FRANCE) ASKED WHETHER ANY CONCLUSION WAS REACHED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE DRAWBACKS OF AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON MILITARY DOCTRINE ON THE FRINGES OF THE CST: AND WHETHER THE RUSSIANS SEEMED TO BE IN A HURRY OVER START. LEHMAN SAID THAT THE RUSSIANS SAID LITTLE WHICH COULD DIRECTLY BE RELATED TO OTHER MEETINGS. IT WAS CLEAR THAT FOR THEM, THE FACT OF THE MEETING WITH CARLUCCI WAS THE IMPORTANT FACTOR. THEY TRIED TO SIDE-STEP CONTROVERSY. ON START, THEY REPEATED THE OFFICIAL LINE OF WANTING A TREATY IN TIME FOR THE SUMMIT. BUT THEY ACCEPTED THAT THIS COULD NOT BE GUARANTEED. THEIR OVERALL ATTITUDE WAS RESPONSIBLE.

17. HANSEN (FRG) ASKED WHETHER THE QUESTION OF DIRECT CONTACTS BETWEEN NATO AND THE WARSAW PACT, OR BETWEEN KULIKOV AND SACEUR, WAS RAISED: AND WHETHER THE RUSSIANS GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF REALLY BELIEVING IN THE EXISTENCE OF A NATO THREAT. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT MILITARY/MILITARY MEETINGS RAISED QUESTIONS WHICH OUGHT TO BE CLARIFIED WITHIN THE ALLIANCE WITH A VIEW TO A QUOTE MORE CONFORMIST UNQUOTE ALLIED POSITION. LEHMAN REPLIED THAT THE RUSSIANS DID NOT FEEL DIRECTLY THREATENED BY WESTERN EUROPE OR THE U S, ALTHOUGH THEY DID HAVE OTHER FEARS. BUT YAZOV ADDED THAT WHILE WESTERN FORCES EXISTED, THEY COULD NOT BUT BE A CAUSE OF CONCERN.

18. FOR THE UK, I SAID THAT HOWEVER GOOD THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE MEETING, CAUTION WAS NEEDED. ON MILITARY DOCTRINE, I RECALLED THAT THERE HAD BEEN AGREEMENT IN THE ALLIANCE TO WAIT FOR THE EAST TO RAISE THE SUBJECT. THE UK VIEW WAS THAT IF IT WERE TO BE DISCUSSED, WE SHOULD TIE THE EXCHANGES TO FORCE STRUCTURES AND DISPOSITIONS. ON MILITARY CONTACTS, I REFERRED TO THE POST-AFGHANISTAN GUIDELINES,

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AND NOTED THAT THE U S HAD ARRANGED VARIOUS CONTACTS. DID THIS REFLECT A CHANGE IN U S POLICY? IF SO, THE ALLIANCE SHOULD DISCUSS THE SITUATION. I ALSO ASKED ABOUT YAZOV'S COMPLAINTS RELATING TO U S MILITARY ACTIVITY: AND HOW LONG IT WAS LIKELY TO TAKE THE RUSSIANS TO PRODUCE CREDIBLE DEFENCE BUDGET FIGURES, AND INDEED WHETHER THEY WERE CAPABLE OF SUCH AN EXERCISE. LEHMAN REPLIED THAT THE MEETING WAS INTENDED AS A SERIOUS DISCUSSION. THE U S SIDE TRIED TO LINK THE EXCHANGES ON DOCTRINE TO FORCE STRUCTURES AND DISPOSITIONS. THE DATA DISCUSSED DID NOT GO BEYOND IISS FIGURES. ON MILITARY CONTACTS, CARLUCCI EMPHASISED THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE WIDER CONTEXT, ESPECIALLY AFGHANISTAN, BUT ALSO TO EVENTS SUCH AS THE NICHOLSON SHOOTING. A STEP BY STEP APPROACH WAS NECESSARY: OTHER THAN THE MEETINGS OF CROWE AND POSSIBLY OTIS, NO FURTHER IMMEDIATE STEPS WERE ENVISAGED. ON THE NICHOLSON SHOOTING, YAZOV SAID THAT THE INCIDENT TOOK PLACE BEFORE THIS TIME: BUT HE EXPRESSED REGRET, AND PROMISED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHEN GENERAL CHERVOV ACCOMPANIED SHEVARDNADZE TO WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK. LEHMAN SAID THAT YAZOV MADE NO SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS ABOUT U S ACTIVITY: BUT IN RESPONDING TO U S COMPLAINTS HE CLAIMED THAT THE AMERICANS HAD BROKEN THE RULES. CARLUCCI STRESSED AGAIN THAT BOTH SIDES SHOULD AGREE THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO POLICY OF SHOOTING TO KILL AND NO RAMMING OF SHIPS. ON THE PREPARATION OF BUDGET FIGURES, THE RUSSIANS SPOKE OF A TIME SCALE OF A FEW YEARS.

19. COMMENTING, LORD CARRINGTON SAID THAT THE ALLIANCE SHOULD BE CONSISTENT ON MILITARY CONTACTS. IF THERE WERE FUTURE U S/SOVIET CONTACTS, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE REST OF THE ALLIANCE TO HOLD TO THE UNDERTAKING TO AVOID THESE.

20. THUYSBAERT (BELGIUM) REFERRED TO TRADITIONAL SOVIET RELUCTANCE TO GIVE INFORMATION ON CONVENTIONAL FORCES. IT WAS CURIOUS THAT THE RUSSIANS NOW SEEMED WILLING TO GIVE THIS, BUT IN A BILATERAL FRAMEWORK OUTSIDE USUAL CHANNELS. LEHMAN SAID THAT IN HIS JUDGMENT THE RUSSIANS HAD BEEN READY IN PRINCIPLE TO BE OPEN, BUT UNABLE IN PRACTICE TO DO SO SINCE THEY HAD NO RELIABLE FIGURES. HE REITERATED THAT THEY HAD NOT GONE BEYOND IISS DATA.

21. ROBIN (FRANCE), REFERRING TO MY INTERVENTION, SAID THAT HE DID NOT SHARE THE BRITISH UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE HANDLING OF MILITARY DOCTRINE IN FUTURE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE EAST.

ALEXANDER

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