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B.0268

MR POWELL

CDR 23/4

c Mr Woolley

IDU Conference in Berlin

In your letter of 7 September to Mr Parker, you asked for briefing for M. Chirac's meeting with the Prime Minister at the IDU Conference on 24/25 September. I enclose a brief on the bilateral dialogue on nuclear weapons matters, in case M. Chirac should raise the subject. There is no need for the Prime Minister to do so.

CLG

C L G Mallaby

23 September 1987

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ANGLO-FRENCH DIALOGUE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS MATTERSOur objective

1. To reiterate support for the continuing Anglo-French dialogue on certain nuclear weapons matters.

Arguments to use

2.
 - a. Common interests of United Kingdom and France as European nuclear powers.
 - b. Right that our dialogue should continue to develop.
 - c. Glad that, following agreement between Defence Ministers on agenda, contacts between officials have begun.
 - d. (If question of collaboration on sub-strategic weapons is suggested.) No immediate requirement to replace United Kingdom sub-strategic nuclear weapons. But preliminary thought being given to number of possible successor systems and wish to explore every option. As you know, current French system (ASMP) does not meet our requirement (range too short). But understand that French officials have offered a presentation on technical aspects of plans for second generation version. British officials would be interested to hear this and look forward to receiving invitation.
 - e. (If needed). Good progress being made on Trident programme. Firmly on target to become operational in the mid-1990s.

BACKGROUND

1. The Defence Secretary agreed in March 1987 with the French Defence Minister, M. Giraud, an agenda for bilateral exchanges by officials on certain nuclear weapons matters. Officials have held preliminary talks and plan a series of meetings to follow up the agreed agenda.
2. When M. Chirac saw the Prime Minister at Chequers on 26 April, he raised the question of Anglo-French defence co-operation. In particular, he suggested that the United Kingdom might buy the French short-range air-to-ground nuclear missile (ASMP) for its Tornado aircraft. The Prime Minister replied that the range of the ASMP missile was too short for our purposes but that we would like to be kept in touch with any plans to develop a longer range version.
3. In subsequent contacts between British and French officials, the French have appeared to recognise the limitations of ASMP. They have suggested that the United Kingdom and France should jointly consider future development of an air-to-ground nuclear missile, and have offered a technical presentation on their plans for a successor to their present system. British doubts about the specification of the French system remain, but officials would be interested to hear what the French have to say and they await an invitation to the promised presentation.

GERMANY

PM'S VISIT

PT 7

