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Dear George:

I want to thank you for your letter of September 22 expressing your concerns about the Soviet proposal for a bilateral agreement on ballistic missile warhead numbers and flight testing. We provided your Embassy in Washington with a report on this and other subjects discussed at the Ministerial upon the conclusion of that meeting. This letter is meant to supplement both that report and the conversation between Secretary Shultz and Geoffrey Howe in New York September 29.

The Soviets indicated at the Ministerial that they would respond in Geneva to the questions we raised about their initiative. While we will study the Soviet proposal, the position of the Administration has been clear and consistent that we will not agree to cosmetic limitations on strategic arms. We would certainly not permit any such agreement to substitute for or delay the completion of a full START Treaty, toward which we have worked so hard for many years. Moreover, any such agreement could only be seriously considered if the Soviets resolved their Krasnoyarsk and Gomel ABM Treaty violations. I will ensure we keep you and HMG informed of any future exchanges with the Soviets on this matter.

Your letter to me expressed concern about the impact of potential START limitations on the UK Trident program. The U.S. has always insisted that START will be a bilateral agreement between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and that by its nature it will not apply to the long-standing program of strategic cooperation between the U.S. and UK. The U.S. will not negotiate a START Treaty which prejudices this cooperative arrangement.

Specifically, any U.S.-Soviet agreement would not affect the right of the UK to test and deploy its SLBMs with any reentry vehicle configuration it deems appropriate, nor would the Soviets have access to UK SSBNs or SLBMs on board those SSBNs.

The Rt. Hon. George Younger, M.P.,
Secretary of State for Defense,
Ministry of Defense,
Whitehall.

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Moreover, the UK may continue to make use of U.S. SLBM test ranges and their associated test facilities for test firings of UK SLBMs as allowed under the Polaris Sales Agreement.

We intend to insert at an appropriate time a unilateral statement into the permanent START negotiating record that makes clear to the Soviets our position that U.S.-UK cooperation under the Polaris Sales Agreement in no way constitutes non-compliance with the provisions of the START Treaty.

I hope that my additional remarks have allayed your concerns about the Soviet proposal and the impact of START on the UK Trident program. The U.S. fully supports the modernization of the UK strategic deterrent. Any strategic arms control accord will be consistent with that commitment.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

/s/

Frank C. Carlucci

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