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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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SECRETARY OF STATE

MO 26/3/1G

28th

November 1991

Dear Stephen

VISIT OF PRESIDENT MITTERAND: 2ND DECEMBER 1991

THE FUTURE FRIGATE

In your letter of 23rd November to Christopher Prentice, you asked for a form of words for inclusion in the press line on the prospect of co-operation between the UK and France on a future frigate. We suggest the following:

The President and Prime Minister welcomed the agreement by their Defence Ministers to begin exploratory work on joint project for an anti-air warfare frigate to enter service early in the next decade. They noted that this work marked a new milestone in Anglo-French defence co-operation.

As requested, I also attach a line to take and background note on the project for the Prime Minister's use, together with a copy of the full press release that has been agreed with the French Ministry of Defence and from which the piece for the communique is drawn. The full release is too long for inclusion in the line at the end of the talks and we would propose to issue it as an MOD press release to complement the Summit press line.

As I cautioned in my letter of 14th November, you should not overestimate the importance of the current position. There is no Anglo/French frigate project as yet, and a number of difficult issues remain to be resolved before we can move (hopefully) to a co-operative programme with French in 1993.

I will deal separately with M.Joxe's Cabinet on the timing of the full press release.

J S Wall LVO CMG
10 Downing Street



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NUCLEAR ASSISTANCE TO THE SOVIET UNION

Separately, you may know that we are considering the feasibility of offering assistance to the Soviet Union in the nuclear field in order to try to reduce the risks of proliferation of nuclear weapons and expertise as central authority ebbs away. The Defence Secretary raised his concerns on this issue in the Debate on the Adjournment last Friday; and intends to minute colleagues shortly with proposals. One idea is for the West to pay for Soviet nuclear scientists to stay in the area dismantling their own weapons (rather than taking their expertise elsewhere).

The detail would need close co-ordination with the Americans. It would follow-up their programme, initiated with President Bush's nuclear initiative in September, for which Congress has now provided funding. The Prime Minister might wish to give President Mitterand an indication of our thinking (especially if President Mitterand returns to his proposal which we did not favour that the four nuclear powers meet to discuss technical control of nuclear weapons). A line to take is attached.

I am copying this letter to Christopher Prentice (FCO), Robert Canniff (Lord Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster), Tim Sutton (Lord President) and Martin Stanley (Trade and Industry) and to Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

V
When ready
John Galt

(MISS J R BINSTAD)
Private Secretary



VISIT OF PRESIDENT MITTERAND: 2 DECEMBER 1991
THE FUTURE FRIGATE

Line to Take

- Pleased that work is under way on a new prospect for Anglo-French co-operation.
- Feel sure both sides will work with determination and purpose to achieve a successful outcome.

Background

The UK and France have a requirement for a new anti-air warfare frigate to enter service early in the next decade. Work carried out jointly by both sides has confirmed that a co-operative project may be feasible.

UK and French Defence Ministers have exchanged letters which set out the basis for a further phase of work. This work is now underway and is aimed at developing a Joint Staff Requirement that is affordable and acceptable to both Nations, and the negotiation of a Memorandum of Understanding to cover the procurement arrangements for any subsequent phase that might be agreed.

A number of difficult issues need to be resolved before it can be confirmed that a co-operative programme offers best value for money.

DRAFT PQ FOR FUTURE FRIGATE ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr..... to ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his plans for a replacement for the Type 42 destroyer.

I am pleased to announce that the Secretary of State for Defence has reached agreement with M. Pierre Joxe, his French counterpart, on the basis for a phase of preparatory work to establish the scope for a cooperative programme for an Anti-Air Warfare Frigate to enter service early in the next decade.

Work has already commenced and is expected to last about eighteen months. The outcome of this phase will enable a final decision on the development of the frigate to be taken in 1993.

A copy of the press announcement has been placed in the Library.

THE FUTURE FRIGATE - PRESS RELEASE

A new milestone has been reached in Anglo-French co-operation with the recent exchange of letters between the Rt Hon Tom King MP, Secretary of State for Defence and M. Pierre Joxe, his French opposite number.

Both Ministers have agreed to begin exploratory work lasting about eighteen months on a joint project for a future anti-air warfare frigate to enter service early in the next decade.

The new frigate would be equipped with anti-air missiles of the FAMS programme. Its task would be escorting and protecting maritime forces in the Atlantic or elsewhere.

This bilateral initiative concludes a series of discussions initiated one year ago, and follows a Joint Statement of Need by the two navies and a Joint Technical Report on the feasibility of a co-operative programme.

Both countries recognize the potential benefits of co-operation through standardization, rationalization and interoperability of equipments. A number of difficult issues will need to be addressed in this next phase of work, but the two Ministers are determined that every effort shall be made to resolve them. The outcome of this phase will enable a final decision on the development of the frigate to be taken in 1993.

The participation of the other nations co-operating on FAMS remains an option for any subsequent phase.

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SECRETARY OF STATE

VISIT OF PRESIDENT MITTERAND: 2ND DECEMBER

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION FROM SOVIET UNION

Line to Take

- Share your concerns about safeguarding Soviet nuclear weapons. New worries that Soviet nuclear scientists might be attracted away by emerging nuclear powers.
- Looking at possible practical assistance the West could give (eg. helping keep their scientists employed, especially on dismantling their surplus weapons). May want to discuss a French/UK/US programme as part of G7 aid.



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