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FILE  
CAJAAT



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

30 December 1985

CHEMICAL WEAPONS AND CHALLENGE INSPECTION

The Prime Minister has considered the Foreign Secretary's minute of 23 December about the US draft Treaty on chemical weapons and the problem of challenge inspection.

The Prime Minister would not herself want to write to the President on this specific point, but she would be content for the Foreign Secretary to tell Secretary Shultz that she generally endorses the approach set out in the minute under reference.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

CHARLES POWELL

Len Appleyard Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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JB



*CDK*



PM/85/107

PRIME MINISTER

*No - there are other things in the air - and I should make another approach to Mr Shultz along the lines proposed, and to see if anyone says that you endorse it?*

*Prime Minister. ①*

*Contact that the Foreign Secretary*

*MCA 23/12*

*PCS*

Chemical Weapons and Challenge Inspection

*After discussion → let me say I support this  
agreement so long as I am not expected to do what the President wants  
This point would not be a problem*

1. At our meeting with Michael Heseltine on 4 July 1984, to discuss the US draft Treaty on chemical weapons, you concluded that we should support it in public; but that we should seek in private discussion with US officials to find a better alternative to their proposals for challenge inspection, with preference for the original UK ideas. The US proposals, which provided for no initial right to refuse a challenge, were seen as damaging to our own security interests, as well as being unnegotiable as part of an overall agreement banning chemical weapons.

2. FCO and MOD officials have endeavoured over the past 15 months, in discussions with the Americans, to find a position which would reflect this remit. George Shultz has more than once in that time agreed with me about the value of this joint search. While these discussions have been going on, there has been little progress in the Geneva negotiations on CW; not only the Russians but our other Allies have rejected the American proposal; and we face the prospect of continuing immobility unless some way can be found of introducing some movement in the fundamental US position.

3. As a result of our bilateral exchanges, we have been able to agree with the Americans on a number of points relevant to a challenge inspection regime. Nonetheless, one important sticking-point remains. At Pentagon insistence the US are still wedded to the proposition that initial refusal of a

/challenge





challenge inspection must amount to an ipso facto breach of the CW Convention. This basic point continues to give us difficulties.

4. We recognise the moves they have made to meet us in other areas. And we understand the dilemmas we both face in trying to create an adequate verification regime for a CW ban: how to ensure sufficient capability to monitor the Russians across the very broad range of activities relevant to CW, while not exposing ourselves to undue risks. As a corollary to this, the regime has to act as a sufficient deterrent on the Russians to stop them cheating. In other words, the regime must provide, or be capable of providing, evidence of cheating sufficient to convince opinion in the West to take counter-measures such as resuming CW production ourselves: the only deterrent of real force. In addition, we must (and not just for presentational purposes) have a proposal which looks like being negotiable.

5. The US insistence on 'no refusal' is open to three objections:

- it clearly creates unacceptable hazards for our own security interests;
- it does not provide an adequate deterrent, since the basis for Western counter-measures would be relatively flimsy; and
- it is non-negotiable with the Soviet Union, not to mention the rest of our Allies.

6. We have therefore tried to secure US agreement to an alternative, similar to that in the UK proposal tabled at the CD in March 1984. This would allow for an initial right of refusal. But it would still impose on the challenged state the continuing obligation to provide alternative measures which would satisfy the challenging state and other parties as to its compliance. Failure to provide such satisfaction would in itself be a breach of the Convention. We believe that this

/meets





meets our negotiating criteria, including providing a sounder basis for counter-measures and thus of deterrence. The concept has, however, provided unacceptable to the Americans, for whom the lead in this area is largely taken by the Pentagon.

7. You will wish to be aware of the stage we have reached. The issue has acquired new importance because of the references to CW at the US/Soviet Summit; of the UK Chairmanship of the CW negotiations in Geneva for all of 1986; and of the less certain prospect of a US resumption of CW production.

8. I have discussed the present state of play with Michael Heseltine, whose officials have been closely involved in the exchanges with the US. I share his understandable concern that, in striking the right balance for our verification proposals, we should aim for the most stringent possible inspection measures to be applied to the Soviet Union. At the same time, he accepts my judgement that we must find an alternative to the current US proposal; and that the UK counter-proposal strikes a better balance of advantage.

9. Unless, however, at the highest level the Americans can be persuaded to be more flexible, and to accept the sort of British proposition outlined above, there is little prospect in the foreseeable future of making progress towards a total CW ban. For both political and strategic reasons, this would be damaging. We therefore believe that another effort in private with the Americans is required.

10. I propose early in the New Year to make another approach to George Shultz (to whom I mentioned the point briefly when we met in Brussels the week before last) in order to urge the need for greater US flexibility. It would obviously carry great weight with the American side if I were able to confirm that, in the light of the keen interest in this subject which you have expressed on a number of occasions with President Reagan

/and

MoD say this  
rather overstates  
his SoS' view.  
He is less  
inclined to  
just do US  
position unacceptable.  
But he is  
willing to go  
along with  
the FCS.





and in other fora, you endorse this approach which is, of course, in line with the conclusions that we reached in our discussion in July 1984.

11. I am sending a copy of this minute to Michael Heseltine and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

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

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
23 December 1985