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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

28 November 1988

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Richard Hunter

CDP 20/11

Dear Charles,

Prime Minister's visit to France: 30 November:
Anglo/French Defence Cooperation

Our letter of 25 November provided briefing for the Prime Minister's meeting with President Mitterrand on 30 November. Since then we have learned from the Embassy in Paris that President Mitterrand may raise his exchange of correspondence with the Prime Minister on bilateral defence cooperation.

President Mitterrand wrote to the Prime Minister on 6 October 1987 suggesting some areas of possible bilateral cooperation in nuclear defence matters. The Prime Minister replied on 12 January that there was further scope for Anglo/French cooperation and that she welcomed discussions between Mr Younger and the then French Defence Minister, M Giraud, on nuclear defence matters. The Prime Minister also said that inevitably our two countries approached some matters from different viewpoints: France was not a member of NATO's Integrated Military Structure. President Mitterrand appears to have interpreted this as indicating a lack of substantial interest, despite the fact that the Prime Minister put forward three extremely constructive ideas for conventional defence cooperation (exercises in NORTHAG; exercise of the lines of communication through France; more maritime cooperation). My separate letter of 25 November covers the follow up to these proposals.

If President Mitterrand refers to nuclear cooperation, we recommend that the Prime Minister confirms that we very much value the links which have been established over the last two years in the nuclear area. MOD officials continue to have valuable talks with their French counterparts on nuclear matters including on:-

- the philosophy of targetting strategic nuclear weapons;
- intelligence exchange on Soviet air defences and anti-ballistic missile defences;
- design concepts for a tactical air to surface missile;
- nuclear security; and
- a range of other scientific and technical topics.

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There are limits: we could not, for example, undertake to coordinate our nuclear targetting with the French given that our forces are assigned to NATO. Nevertheless, there may well be scope for cooperation in other areas, such as the better coordination of the patrols of British and French nuclear armed submarines. Officials are already pursuing this in consultation with the US.

President Mitterrand may also express disappointment that we have ruled out Anglo/French cooperation on the tactical air to surface missile (TASM) to succeed the WE177 nuclear bomb. As Mr Younger explained frankly to M Chevenement, the French system on offer (ASMP) did not meet the range requirement for TASM, nor were any variants of it likely to do so; it would also have been dated technology by the time we wanted a missile in service. But we have made clear to the French that we have no hang-ups about the principle of cooperating over theatre nuclear systems; and that we wish to stay close to them on their next generation of stand-off missile which may be of future interest. MOD officials had a briefing on French plans last month and will be meeting their French counterparts again next Spring.

I am copying this letter to Brian Hawtin (Ministry of Defence) and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

however

L Parker

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FRANCE: PM'S VISUS pls

