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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

STUDY ON THE NAVAL ARMS RACE

Addendum

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REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS

DENMARK

[Original: English]

[11 June 1986]

The Danish Government welcomes the completion of the study on the naval arms race (A/40/535) as a significant and comprehensive consideration of the subject. The Danish Government hopes that the study will assist the international community in facilitating identification of possible areas for naval disarmament and confidence-building measures at sea. Denmark wishes to make the following observations:

(a) As a maritime nation, Denmark actively supports all realistic endeavours aimed at safeguarding the peaceful use of the seas. Denmark took an active part in the elaboration of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea which Denmark considers a significant factor for the maintenance of international peace and security. The study rightly refers to the role of the Convention in this respect. Denmark agrees to the assessment of the study, that full implementation of the said Convention will have far-reaching effects on the international conduct of maritime affairs and that naval activities should be compatible with the provisions of the Convention.

(b) The principle of undiminished security (para. 22 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament) has a special importance with regard to naval disarmament in consequence of the asymmetries arising from differing geo-political and other factors. Denmark, therefore, endorses the statement of the study that naval forces are not independent of other military forces and that there is no such thing as an independent naval balance or parity. The role of naval forces and measures of naval arms limitations and reductions - both nuclear and conventional - must be examined in an overall military and political context when considering halting and reversing the arms race in general.

(c) Consideration should be given to several of the suggestions of the study, such as:

- (i) International agreements similar to the bilateral agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States on the Prevention of Incidents on and over the High Seas of 1972;
- (ii) Further measures for the prevention of an arms race on the sea-bed in accordance with article V of the sea-bed Treaty;
- (iii) Modernization of the laws of sea warfare with a view to expand humanitarian international law;

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- (iv) Mutually agreed verifiable limitations of the kind suggested in paragraph 287 of the study as part of overall weapons reductions agreements;
 - (v) Promotion of trust and confidence by more openness concerning naval strength. Reliable and comparable information on global naval capabilities and expenditures is a precondition for meaningful negotiations of verifiable limitations. Denmark provides information annually to the United Nations on its military expenditures, more Member States should do likewise.
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- (d) Denmark associates itself with the remarks of Norway concerning the defensive posture of the alliance to which Denmark also belongs (A/CN.10/77/Add.1, para. (a)).

NETHERLANDS

[Original: English]

[27 June 1986]

The Netherlands co-sponsored General Assembly resolution 40/94 F entitled "Study of the naval arms race" in which all Member States are invited to inform the Secretary-General of their views concerning study A/40/535. Naval arms limitation and disarmament have not been the subject of much consideration in the multilateral disarmament context. Consequently, the Netherlands welcomed the study on the "naval arms race", which was completed last year. In view of the importance that the Netherlands, as a maritime nation, attached to the study in question, it was satisfied that a Netherlands naval expert could participate in the Group of Experts.

It is the Netherlands' view that the Group of Experts basically chose the right approach by taking the motivations for States to develop naval capabilities and by presenting military naval activities in their broad political, economic and security context, as a starting point. This approach offers a context for appreciating the asymmetries that exist between States regarding the size of their military fleets and the span of their naval activities. From this perspective, any comparison of numbers of naval systems can have only relative value. As the study rightly points out, there is no such thing as an independent naval balance.

The Netherlands considers the study in general to be a factual and acceptable comprehensive overview of the uses and resources of the maritime environment and the general composition of naval forces and their weapon systems. However, the imbalance in availability of official information on the world's naval forces has led to an undue emphasis on the naval forces and activities of Western States.

In describing the pertinent legal provisions, the study gives a - generally speaking - factually correct picture of the relevant rules. However, it is not always clear about what are legitimate naval activities and it sometimes seems to ignore the fact that the provisions of the law of the sea Convention do not provide autonomous criteria by which to judge the legitimacy of the different categories of naval activities. While it is correctly remarked in paragraph 188 that military

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activities consistent with the Charter of the United Nations are not prohibited by the law of the sea Convention, paragraph 277 implies that certain activities are more permitted than others. The law of the sea Convention provides no grounds for such a conclusion.

In the descriptive part of the study it is recognized that developments regarding naval forces and activities cannot be looked at in isolation. It is also repeatedly stressed that adequate verification provisions are necessary. This point of departure, with which the Netherlands agrees, is not always taken into account in chapter VII. This is especially true for the proposed quantitative restraints, but to some extent also for the qualitative restraints. In the Netherlands' view, only, the proposal concerning the deactivation of unexploded naval armaments (B.B.), merits further study. However, modernization of the laws of sea warfare, e.g., measures proposed under paragraph 304, does not seem to be the most realistic approach to the problem of disarmament.

The study has proved its usefulness already during the recent session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. It provided a focus for the multilateral consideration of relevant issues. The discussion in the Disarmament Commission cannot be seen, however, as more than a first, preliminary discussion. Further clarification will be necessary before any future negotiation could actually start.

