



FCS/84/174

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCEMilitary Developments in Outer Space

1. You may find it helpful to have a brief account of the Ministerial meeting of WEU which I attended on Tuesday in Paris. This went well from our point of view. You will no doubt be pleased to learn that a number of warm tributes were paid to the recent work of the IEPG in which I know you have taken a close interest.

2. During the meeting Cheysson launched a discussion about European attitudes towards military developments in outer space, drawing on points which the French have made at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva (your officials have details). In summary, he noted the dangers of a new arms race in space, welcomed the US readiness to discuss possible arms control measures with the Russians and expressed regret that the latter had rejected these. He then pointed to the need for the European Allies to take a position on arms control options, and noted French proposals to this effect which were being tabled in Geneva. These include a five-year renewable ban on testing and deployment of directed energy weapons with anti-satellite (ASAT) or ABM capability; severe restraints on other ASAT potential systems, especially those threatening high altitude satellites; an expanded data exchange on space objects; and extension by the super-powers to third country satellites of immunities already agreed bilaterally.

②  
Prime Minister  
Further pressure  
on MOD to disgorge  
a paper. AJC is  
writing to them as  
his final act.

EDP  
14/6



3. Genscher responded warmly to these French ideas but there were no other comments. For my part I would have been glad to contribute, along the lines which both you and I have been talking privately with other interlocutors. But I felt constrained from doing so by the fact that we have reached no collective position on the substance of these issues.

4. You will recognise that some of these French ideas on ASATs are very close to proposals which you and I put to the Prime Minister in February, with a view to further discussion of them with the Americans; and which have now been fleshed out in the joint paper prepared by our officials for submission to the Prime Minister at her request. I think it is important to circulate the paper as soon as possible.

5. I recognise that the ASATs issue is only one element in the wider complex of space problems. I welcome the fact that our officials are beginning work on an interim paper to Ministers on the latter, including the American proposals for the Strategic Defense Initiative. I think that it would be useful if we could take such a paper before the summer break, since military developments in outer space and arms control possibilities are becoming a subject of increasing interest throughout the Alliance and more widely. The issue has been raised in the Community, in the North Atlantic Council and in the bilateral meetings during the WEU. The Russians have made strenuous efforts since 1981 to seize the high propaganda ground in this area. When I visit Moscow next month I expect they will criticise and misrepresent US intentions and statements. I shall of course rebut such attacks. But US programmes are going ahead and the rest of our Allies are taking increasingly firm positions on the

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range of space issues. It is important for us to contribute in substance to this important and far-reaching debate, and to the formation of an acceptable policy for the West. I know you share my wish to press ahead with this aim in mind.

6. I am sending a copy of this minute to the Prime Minister.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
14 June 1984

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