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Our reference

MK2AEL

Date

9 November 1990

Dear Desmond,

CFE DATA FROM OTHER NATIONS

1. I enclose a copy of a letter dated 8 November from David Chuter, which raises an important question. I would be most grateful for your advice, as soon as possible.

2. My inclination is that:

- there is no reason for the MOD to translate material (eg Italian) for any purposes other than its own;

- although we will be treating data received as unclassified, we could easily refuse general access to it on the (only slightly spurious) grounds that it is a diplomatic communication from another government;

- this would not prevent us from allowing access to the raw data (as opposed to dishing out copies) for those whom we consider reputable;

- for Parliament and the wider public, we will almost certainly have to produce a pretty broad digest of the data - this we could happily publish (eg in the Statement of Defence Estimates); and

- I see no need to place the entire information exchange in the House of Commons Library, but equally no reason not to if they really want it (they'll be pretty fed up by about year 10!).

3. You will doubtless be able to give a more authoritative steer. Are others going to publish the data (eg in the Library of Congress)?

Yours ever,
Matthew

M J L KIRK

Security Policy Department

cc: D M Chuter Esq, DACU, MOD