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

[Original: English]

[26 June 1986]

The United Kingdom has noted the work undertaken by the study Group and, despite a number of reservations described below, regards the report as a worthwhile attempt at producing a realistic summary of the current situation with regard to the build-up of naval forces throughout the world.

While the United Kingdom welcomes the study Group's limited consideration of the growth of the Soviet Navy, it notes that the asymmetries which exist at present in the availability of official information have led to an undue emphasis in the report on the naval forces and activities of Western States. The United Kingdom also considers that the study does not devote sufficient attention to the growth of neutral and non-aligned navies.

Heavy emphasis is placed throughout the study on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The United Kingdom agrees with much of what is contained within the Convention but wishes to point out that several countries are not States Parties to it. In the case of negotiations aimed at disarmament and arms limitation at sea, the continued applicability of the Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zones, signed in 1958 at Geneva, should be borne in mind. The study emphasizes the idea that the entry into force of the Convention on the Law of the Sea would bring new rights and responsibilities to many States and the need to protect them. It goes on to suggest that there may therefore be additional motivation to States, including those which may not previously have had any naval capabilities, to develop such forces. It seems to the United Kingdom a

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contradiction to suggest on the one hand the idea that the law of the sea Convention is designed to emphasize the peaceful uses of the sea, while at the same time suggesting that the coming into force of the Treaty would form a rationale for a number of States indulging in a naval build-up.

Throughout the study the activities of the major military Powers are viewed as being essentially inimical to international security, whereas the growth in naval activities among developing countries is treated with much greater tolerance. Such an approach to the build-up in global naval systems is inappropriate for a United Nations study which purports to be balanced and factual. In the same way, the emphasis on the confrontation between countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Treaty Organization is given heavy emphasis while regional rivalries, tensions and conflicts which exist amongst developing countries are largely ignored. Although these conflicts may not, as the study claims, form the basis for a global conflict, they are nevertheless of great significance since it is these conflicts which most often see the deployment and use of naval forces. Moreover, regional conflicts have been responsible for over 20 million deaths since the end of the Second World War. To ignore these conflicts, while placing the burden for the build-up on the naval arms race only on the shoulders of the two major alliance systems, is at best disingenuous and at worst highly discriminatory. The study only briefly mentions the noticeable increase in the demand for the most modern weapons, including anti-ship guided missiles, among the navies of developing countries. There is no serious discussion of the impact which the delivery of these has had on even relatively small coastal navies and the significant increase which these types of weapons have had on the war fighting and power projection capabilities of smaller navies.

When analysing the discussion in the study of the use of nuclear power for propulsion systems at sea and the naval role of nuclear weapons, the United Kingdom was disturbed to note that only the plans of the nuclear-weapon States were discussed in connection with the building of nuclear-powered warships. This is despite the fact that information is available in the public domain concerning the intentions of other States, which are not at present nuclear-weapon States, to build nuclear-powered warships, including nuclear-powered submarines.

The United Kingdom does not accept the assertion in paragraph 105 that the current generation of more accurate missiles provide ballistic missile nuclear submarines (SSBNs) with a hard target capability against specific targets of the type which have previously been reserved for bombers and land-based missiles. While such developments may take place in future, the sort of precision attacks which can be made by intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and bombers are simply not within the capabilities of current SSBNs. Similarly, the study refers to anti-ship missiles with a nuclear capability being used from ship to ship but there is no mention, either in the study itself or in the table of tactical nuclear weapons annexed to the study, of nuclear-armed long-range tactical missiles carried on land-based bombers which could be used against naval targets. The omission is a serious flaw in that this system constitutes one of the major weapons against surface targets deployed by one of the two major military Powers.

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The United Kingdom welcomes the recognition given by the study to the asymmetries inherent in the geographical positions of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and NATO. The study makes clear that the members of NATO are very dependent on their sea lines of communication and, similarly, these also form a link of major importance between the United States of America and the States in the Western rim of the Pacific Ocean. It also makes clear that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, on the other hand, does not depend on sea lines of communication for its physical well-being, and that there is no history of a large ocean-going navy in the Soviet naval tradition. The United Kingdom also welcomes the discussion contained in the study of the asymmetry of general military forces between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization and believes that this highlights the unsuitability of measures designed to deal with only one facet of naval activities or a naval build-up in isolation from other facets of a world-wide build-up in armaments.

The existence of nuclear weapons means that the United Kingdom and its allies must depend on a policy of deterrence to ensure peace and to maintain their security. The ability to maintain nuclear forces on submarines, to ensure a retaliatory capability, is essential to the continued viability of the NATO strategy of deterrence. The United Kingdom, in concert with its NATO allies, wishes to see a successful outcome to the current round of bilateral negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union in Geneva and, as part of these discussions, would wish to see discussion of possible limitation of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). However, any discussion of SLBMs must take place in the context of the overall levels of nuclear weapons in the world. It cannot be taken in isolation and treated as a separate problem.

