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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

15 February 1983

Dear Winston

Thank you for your letter of 1 February about control over cruise missiles.

I am delighted to put the record absolutely straight. Our control goes well beyond 'joint consultation' and I have, in fact, spoken of joint decision a number of times in the House. On 18 January, for example, I referred to the use of cruise missile bases as a matter for joint decision for HMG and the United States Government (and said that I had satisfied myself that the existing arrangements were effective). Questions about joint decision arrangements have been put a number of times since, most recently on 10 February. On that occasion I said, in reply to Mr. Foot, that the arrangement was for a joint decision and that meant exactly what it said.

You may have seen that Francis Pym was also unambiguous during Questions the day before. In reply to a Supplementary Question from Mr. Faulds, he said:

"As my right Hon. Friend, the Prime Minister has said on a number of occasions, we have the advantage of the system and method of joint decision with the United States. It is not possible for these weapons to be used without the agreement of both the Prime Minister and the President. That is what joint decision means."

I know that this has been an issue of some concern, but I do believe that we have now explained that the arrangements

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for a joint decision by the two Heads of Government provide
the sort of control we need.

Yours sincerely
Raymond

Winston S. Churchill, Esq., MP.