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PRIME MINISTER

c Sir Robert Armstrong

OD(D): Arms Control

BACKGROUND

This first meeting of the Sub-Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament is part of the follow up to the general Ministerial discussion of foreign affairs, including East-West relations and arms control, which were held at Chequers on 9 September. There will be a discussion of East-West relations in OD on 15 December.

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2. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute to you of 7 December provides a broad overview of the positions reached in the discussions of arms control and disarmament in various international fora. Attached to his minute are notes by officials giving details and policy recommendations in respect of

Nuclear Non-Proliferation (NPT)

Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR)

The Conference on Disarmament in Europe (CDE)

The Strategic Arms Reductions Talks (START)

Intermediate Nuclear Forces negotiations (INF)

Strategic Defence ('Star Wars')

United Nations Conference on Disarmament (CD)

3. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary draws attention to the differences in timescale in relation to arms control, and particularly nuclear arms reductions, as between the Soviet Union and the West: the Russians can afford to play their cards long, hoping that public restiveness will lead to disunity within the NATO Alliance. But he believes that it would be wrong not to explore every feasible possibility of identifying a fresh approach to nuclear and other arms control

by the United Kingdom which might help to regain momentum in the various sets of talks. Any British initiative would have to be developed within the Alliance, and it would be essential not to use arms control simply as a means of restoring a climate of international confidence, without thinking through the implications for our security. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary recognises that the papers by officials suggest that there is no substantial initiative open to us at present, but he believes that we should look more fundamentally and widely for a fresh approach. He suggests that possibilities include a re-examination of the importance of the concept of arithmetical parity in arms control arrangements; a review of possible steps in the area of multilateral disarmament at the United Nations, and an examination of the implications of a possible merger of the INF and START talks, with particular reference to the position of the British deterrent in relation to arms control.

4. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary also seeks the Sub-Committee's views on three areas where decisions are needed now. Details of each are given in the notes by officials attached to his minute. The decisions the Sub-Committee are invited to take now are set out below.

5. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) The Sub-Committee is invited to endorse a series of propositions reaffirming the importance we attach to the NPT, and agree that efforts should continue to secure adherence to the Treaty regime of further nations. More specifically, Ministers are invited to agree that, in response to suggestions by President Reagan, the United Kingdom should enter into discussions with the other nuclear suppliers of the President's proposal to tighten the existing safeguards regime and agree that any state wishing to acquire significant supplies of nuclear material, or significant items of nuclear plant, should first agree to the application of International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards to all nuclear facilities on its territory ("comprehensive safeguards"). Ministers are further invited to agree that our aim in discussion should be to support this

proposal, provided that our commercial and other interests are not damaged, and that the potential damage to the Treaty regime caused by the tightening of the system of safeguards is kept to a minimum. Lastly, Ministers are invited to agree that officials should undertake further work to identify options for increasing incentives for parties to the NPT to maintain their support for, and for non-parties to adhere to, the Treaty.

6. MBFR It is proposed that the United Kingdom should suggest an evaluation within NATO of the Western position in the light of recent moves by the East, and contribute to Western attempts to develop a counter-move on the basis of principles already approved by Ministers in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence. Further reference would be made to Ministers if this approach looked like producing a consensus in favour of a new move. It is further recommended that it would be premature at this stage to consider a meeting of Foreign Ministers of all participants (as proposed by Mr Trudeau), although the proposal should be kept under review. Finally, it is recommended that the Sub-Committee should keep the negotiations under review.

7. The Conference on Disarmament in Europe (CDE) opens in Stockholm in January. The first phase of the conference will attempt to negotiate a set of confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) designed to reduce the risk of military confrontation in Europe. Work is proceeding in NATO on refining a set of proposals whose outline was agreed by the North Atlantic Council in 1980. The general objectives are

- a. to provide for a mutual exchange of military information;
- b. to establish a clear pattern of normal military behaviour through notification;
- c. to establish an effective verification mechanism including direct observation and a mandatory consultative mechanism;

d. to have regard for the principle of reciprocity and to avoid obligations whose application would be more advantageous to the East than to the West.

The detail of the proposed approach is set out in the Annex to the note by officials. The Sub-Committee is invited to endorse the line being taken by British officials; to note that they will shortly be asked to approve a detailed package of proposals worked up within the Alliance, and to note that further study will be required in due course of the longer term implications for conventional arms control against the possibility that a successful first phase of CDE is achieved by 1986.

8. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Luce), the Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr Stanley) and Mr Cartledge (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) will be present.

HANDLING

9. To make best use of the limited time, it would be best to address first the specific issues on which decisions are needed now. You might invite the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to explain his proposals on

- a. the Non-Proliferation Treaty
- b. the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions
- c. the Conference on Disarmament in Europe.

In each case, the main point to establish in discussion is whether the Sub-Committee endorses the general line which it is proposed the United Kingdom should take; further reports will be made to Ministers on progress on each subject.

10. You could then invite the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to introduce a broader discussion of arms control and disarmament. The main points here are

- a. does the Sub-Committee agree with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's view that we should explore every feasible possibility for a fresh approach to nuclear arms control?

- b. in particular, should we be looking for possible British initiatives within the Alliance before Ministers have taken decisions on the number of missiles and warheads to be mounted on the Trident submarines? (Work on this is proceeding with a view to submission to Ministers in early spring);
- c. would it be sufficient to concentrate for the moment on the possibility of a British initiative in the area of non-nuclear arms control, at least until the Trident decisions have been taken, meanwhile preparing our position carefully on the implications for our national nuclear deterrent of a possible INF/START merger?
- d. as to re-examining the need for arithmetical parity in any arms control arrangements, what would be the effect on the Americans, and on the cohesion of the Alliance, of questioning this principle at this juncture? Might it suggest British readiness to include our own nuclear weapons in an arms control agreement ahead of major reductions by the super powers?

CONCLUSION

11. Subject to the points made in discussion you could guide the Sub-Committee to
- a. agree the recommendations in the notes by officials attached to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's minute as to the approach to the Non-proliferation Treaty, Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions and the Stockholm Conference on Disarmament in Europe;
- b. invite the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to set in hand further work by officials on possible British arms control initiatives within the Alliance, concentrating for the present on non-nuclear arms control;
- e. invite the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in consultation with the Defence Secretary, to prepare an assessment of the implications for the United Kingdom of a possible INF/START merger.

David Goddall

A D S GODDALL

Deputy

Miss Campbell

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