

Prime Minister



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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London SW1A 2AH

26 July 1991

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Dear Stephen,

Anglo-French Summit: Follow-up on Defence Issues

Plan. →

Your record of the Dunkirk Summit on 24 June shows clearly the remoteness of President Mitterrand from many of the points at issue in the IGC and NATO debates. On defence, he clearly resents and misunderstands the decisions of the DPC on the formation of a NATO Rapid Reaction Corps drawing the conclusion that we are moving further apart and that the prospects for defence cooperation in the WEU are receding. He also seems to have convinced Chancellor Kohl that this is an obstacle to France's closer participation in NATO (my letter to you of 16 July). President Mitterrand seems unaware of our efforts over several months to engage the French in reforming NATO and developing practical defence cooperation between the Europeans.

President Mitterrand's attitude is particularly worrying because it reflects more than short term resentment of the decision to set up a Rapid Reaction Corps. Sir Ewen Fergusson has commented that it also reflects the President's domestic difficulties and the acute dilemma which French defence policy now faces following changes in East-West relations, especially the changed status of Germany. The mix of paralysis, tetchiness and dogmatism, which President Mitterrand apparently also demonstrated in his meeting with Chancellor Kohl on 25 June, does not augur well for the NATO Summit and Maastricht. The prospects are for a minimal compromise, with a token commitment in the Treaty to a European defence policy matched by a largely empty commitment to develop practical defence cooperation. The risk is not that this would threaten NATO in the short term, but that the French would be left after Maastricht still sulking outside the NATO military structure, and using the cover of even a distant defence role for the Twelve to divert discussion into this forum where, they would say, the Europeans can take into their own decisions.

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Though French re-integration is not on the cards, we want to see them as much as possible associated with decisions in NATO and the IGC in the Autumn which will in effect keep NATO at the heart of European defence. This does not require us to run after the French, nor does it require that France reintegrates with NATO. We need both to bring the French back into a constructive dialogue on defence issues in the Autumn, but also to be prepared if necessary to work round them with other allies like the Portuguese, Dutch, Italians and hopefully the Germans, to produce the right Treaty and Rome Summit language.

The Foreign Secretary thinks it important however, after Dunkirk, to try to re-engage the President personally. In France he is the key figure on whom we must concentrate. His Defence and Foreign Ministers have little influence on defence and strategic policy. We are not getting through to the President via his officials, though we should continue to make the fullest use of this new channel. The Foreign Secretary therefore thinks that there is a strong case for following up last month's discussion with a personal message from the Prime Minister to Mitterrand, setting out the principles on the basis of which we would be willing to agree a common approach with the French to the NATO Summit and the IGC with a view to ministerial meetings and a further discussion with Mitterrand himself in the Autumn. The attached draft concentrates on the fundamentals rather than details of our approach. If we can convince the President that there is scope for such a deal at the end of the day, the prospects for progress will be greatly improved. It would also be useful to put the Prime Minister's weight behind the proposals we have made for a further round of official talks and the meeting of Foreign and Defence Ministers between now and the NATO and IGC summits.

I am sending copies of this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,
Richard Sney
(R H T Gozney)
Private Secretary

J S Wall Esq
10 Downing Street

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From the Private Secretary

30 July 1991

Dear Richard

ANGLO-FRENCH SUMMIT: FOLLOW-UP ON DEFENCE ISSUES

Thank you for your letter of 26 July enclosing a draft message from the Prime Minister to President Mitterrand.

The Prime Minister thought the draft a good one and is content with it, subject only to the minor amendment shown on the attached copy.

I should be grateful if you could arrange for the message to be delivered. There will be no signed original.

I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence) and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

Jans.
Stephen

J S WALL

R H T Gozney Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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DRAFT LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER

TO: PRESIDENT MITTERRAND

Dear Mr President,

I greatly valued the chance to cover a wide range of issues with you in Dunkirk on 24 June.

I have been reflecting further on our discussion of the defence aspects and believe this is a subject to which Britain and France should return in the Autumn. I believe that Britain and France, as key players in the European defence debate and as nuclear powers, are not as far apart as you seemed to think and that we have a joint role to play over the longer term in shaping the future defence arrangements for Europe. I am convinced that if there is to be a satisfactory conclusion to the Inter-Governmental Conference on Political Union in this area it will have to be on a basis agreed between the two of us.

My aim, which I believe you share, is to find a lasting synthesis between the European and Atlantic dimensions of our security. Both will be vital to the stability of our continent in the potentially dangerous transition through which it is likely to pass in the nineties. We cannot afford to risk undermining NATO for an uncertain European alternative. The defence of Europe without US involvement would lack credibility. But equally I strongly share your desire to see Europeans taking more responsibility for their own defence; and NATO will not flourish unless it takes account of this political fact. Britain has therefore been trying to press for genuine reforms of NATO to open the way for much greater European cooperation within that framework, while at the same time proposing practical ways of giving operational roles to the WEU in areas where NATO itself is not engaged.

The arrangements now being established for a new Alliance force structure, comprising main defence forces, reaction forces and augmentation forces, are designed to underpin Alliance roles and responsibilities agreed between us all at the Copenhagen Ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council. These forces including the

Rapid Reaction Corps, to which the UK will be the major contributor, are for the defence of NATO territory. In no way do they stop us from creating other roles for European forces, such as a European Reaction Force, in which I would see France and Britain playing the leading part. The door is also open to other possibilities in the WEU such as the space proposals which Britain has agreed to support in the context of practical European defence cooperation in other areas.

Over the past several months, in contacts between our Ambassadors at NATO and representatives in the WEU, we have been seeking French views on these important matters. As the reform of NATO continues in areas such as force and command structures during the rest of this year and beyond, there will be scope for further important changes but only insofar as we Europeans are prepared to participate and contribute the necessary forces to justify them.

I well understand your concern that the IGC on political union should convey a clear message about the long term evolution of a European defence policy as part of the process of political union. I can conceive of ways in which this could be achieved. But to state the goal with no guidelines for the shorter term would lead us into difficulties. The challenge is to ensure that the outcome is compatible with the functions and structures of the reformed Alliance, and that it does not make it harder, in due course, for us to retain the US commitment, to guarantee the security of a non-nuclear Germany and to handle the security problems which we will face in Eastern Europe during this decade. I attach very great importance to working with you to find a way of expressing - in the Treaty and in practice - our joint aspirations for a European defence identity on these lines.

I look forward to a further discussion on all of this at our next meeting. Meanwhile I would like to propose that Foreign and Defence Ministers should meet together in ^{the} early ~~October~~ ^{autumn} to review our bilateral cooperation and discuss our approaches to the important meetings which will take place at the end of the year.

With best wishes,

John

