

SECRET

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FROM UKDEL NATO 081008Z FEB 85
 TO IMMEDIATE FCO
 TELEGRAM NUMBER 29 OF 9 FEBRUARY
 AND TO IMMEDIATE MODUK (FOR DACU AND ACDS POL/NUC) PRIORITY
 WASHINGTON PARIS BONN BRUSSELS THE HAGUE

12

SS20 NUMBERS

1. AT TODAY'S MEETING OF THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP PERLE ANNOUNCED THAT THE 5TH SS20 BASE AT THE YURYA COMPLEX HAD BEEN DISMANTLED. NO NEW BASE HAS YET BECOME OPERATIONAL. THE NUMBER OF SS20S AT OPERATIONAL BASES HAS THEREFORE REDUCED TO 387. 27 LAUNCHERS FROM DISMANTLED BASES WERE ASSESSED TO BE EN ROUTE TO NEW SITES. THESE WERE OPERATIONAL WHEN MOBILE. THE NUMBER OF SS20S WHICH HAD BEEN OR WERE RECENTLY OPERATIONAL WAS THEREFORE 396 - 414.
2. PERLE PROPOSED THAT RATHER THAN LOWER THE PUBLICLY GIVEN FIGURE FOR SS20S WE SHOULD MAINTAIN THE CURRENT NUMBER (396). BUT WITHOUT EXPLICITLY LINKING THIS TO MISSILES AT OPERATIONAL BASES. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS US SPOKESMEN WOULD SAY THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO CHANGE SINCE THE LAST BRIEFINGS GIVEN BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCG. THEY WOULD STRESS THAT THERE WERE AT LEAST 396 SS20S AND THAT AT LEAST 10 FURTHER BASES WERE UNDER CONSTRUCTION. THIS ISSUE NEEDED TO BE HANDLED (PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO THE NETHERLANDS) WITH EXTREME CARE TO AVOID ANY MISPERCEPTION THAT WE WERE MANIPULATING THE NUMBERS.
3. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FROM VAN DER PUT (NETHERLANDS) THE US CONFIRMED THAT UNLESS THERE WAS A DRAMATIC CHANGE IN THE PATTERN OF SOVIET CONSTRUCTION 2 OR 3 NEW BASES WOULD BECOME OPERATIONAL VERY SHORTLY. PERLE ADDED THAT WE WERE NOW OBSERVING A FORETASTE OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF ACCOUNTING FOR MOBILE MISSILE SYSTEMS WHEN THE NORMAL PATTERN OF OPERATING FROM RECOGNISABLE BASES WAS DEPARTED FROM. WE WOULD IN THE FUTURE HAVE TO ASSESS THAT THERE WERE MORE MISSILES THAN COULD BE SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED. THE SOVIET UNION WOULD PROBABLY BE ABLE TO DEPLOY OPERATIONALLY A SIGNIFICANTLY LARGER NUMBER OF SS20S THAN THOSE WHICH WERE CLEARLY OBSERVED AT SITES IN THE TRADITIONAL MANNER. IT WOULD BE QUITE POSSIBLE TO SUPPORT SS20 UNITS CLANDESTINELY UNDER COVER AWAY FROM THEIR BASES.
4. THERE WAS NO OTHER COMMENT. PERLE'S INTERVENTION INDICATES THAT THE U.S. NOW ACCEPT THAT THIS IS GOING TO BE A VERY TRICKY ISSUE ON WHICH CAREFUL AND CONSISTENT HANDLING IN THE ALLIANCE IS GOING TO BE NEEDED, PARTICULARLY PRIOR TO THE FINAL DUTCH DEPLOYMENT DECISION NEXT AUTUMN.

GRAHAM

LIMITED.

DEF D
 ACDD
 NAD
 WED
 PUSD
 PLANNING STAFF
 PS
 PSI/MK RIFKIND

PSI/PUS
 MR GODDARD
 MR WESTON
 MR DEREK THOMAS
 MR JENKINS
 MR DAVID THOMAS

COPIES TO:

MR CARTLEDGE
 CAB OFF.
 MR POWELL NO10
 DOWNING ST

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