

OPS

DEFENSE MINISTERS
SPECIAL MESSAGE
T/6/1/PJ#

SECRET

Prime Minister

19/12

We shall let you have a
copy. A.S.C. 25/10.

ms

Dear Margaret:

Our defense ministers will shortly meet in Canada at the autumn meeting of NATO's Nuclear Planning Group (NPG), where they will review a comprehensive study, prepared by the NPG's High Level Group (HLG), on the future size and composition of NATO's nuclear stockpile. The decision to be taken by our defense ministers is important both to the Alliance's future military credibility and effectiveness and to public understanding and support for our defense posture.

cc Master
Subject:
DEFENSE
Arms Control
PE.4

If the NPG adopts the HLG recommendations, the Alliance will reduce its European nuclear stockpile to its lowest level in over twenty years. It is imperative that we explain to our publics our concerted efforts to sustain a credible deterrent force, and that we can safely undertake these reductions only if we remain committed to essential force improvements. We will have reduced our arsenal as far as we possibly can on a unilateral basis, and hope that the USSR will exercise similar restraint.

Secretary Weinberger has kept me closely informed of the HLG's work. We will be strongly endorsing -- as I hope you will -- the balanced approach which the HLG has recommended. Moreover, if the ministers approve the HLG's recommendations it will be essential that NATO's decision to reduce further its nuclear stockpile receive the public attention and understanding it merits. In that respect, I believe that we must avoid prior publicity about the HLG recommendations and work to focus maximum attention on the NPG ministerial decision once it is made.

For my part, I plan to highlight the importance of the NPG ministerial meeting by giving Secretary Weinberger a public send-off emphasizing our support for the current work of the NPG. Following the meeting, I plan to speak out publicly on the significance of the ministerial decision. I will be emphasizing that NATO nuclear forces are fundamental to the maintenance of peace and freedom and that these reductions in our nuclear stockpile are aimed both at enhancing stability at the lowest possible level of forces and at reducing tensions in Europe. I hope you will be able to join me in publicly underscoring the importance of these reductions and their contribution to a more stable military balance at the lowest possible level.

SECRET

We should be especially proud of NATO's success in maintaining peace for nearly four decades. We clearly demonstrated our commitment to reductions in our nuclear arsenal when we withdrew one thousand warheads in accordance with NATO's 1979 dual-track INF decision. Similarly, the 1979 decision's provision for replacement of existing warheads with LRINF warheads on a one-for-one basis, should deployments prove necessary, further underlined our dedication to maintaining deterrence at the lowest possible level of forces. The additional reductions now recommended by the HIG are further evidence of our determination in this regard.

We should thus take this opportunity to demonstrate the Alliance solidarity behind this new initiative -- supporting not only the welcome reductions envisioned, but, equally importantly, the actions recommended to upgrade and thereby to maintain the credibility and effectiveness of the resulting posture. These steps taken together will ensure that for the foreseeable future, we shall, as we have done so well in the past, be able successfully to deter Soviet aggression or intimidation. As leaders of the free world, I am sure you agree that we have no more important and urgent task than to communicate clearly to our publics our unceasing efforts to maintain peace and safeguard our freedom.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ron