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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

6 June 1990

Dear Charles,

START: UK Interests *at the end*

Thank you for your letter of 4 June enclosing President Bush's message on last week's Summit in Washington. You asked for advice on President Gorbachev's proposals on the non-circumvention language, START and on British and French involvement in follow-on negotiations to the START agreement. You will have since seen Washington telegram no 1327 which gives further background.

The Summit discussions on non-circumvention follow up those held in the margins of the Baker/Shevardnadze meeting last month when the Americans tabled language (acceptable to us, my letter of 18 May) which the Russians took away to study. We and the Americans have been working on the assumption that the Russians have known all along that they cannot win on the non-circumvention issue, just as they cannot in the foreseeable future embroil UK and French systems in START II.

The Russians' claim that they did not realise co-operation would extend beyond Trident II and could encompass systems other than SLBMs is therefore unexpected and unwelcome. It suggests they see this as an issue where obstructionism may still pay off. President Gorbachev apparently sees this as a significant problem to be discussed within START, and there is a danger now that the question of US/UK nuclear co-operation could become a major issue in START in the run-up to signature of the Treaty (something we have all along tried to avoid for domestic as well as foreign policy reasons).

As the Embassy in Washington report (para 6 of their telegram) the Americans responded unambiguously in rejecting the Soviet proposals on non-circumvention. The telegram confirms what the Americans have told us all along: that if the Russians tried to use non-circumvention as a way to circumscribe US/UK nuclear co-operation, there would be no treaty.

SECRET



As the Embassy reports, the Americans advise against our tackling the Russians ourselves on the non-circumvention problem since this might cut across US/Soviet discussions in the START context. This argument has also led Scowcroft to amend President Bush's original recommendation that the Prime Minister should make clear that "nuclear co-operation between the US and the United Kingdom poses no threat to Soviet strategic interests".

The Foreign Secretary accepts the US view that it is for the Americans to sort out the non-circumvention issue in START. For us to become involved in actual negotiations would complicate matters and perhaps give the Russians scope to play us against the US. He suggests, however, that the Prime Minister should make her thinking clear to President Gorbachev on both non-circumvention and START II. It would be interesting, as an indication of the strength of Soviet feelings, to wait and see whether Gorbachev raises these issues. But even if he does not, the Prime Minister might say that:

- we congratulate the Russians and Americans on progress in START negotiations so far; - she is aware in detail of US-Soviet discussions on non-circumvention; no wish to cut across bilateral negotiations but may be helpful to make the position clear;

- she and President Bush are absolutely committed to continuing our present arrangements and rejecting any third party constraints on our nuclear cooperation in the future;

- HMG's aim is to sustain an independent deterrent at minimum level (hence the public commitment not to exceed 128 warheads on each of the four boats);

- on START II, HMG's position is unchanged (text from 1990 Defence estimates attached);

- President Gorbachev's comment to President Bush that we would participate in START after Soviet and US arsenals were cut by 50% is not correct. UK Ministers in the early 80s said that negotiations would have to go well beyond the 50% envisaged as the objective of START before the UK's deterrent could become involved;



- because of increases on the Soviet side, the ratio of UK to Soviet warheads, even after the implementation of START and the introduction of Trident, will be less than 10% - a smaller proportion of Soviet strategic nuclear forces than Polaris when it was introduced in 1970;

- our position is, with minor nuances, shared by France. President Mitterrand has made clear that he, like us, sees no case for involvement in START II.

MOD agree with this advice. I am copying this letter to Simon Webb (MOD), Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office) and Sir Percy Cradock.

