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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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MO 26/14

22nd March 1985

I do not take the point made in para 3. It checks the question that in the absence of chemical capability, modern may be the only response.

*Prime Minister
The letter summarises the documents well.
Agree the proposed line (bearing in mind it may (pals)?)*

US PRESIDENTIAL CHEMICAL WARFARE REVIEW COMMISSION (PRC) CDP

22/3

In your letter of 10th December 1984 to Colin Budd at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, you recorded the Prime Minister's agreement that we should respond to the expected request from the PRC for a UK view. You noted that she wished to see the proposed line.

The Commission was established by President Reagan on 28th January and formally constituted on 11th March. Its chairman is Walter Stoessel and its members include Alexander Haig and Zbigniew Brzezinski. Contacts between our Embassy in Washington, the State Department and the Pentagon have confirmed that the PRC would welcome our views, and that the Administration would find it useful if we provided them.

The Defence and Foreign Secretaries have agreed that, given the sensitivity of chemical warfare (CW) issues, we should offer a written statement of our views in strict confidence. I enclose at Annex A the proposed text: it offers support for US moves towards modernisation in the context of the negotiations for a total ban, which would usefully increase Western leverage over the Russians at Geneva. It also recognises that, in the absence of an acceptable outcome at Geneva, a limited modernised US capability would act as a deterrent within NATO's strategy of flexible response. The US Administration have confirmed that they would welcome a statement along these lines. It would thus carry forward the remit from the Prime Minister's meeting on 2nd August 1984, while at the same time reflecting the UK's continued commitment to a negotiated ban, as underlined by the Prime Minister in the House on 10th January.

The State Department consider that the PRC will need to acknowledge in the unclassified part of their report that we have responded to a request for views. They have suggested that we should agree a general form of words for this purpose: the proposed text is at Annex B.

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The PRC have asked to visit Bonn, Paris and (on 29th March) London in the course of a visit to US Forces in Europe and NATO. The party will not include Haig or Brzezinski. The French and Germans have agreed to see them at official level. The Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Secretaries agree that we should do likewise.

I would be grateful to know that the Prime Minister is content with the written statement and the line for the PRC's unclassified report. The former would be handed to the team on arrival; officials would follow up any questions arising from the statement. I attach at Annex C a copy of the Question and Answer Brief which the Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Secretaries are content officials should use for that purpose.

I am copying this letter and the attachments to Len Appleyard (FCO), Rachel Lomax (HM Treasury), Hugh Taylor (Home Office), and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours etc,

Richard Mottram

(R C MOTTRAM)