

Ref. A083/2740

MR COLES ✓



Yes

Prime MinisterAgree to a new sub-committee  
of OD as in para. 4?A.J.C.  $\frac{3}{10}$ Arms Control and Disarmament

Your letter of 12 September to Brian Fall recording the conclusions of the Chequers' discussion on arms control and disarmament instructed me to circulate a draft agenda of issues in this field which Ministers would need to consider in the next three months; to recommend how those issues might be best considered by Ministers; and to arrange for the preparation by officials of the issues to be discussed.

2. Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet Office are working to produce an agenda and programme of work, and I expect to submit proposals to the Prime Minister soon.

3. So far as Ministerial consideration of these issues is concerned, I believe that it would be best to create a small Sub-Committee of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, especially for the purpose. This might be designated OD(D). Another possibility would be to put these issues to the existing Ministerial Group on Nuclear Defence, MISC 7, which will probably have a role to play in Trident procurement decisions to be taken next spring; but MISC 7 (on which the Lord President and the Chancellor of the Exchequer sit, as well as the Foreign Secretary and the Defence Secretary) is perhaps not the right body to consider the whole field of disarmament, including its non-nuclear aspects such as MBFR.

4. If the Prime Minister agrees to the proposal to establish a new Sub-Committee of OD for this purpose, I believe there would be advantage in keeping it small and confining membership, in addition to the Prime Minister, to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence, with provision for them to be accompanied by the two Ministers of State with responsibilities in this area (Mr Luce and Mr Stanley) when they so wish, and also for official and military





advisers to be invited where this would be useful. Such an arrangement would not of course preclude invitations to other Ministers (eg the Chancellor of the Exchequer) to attend, if the Sub-Committee was going to discuss a matter in which the other Departmental interests were involved.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

3 October 1983

conqueror

DEFENCE: Arms Control

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