Jan,

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COPENHAGEN FOR PRIVATE SECRETARY
MODUK FOR DUSP, ACDS (POL-NUC), AND DACU
MY TELNO 1235 : START : BRITISH INTERESTS
SUMMARY

1. DISCUSSION OF NON-CIRCUMVENTION AT SUMMIT GOES BADLY. RUSSIANS ARGUE THAT US/UK COOPERATION SHOULD BE RESTRICTED TO THE CURRENT TRIDENT D5 PROGRAMME AND NOT EXTEND BEYOND IT. AMERICANS STANDING RESOLUTE ON THE POSITION AGREED PREVIOUSLY WITH US. ASSURANCES THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO SAFEGUARD UK INTERESTS. RECOMMENDATION ON WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER SHOULD RAISE THE MATTER WITH GORBACHEV IN KIEV.

DETAIL

2. IN RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST FOR AN EARLY READOUT ON HOW NON-CIRCUMVENTION FIGURED DURING THE SUMMIT, BARTHOLOMEW ASKED ME TO CALL ON 4 JUNE. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A FULL US TEAM (SEITZ, CLARKE, AND TIMBIE).

3. BARTHOLOMEW SAID THAT THE AMERICANS HAD WORKED THROUGHOUT THE SUMMIT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK THAT HAD BEEN AGREED WITH US PREVIOUSLY. THEY HAD SUSTAINED THE TEXTS FOR THE TREATY ARTICLE, AGREED STATEMENT AND US SPEAKING NOTE AS GIVEN IN MY TELNOS 1167/1168, THE LANGUAGE OF WHICH REMAINED UNCHANGED. THIS STILL REPRESENTED AN ACHIEVEMENT, PARTICULARLY AS IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT A REFERENCE TO THE NON-APPLICABILITY OF THE TREATY TO EXISTING PATTERNS OF COOPERATION HAD BEEN INCLUDED IN THE TREATY TEXT ITSELF, AS OPPOSED TO A SUBSIDIARY STATEMENT. THE RUSSIANS HAD NOT CHALLENGED THE LANGUAGE, NOR ATTEMPTED TO INTRODUCE SQUARE BRACKETS, BUT THEY HAD SOUGHT TO RE-INTERPRET THE MEANING OF THESE QUOTE EXISTING PATTERNS OF COOPERATION UNQUOTE IN THE RESTRICTED WAY WHICH WE HAD FEARED.

4. IN THE OPENING SESSION WITH BARTHOLOMEW, KARPOV HAD MADE A GREAT DISPLAY, FEIGNING SUDDEN DISCOVERY THAT US/UK COOPERATION DID NOT END WITH TRIDENT II AND COULD ENCOMPASS SYSTEMS OTHER THAN SLBMS. THAT SAID BARTHOLOMEW WAS CLEAR

PREVARICATION, SINCE THE NATURE OF THE COOPERATION HAD BEEN KNOWN TO THE RUSSIANS ALL ALONG (AND HAD BEEN SPELT OUT MOST RECENTLY TO NAZARKIN BY BURT IN GENEVA ONLY A FEW MONTHS AGO). BARTHOLOMEW ADDED THAT HE HAD TAKEN KARPOV ASIDE TO ASK WHAT WAS GOING ON. KARPOV HALF CONCEDED THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE COMING TO THIS LATE, BUT CLAIMED THAT NAZARKIN IN GENEVA HAD NOT APPRECIATED ALL THE POLITICAL ANGLES, NOTABLY THAT UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, THE SUPREME SOVIET COULD FOCUS ON US/UK COOPERATION AS A MAJOR DEFECT. BARTHOLOMEW SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN VERY DIRECT AND FIRM IN MAKING IT CLEAR TO KARPOV THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT ENTER INTO A TREATY WHICH BOUNDED AND LIMITED COOPERATION WITH THE UK IN THE WAY THAT KARPOV WAS SUGGESTING. IT WOULD BE, HE HAD SAID, A TREATY BLOCKER.