The United Kingdom considers that the discussion contained in the study of naval manoeuvres is not sufficiently balanced. The criticism of such naval manoeuvres, when they are in full accordance with international law and are taking place with the permission of adjacent coastal States, is not acceptable. In adopting this approach, the study has shown a bias and partial view of the current situation with regard to the deployment of naval forces. The study adopts a differential approach to national security. Small and medium-sized States are considered to have legitimate needs for naval forces in defence of their national security, both in terms of their immediate coastlines and for projection out onto the high seas. However, the major military Powers also have national security interests which, while not immediately contiguous with their coastline, are just as vital. Not to recognize this, and not to accept the need for the deployment of naval forces away from the immediate coastline of States, is to take a blinkered and unrealistic view of the current situation. In addition, a number of States are responsible for territories far from their own national territory and these require the presence of naval forces to protect them from unwarranted aggression and invasion. In the same way, the presence of naval bases used by a second State on the territory of a first, with the permission of the sovereign Government, is not a matter which should be questioned by the United Nations, regardless of any view expressed by a majority of States. If, however, the issue is to be discussed, then the other view should have been accorded equal prominence within the text of the paper.

The discussion contained in the paper of the emerging role of fast attack craft is insufficient, given the growing importance of these types of vessels. While there is considerable discussion of the naval units of the major military Powers, insufficient attention is paid to the capabilities which this type of vessel conveys to small and medium-sized navies. Although lacking the power projection capability of larger navies, these forces are more than sufficient for the type of regional conflict which is so prevalent throughout the world. It is this type of vessel which has seen more action in recent years and in which there has been the greatest number of innovations and an explosion in numerical terms. While large navies may be able to project their forces at considerable distances from their coast, once these forces come into contact with local forces, armed with fast attack craft, then the advantages of the larger vessels are in many ways nullified. The ability to place highly capable and sophisticated surface-to-surface missiles on relatively small platforms gives small navies an equal striking force in local conflicts with much larger warships. The importance of this type of vessel needs to be recognized and, in any future discussions concerned with limiting and preventing any further increase in the naval build-up, this type of vessel deserves to receive equal attention to other, larger capital vessels.

The United Kingdom does not accept the suggestion contained in paragraph 279 that its present governmental agencies concerned with offshore activities are inefficient or insufficient to deal with the task with which they have been allocated.

Paragraph 285 of the study correctly points out that there is no such thing as an independent naval balance or parity and that all discussion of disarmament measures in the maritime field needs to be considered within the overall military situation prevailing in the world. Unfortunately, this realization is not always reflected in other parts of the study. The ideas contained in the study for quantitative and qualitative restraints on naval armaments do not seem to the United Kingdom to be realistic or practicable, given the overall situation in which the United Kingdom and its allies find themselves. As previously stated, the United Kingdom believes that the situation with regard to nuclear weapons deployed at sea needs to be viewed in the context of the overall nuclear balance. Similarly, the asymmetries in military forces and geographical situation between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization mean that discussion of limitations of naval forces should be placed in the context of an overall agreement on the military balance between the two alliance systems. In this regard, the United Kingdom does not accept the implicit suggestion contained in paragraph 297 of the study that the continued possession of nuclear weapons and their deployment, according to generally recognized principles of international law, is in any sense not legitimate.

With regard to the confidence-building measures contained in paragraph 298, the United Kingdom considers that three of the suggestions made form an acceptable basis for discussion. The United Kingdom would wish to see discussion on the extension of existing CBMs and the promotion of mutual trust through more openness. Multilateralization of the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union on the prevention of incidents over the high seas is also a topic

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which merits discussion. The remaining CBMs addressing restraints on areas, ranges, deployments, bases, working systems and technology do not seem areas where useful discussions involving the United Kingdom and its allies could take place, given the current asymmetries which exist between their forces and those of the Warsaw Treaty Organization. This does not mean, however, that these ideas could not be applied in other regions of the world.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom does not accept that the build-up in naval arms imparts a particularly dangerous dimension to the arms race or that a build-up in naval arms has any inherent momentum of its own. The growth in naval systems has taken place as a result of political decisions based upon the national security considerations of States. The United Kingdom would have wished to see greater discussion in the study of the growth of navies apart from those of the two alliance systems, and would have welcomed greater recognition of the impact which technological advances have had on the capability of smaller and medium-sized navies to carry out naval actions close to their own shores. Discussion of the effects which this growth in naval power could have on regional situations would have made a significant contribution to the current debate and would have gone some way towards balancing the overall presentation of the current international naval situation contained in the study.
