



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

12 May 1989

070
Dear Charles,

mr

ECPC
②
The Minister
A bit of an
old clerk mr.

Open Skies

The US Ambassador called on the Foreign Secretary on 11 May to inform us that, in a speech which he will make at Texas A and M University late today, President Bush will launch an initiative on "Open Skies".

CBP
12/5

Specifically, the US Ambassador said that the President would propose that unarmed aircraft of the United States and the Soviet Union be permitted to fly over the territory of the other country; that the other countries of NATO and the Warsaw Pact might join in this arrangement; and that those countries who wish to accept this invitation should meet soon to work out the necessary details.

I attach a copy of a speaking note which the Ambassador handed over. Mr Baker, who is debriefing the North Atlantic Council today on his visit to Moscow, is expected to explain further what the Americans have in mind.

In response to the Ambassador the Foreign Secretary said that, without prejudice to the merits of an "Open Skies" initiative, he wondered whether the way in which the Americans envisaged presenting it would necessarily extract the best PR mileage from the idea. Some members of the Alliance, including even those who might be sympathetic in substance, would find it odd that they were being informed about it only a day in advance; and there might be a risk of a fragmented Allied response whereby some European countries accepted the US invitation to discuss the details of an Open Skies regime, whereas others did not. Might it not be preferable for President Bush to present the idea as something which he intended to raise with his Allies at the forthcoming NATO Summit, with a view to possible promulgation with the Soviet Union thereafter; rather than as an initiative addressed to the Soviet Union in which other Allies were invited, almost as an afterthought, to participate?



We reinforced this message about the presentational aspects of such an initiative in Washington in the course of yesterday. Meanwhile the Prime Minister may wish to have the following initial views on the substance and handling of the idea.

Background

Open Skies was originally a proposal made by President Eisenhower in the run up to the abortive Geneva Summit of 1955. Essentially, it involves the offering on a reciprocal basis of over-flight rights in order to permit the monitoring, visually, photographically or electronically, of military activities. The idea has obvious political attraction as an illustration of the Western commitment to transparency in the military field; and as a challenge to the Soviet Union to match its professed commitment to glasnost with deeds. In recent contacts with the Americans at official level the idea was canvassed by them as a possible Western initiative at the NATO Summit. It appears, however, that the Americans are unwilling to wait for the Summit before promulgating the proposal in a multilateral context, but prefer to present it earlier as a bilateral initiative.

An Open Skies regime could apply either bilaterally between the United States and the Soviet Union; or multilaterally between NATO and the Warsaw Pact; or, conceivably, between all 35 countries participating in the CSCE process. (The likelihood of achieving a global regime at any early date is small.) It would be axiomatic in any NATO/Warsaw Pact regime that the over-flight rights, both in terms of obligations and entitlements, would be equitably shared and would apply to the totality of the territory involved including the whole of continental America and the whole of the Soviet Union.

It would be necessary in any such regime to stipulate conditions on altitude, frequency of flights, notification periods, refuelling/landing rights and types of aircraft permitted. It might also be necessary to agree restrictions on equipment to be carried, the need for escorts and the avoidance of certain sensitive areas.

Advantages and disadvantages

The benefits to the Alliance of an Open Skies regime derive from the enhanced opportunities to over-fly Warsaw Pact territory, much of which is at present closed to access. This would provide material additional to satellite photography which could bring increased



confidence about our ability to detect unusual military activity. It could also assist in the verification of arms control agreements. In particular we would be better placed to detect concentration of forces or preparations for mobilisation; to confirm the accuracy of military information supplied by the Warsaw Pact; and to monitor stocks, military activities, production rates, locations of military headquarters etc.

The principal drawback is the reciprocal access which Warsaw Pact governments would have in respect of Western territory. But given the open nature of our societies, it is already relatively easy for the Warsaw Pact to monitor NATO's military activities. Such degradation in security as there might be would probably be limited to specific sites, electronic and other emissions from which might have to be closed down at certain moments. We would also need to watch the implications for the use of air space (though whether this proved to be a real problem would depend on the frequency and number of such over-flights as was agreed); and costs (though these could be alleviated if shared on an Alliance-wide basis).

In terms of presentation, the Foreign Secretary sees some difficulties if we are seen to be looking for this sort of openness from the East at the same time as we are trying to convince European opinion of the importance of modernising NATO's SNF.

We shall make further recommendations on handling in the light of the US announcement. But the Foreign Secretary thinks we cannot now do less than welcome the initiative as a challenge to greater openness in East/West relations and look forward to discussing it in greater detail with the US and other Allies.

I am send a copy of this letter to Brian Hawtin in the MOD and to Trevor Woolley in the Cabinet Office.

Jans,
Steph Wall
 (J S Wall)
 Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
 10 Downing Street

SECRET

PRESIDENT BUSH'S "OPEN SKIES" INITIATIVE

-- President Bush will announce an important initiative in his commencement speech at 3:00 PM EDT (8:00 PM London time) Friday, May 12, at Texas A and M University. Secretary Baker will brief the North Atlantic Council about it tomorrow.

--We would appreciate it if this information could be closely held until after the speech.

-- The President plans to renew and expand President Eisenhower's proposal for "Open Skies," which would allow unarmed aircraft of the United States and the Soviet Union to fly over the territory of the other country, but on a broader, more radical basis.

-- Specifically, the President will propose that not only the U.S. and Soviet Union, but also the other countries of the North Atlantic Alliance and the Warsaw Pact, join in this arrangement.

-- The President will suggest that those countries which wish to accept this invitation meet soon to work out the necessary technical details, separately from any ongoing negotiations.

-- He will explain that such flights would provide regular scrutiny for both sides, and that such unprecedented territorial access would show the world the meaning of the Western concept of openness -- a concept as central to Western values today as it was in President Eisenhower's time.

-- Last, he will note that Soviet willingness to embrace such a concept would reveal much about their commitment to a fundamentally different relationship.

May 11, 1989

SECRET

100-100



12 V
AM 9