5. DESPITE THIS, THE RUSSIANS HAD GONE ON TO RAISE THE SUBJECT AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL. GORBACHEV REFERRED TO IT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT AS AN UNEXPECTED PROBLEM WHICH THE RUSSIANS HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY UNDERSTOOD. BARTHOLOMEW HAD YET TO REVIEW THE RECORDS OF THE MEETING IN DETAIL, BUT HE RECALLED GORBACHEV AS SAYING THAT AN OPEN-ENDED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UK CHALLENGED THE NEGOTIATING LOGIC OF WHAT WAS BEING DONE IN START. SHEVARDNADZE HAD MADE A PITCH TO BAKER IN SIMILAR TERMS.

6. THROUGHOUT THE MEETINGS THE AMERICAN RESPONSE HAD BEEN CONSISTENT: THAT A REDEFINITION OF EXISTING PATTERNS OF COOPERATION TO EXCLUDE FOLLOW-ONS OR MODERNISATION WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO THE UNITED STATES: THAT IT WAS CREATING A PROBLEM WHERE ESSENTIALLY NONE EXISTED (IN THE SENSE THAT THE UK DID NOT ASPIRE TO BE A SUPER POWER): AND THAT IF THE RUSSIANS PERSISTED, THERE WOULD BE NO TREATY. BARTHOLOMEW ADDED (THOUGH IT WAS NOT CLEAR THAT THESE POINTS WERE SPECIFICALLY CONVEYED BY BAKER AND BUSH) THAT IF THE RUSSIAN POSITION WAS CONCEDED, IT COULD NOT ONLY DAMAGE RELATIONS WITH OURSELVES BUT WOULD ALSO AMOUNT TO THE SUBORDINATION OF THE UNITED STATES' ENTIRE NATO RELATIONSHIP TO THAT WITH THE SOVIET UNION. HE SAID THAT THERE COULD BE NO DOUBT THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD BEEN GIVEN AN UNEQUIVOCAL MESSAGE. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD NO INTEREST IN PUTTING US UNDER ANY KIND OF PRESSURE ON THIS SUBJECT.

7. BARTHOLOMEW SAID THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD SOUGHT TO PLAY THIS LOW-KEY IN PUBLIC, WITH REASONABLE SUCCESS SO FAR. HE CONCEDED THAT BAKER HAD MENTIONED COOPERATION WITH THE UK AS ONE OF THE REMAINING PROBLEMS IN START DURING HIS PRESS CONFERENCE ON 1 JUNE, BUT SAID THAT THIS HAD BEEN

UNINTENTIONAL AND HAD HAPPENED ONLY BECAUSE BARTHOLOMEW HAD BEEN UNABLE TO REACH BAKER IN TIME TO WARN HIM OFF. NO FURTHER STATEMENTS WERE ENVISAGED.

8. I ASKED BARTHOLOMEW AND SEITZ FOR THEIR VIEWS ON WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER SHOULD CONSIDER RAISING THIS WITH GORBACHEV IN KIEV LATER THIS WEEK. THEIR INITIAL INCLINATION, WITHOUT HAVING DISCUSSED THIS MORE WIDELY WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION WAS TO RECOMMEND AGAINST DOING SO. SEITZ SAID THAT IT COULD MAKE MORE OF A PROBLEM THAN CURRENTLY EXISTED. BARTHOLOMEW ARGUED THAT IT RAN THE RISK OF CREATING A TRIANGULAR DISCUSSION ABOUT A TREATY WHICH WAS STRICTLY BILATERAL AND THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD PROBABLY BE IN OUR MUTUAL INTEREST TO KEEP IT THAT WAY. CLARKE SUGGESTED THAT IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO WAIT AND SEE WHETHER GORBACHEV RAISED THIS SUBJECT HIMSELF, AS A TEST OF HOW SERIOUSLY HE REGARDED IT.

