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 FM CABINET OFFICE LONDON

TO WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON

T O P S E C R E T

FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE PRESIDENT:  
 DEAR MR PRESIDENT

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE OF 15 OCTOBER, ABOUT MILITARY NUCLEAR MATTERS, WHICH DAVID AARON DELIVERED TO JOHN HUNT DURING HIS VERY USEFUL VISIT TO LONDON LAST WEEK.

I WARMLY WELCOME WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT YOUR AFFIRMATIVE APPROACH TO THE MODERNISATION OF THE BRITISH STRATEGIC DETERRENT. AS YOU KNOW, MY COLLEAGUES AND I HAVE NOT YET DECIDED WHICH SYSTEM WE WOULD WISH TO GO FOR, BUT IT IS VERY GOOD TO KNOW THAT ANY OF THE ALTERNATIVES UNDER CONSIDERATION COULD IN PRACTICE BE MADE AVAILABLE TO US; AND THAT IN PARTICULAR THIS WOULD (IF WE SO DECIDE) COVER THE COMPLETE C4 MISSILE SYSTEM INCLUDING ITS MIRV CAPABILITY.

THANK YOU ALSO FOR YOUR FRANK EXPLANATION OF YOUR CONCERN ABOUT THE DELICATE ISSUES OF TIMING INVOLVED IN THE INTERACTION BETWEEN DECISIONS IN THIS FIELD AND THE IMPORTANT DECISIONS WHICH THE NORTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE NEEDS TO REACH ON LONG RANGE THEATRE NUCLEAR FORCES. YOUR POINT IS WELL TAKEN, AS YOU KNOW WE ARE GIVING YOU FULL SUPPORT ON THE LRTNF QUESTION AND I SHALL BE GLAD TO CO-OPERATE WITH YOU IN SEEKING TO AVERT THE DANGERS YOU IDENTIFY.

AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND I AM HAPPY TO AGREE THAT NO BRITISH REQUEST ON THE STRATEGIC DETERRENT SHOULD BE PUT TO YOU BEFORE WE MEET IN WASHINGTON IN DECEMBER, AND THAT WE SHOULD DISCUSS THE MATTER THEN, TO AVOID ANY MISUNDERSTANDING, AND IN THE SAME SPIRIT OF FRANKNESS, I SHOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT AT THAT MEETING I SHALL NEED TO DISCUSS THE SUBSTANCE OF THE STRATEGIC MODERNISATION ISSUE, AS WELL AS PROCEDURE AND TIMING. I AM CONFIDENT THAT WE SHALL THEN BE ABLE TO SETTLE BOTH THE SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION AND THE PROBLEM OF THE TIMING OF ANY ANNOUNCEMENT. THE LATTER WILL CLEARLY DEPEND ON HOW OTHER MATTERS, INCLUDING LRTNF DECISION-TAKING, HAVE PROGRESSED IN THE INTERVAL.

MEANWHILE, I FULLY AGREE THAT KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR MESSAGE TO ME AND OF MY PRESENT REPLY SHOULD BE CONFINED TO A VERY NARROW CIRCLE. INDEED, ON OUR SIDE I SHALL TELL PETER CARRINGTON AND FRANCIS PYM (BUT NOT THE CHIEFS OF STAFF). THE DOCUMENTS THEMSELVES WILL BE SEEN BY NO-ONE OUTSIDE NO. 10 DOWNING STREET AND THE CABINET OFFICE.

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AND I SUGGEST THAT ANY COMMUNICATIONS ON THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE  
CONFINED TO THE DIRECT WHITE HOUSE/CABINET OFFICE LINK.

YOURS SINCERELY  
MARGARET THATCHER

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