



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~930702~~ 218 6169

D/S of S PS/2

12th December 1979

Dear Nick,

We have discussed on the telephone the Defence Secretary's wish that on his return from the NATO Defence Planning Committee on Thursday he should make a statement to the House about the meeting. The purpose of the statement would be to announce NATO's decision on a programme for the modernisation of the Alliance's long-range theatre nuclear weapons and a parallel arms control approach to the Soviet Union. A draft of the statement would be circulated as early as possible on Thursday.

As you know, considerable interest has been shown in this subject on both sides of the House over recent months, and it has not been possible to respond favourably to the requests which MPs have made on several occasions to the Prime Minister, the Leader of the House and the Defence Secretary for a full-scale debate on LRTNF modernisation. On two successive days this week unsuccessful attempts have been made by the Opposition to persuade the Speaker to allow a debate under Standing Order No 9.

I understand from the Leader of the House's office that, although pressure on the Parliamentary timetable this Thursday is already very great, time for a statement could be found if necessary. I would be grateful if you would confirm that the Prime Minister agrees that Mr Pym should make such a statement on Thursday.

/ I am ...

Nick Sanders Esq
10 Downing Street



2.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Lord Privy Seal, the Paymaster General, the Government Chief Whip and the Secretary of the Cabinet. I am also sending a copy to the Whips' Office in the House of Lords who will wish to consider whether, in the event of the statement being made in the House of Commons, it should be repeated in the House of Lords.

Yours ever

D T Piper

(D T PIPER)