9. SUBSEQUENTLY SCOWCROFT TELEPHONED ME TO SAY THAT, ON FURTHER CONSIDERATION (NO DOUBT AFTER CONSULTATION WITH STATE DEPARTMENT) HIS OWN VIEW HAD CHANGED AND THAT ON BALANCE HE ALSO AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER IF THE PRIME MINISTER DID NOT RAISE THE ISSUE AND THAT WE SHOULD WAIT AND SEE WHETHER THE AMERICANS COULD RESOLVE THIS WITH THE RUSSIANS, BEFORE CONSIDERING DIRECT INVOLVEMENT. THE PRESIDENT AND GORBACHEV HAD NOT ENGAGED SUBSTANTIVELY ON THE SUBJECT THEMSELVES AND GORBACHEV HAD CONCLUDED WHAT LITTLE HE HAD SAID ON IT BY COMMENTING THAT A START TREATY SHOULD BE QUICKLY COMPLETED WITH THE IMPLICATION THAT THE ISSUE NEED NOT BE A MAJOR OBSTACLE.
COMMENT

10. THERE IS CLEARLY A DIFFICULT QUESTION OF JUDGEMENT TO BE DECIDED HERE. ON THE ONE HAND UK INTERVENTION MIGHT COMPLICATE THE AMERICAN GAME-PLAN WHICH, AS THEY HAVE ASSURED US, IS DESIGNED TO PROTECT OUR INTERESTS. IT COULD ALSO WORK TO OUR DISADVANTAGE BY ENCOURAGING THE RUSSIANS TO GO FURTHER AND ATTEMPT TO PIN US DOWN OVER SUCH ISSUES AS THE INCLUSION OF UK ASSETS IN FOLLOW-ON NEGOTIATIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF SOVIET CONCERNS DO PROVE TO BE GENUINE AND DEEPLY FELT (EG IN THE SUPREME SOVIET RATIFICATION CONTEXT) A GENERAL REASSURANCE THAT UK/US COOPERATION WILL NOT DEVELOP IN A WAY WHICH COULD AFFECT THE CENTRAL STRATEGIC BALANCE, COULD BE HELPFUL. MOREOVER SINCE THIS IS NOW IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, IT MAY NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO SAY SIMPLY THAT WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE AMERICANS ARE FULLY PROTECTING OUR INTERESTS WITHOUT DOING ANYTHING OURSELVES.

11. MY RECOMMENDATION, ON BALANCE, IS THAT THE PRIME MINISTER SHOULD NOT RAISE THE SUBJECT EARLY IN THE DISCUSSION WITH

GORBACHEV. IF HE FAILS TO DO SO HIMSELF, THAT IN ITSELF WOULD BE A USEFUL INDICATION OF THE DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE WHICH HE REALLY ATTACHES TO THE SUBJECT. IT MIGHT, HOWEVER, BE IMPORTANT TO SHOW SUBSEQUENTLY THAT HE HAD BEEN OFFERED EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS ANY GENUINE CONCERNS, AND IN THE EVENT THAT THERE WAS NO EARLY REFERENCE TO THE SUBJECT, THE PRIME MINISTER MIGHT OFFER HIM THE OPPORTUNITY BY RAISING THE PROGRESS OF START IN GENERAL TERMS. SHOULD A REASSURANCE THEN BE REQUIRED, IT MIGHT BE GIVEN IN AS LOW A KEY AND GENERALISED A MANNER AS POSSIBLE.

12. THERE WILL BE FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO DISCUSS THIS WITH THE AMERICANS DURING WESTON'S TALK WITH SEITZ ON 5 JUNE (AND, SUBSEQUENTLY, WHEN BARTHOLOMEW VISITS LONDON ON 12 JUNE).

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NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL

Strategic Forces

121. The eleventh round of Strategic Arms Reductions Talks (START) began in Geneva in May last year. The United States and the Soviet Union reaffirmed their aim to reduce their holdings to 1,600 strategic offensive delivery systems and 6,000 warheads on each side, with sub-limits of 4,900 ballistic missile warheads and 1,540 warheads on 154 heavy intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). Each heavy bomber was to count as a single delivery system and, if armed only with free-fall bombs and short-range missiles, as a single warhead. Steady progress has been made since then in subsequent rounds of the talks towards the conclusion of an agreement to make deep cuts in strategic nuclear weapons. Both sides have agreed upon counting rules for air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) and on which non-deployed missiles should be subject to the Treaty. Agreement has also been reached on the treatment of sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs), which it is intended should be the subject of annual politically binding declarations between both sides.

