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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister

*This additional briefing has  
just arrived.*

*A.S.C. 15.  
9*

15 September 1983

*Dear Sir,*

*MB*

Signor Craxi's Visit

The MOD have just learned (through British Aerospace) that Signor Craxi may raise with the Prime Minister the question of Italian participation in discussion of a possible European collaborative combat aircraft. I enclose a brief prepared by the MOD, to be added to the briefing material we have already sent you.

*[Handwritten signature]*

(R B Bone)  
Private Secretary

John Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

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PRIME MINISTER'S TALKS WITH SIGNOR CRAXI

POSSIBLE ITALIAN PARTICIPATION IN FUTURE COMBAT AIRCRAFT MS

Points to make (if raised)

Delighted that Italy should be involved in these discussions. Hope that Air Staff consultations, in which Italy is already participating, will result in an agreed statement of operational requirement by the end of 1983.

Background

1. It is understood that Signor Craxi may raise the question of Italian participation in discussions of a possible European collaborative combat aircraft. Italy may be concerned that she will be excluded from these discussions by the European 'big three' (UK, France and FRG) - there is precedent for her showing sensitivity on this - but the UK would welcome Italian participation.
2. Italy is already taking part in 5-nation Air Staff talks (with UK, France, Germany and Spain) to define an agreed operational requirement. There are also industrial links between British Aerospace (BAe), Aeritalia and the German firm MBB - the three partners in the Tornado project - to develop a successor aircraft which BAe, who are making the running, see as meeting the operational requirement which the staff talks aim to specify.
3. The Defence Secretary is meeting his French and German opposite numbers in Paris next week with the aim of reaching agreement that the military and industrial consultations should be brought together.

Ministry of Defence

15 September 1983