122. A number of issues continue to divide the two sides. These include definitions of ALCMs and SLCMs, restrictions on the modernisation of ICBMs, and verification issues. There are also differences on the relationship of any START agreement to the outcome of the separate negotiations on Defence and Space, also taking place in Geneva. But there has been some convergence. The United States has dropped its insistence that mobile ICBMs should be banned. The Soviet Union is considering a US proposal for numerical limits on such missiles and their warheads. And progress has been made towards agreeing a suitable verification regime. The Soviet Union has agreed to dismantle the large phased-array radar at Krasnoyarsk, which it now admits is in breach of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. It has also agreed that a START Treaty need not depend upon agreement at the Defence and Space talks, although it wishes to see provision within a START Treaty to allow it to withdraw from the agreement if the US Strategic Defence Initiative were to be taken beyond the constraints imposed by the ABM Treaty.

123. We support the efforts of the US and Soviet Governments to bring their negotiations to a successful conclusion. A START Treaty would result in the first negotiated reductions in strategic offensive weapons since their invention, and would create a more stable and secure balance between the two superpowers.

124. The START negotiations are bilateral, reflecting the fact that the US and the Soviet Union possess between them over 95% of the world's strategic nuclear warheads. Our policy with regard to our own strategic deterrent remains unchanged. The introduction of Trident in the 1990s will provide the minimum capability necessary to

maintain an effective independent deterrent into the next century, and a START Treaty would not reduce our needs. If US and Soviet strategic arsenals were further reduced very substantially and there had been no significant improvements in defensive capabilities, we would consider how best we might contribute to the arms control process in the light of the changed circumstances. But even after a START Treaty involving reductions in US and Soviet arsenals of the size now under discussion in Geneva had been implemented, our Trident force would still represent a smaller proportion of Soviet strategic nuclear warheads than did Polaris when it entered service. Reductions in US and Soviet strategic arsenals would have to go much further before we could even consider including the British deterrent in any future negotiations on strategic nuclear weapons.

Intermediate Nuclear Forces

125. Full implementation of the INF Treaty should be completed by 31 May 1991. All ground-launched cruise missiles have been withdrawn from RAF Molesworth. Half of the 96 operational missiles at RAF Greenham Common were withdrawn in 1989, and the remainder will be removed before the end of May 1991. A total of six Soviet inspections of RAF Molesworth and RAF Greenham Common have been carried out. All have proceeded to the satisfaction of both parties to the Treaty.

Nuclear Testing

126. We welcome the efforts of the United States and the Soviet Union to conclude verification protocols for the 1974 Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) and the 1976 Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty (PNET). These bilateral treaties limit to 150 kilotons the yield of underground nuclear weapons tests and nuclear explosions carried out for peaceful purposes. Under the terms of the verification protocols, each party would have the right to use hydrodynamic and seismic methods to monitor nuclear tests on the territory of the other party in the case of tests above an agreed yield. The conclusion of these protocols would pave the way for the ratification of the two Treaties.

127. The United States and the Soviet Union intend in due course to consider further limits on testing following ratification of the TTBT and the PNET. But as thresholds are reduced verification becomes both more difficult and more important. Progress will depend on technical advances in verification as well as on progress elsewhere in arms control and the attitudes of other states. A comprehensive test ban remains a long-term goal, but for the foreseeable future the United Kingdom's security will depend on deterrence based in part on the possession of nuclear weapons. There will be a continuing requirement to conduct underground tests to ensure that our nuclear weapons remain effective and up-to-date.