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SECRET



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 01-218 2111/3 (Direct Dialling)
01-218 9000 (Switchboard)

MO 5/21

12th May 1982

A.S.C. 12/5
L.A.

Dear John,

NON-COMBAT AIRCRAFT : CONTINGENCY PRESS
RELEASE

At OD(SA) yesterday it was agreed that Lord Cockfield should have the opportunity of commenting on the contingency press release against the possibility of an Argentine non-combat aircraft being shot down. I am attaching a draft which has been cleared at working level in both the DoT and FCO and I should be grateful if you would clear this line with the Trade Secretary.

I am copying this letter to John Coles (No 10), Brian Fall (FCO) and Roger Facer (Cabinet Office).

Yours,
Jane Ridley
(J E RIDLEY)

J Rhodes Esq

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DRAFT PRESS RELEASE FOR ARGENTINE 707/C130 ENGAGEMENT

At [] time [] an Argentine (military) aircraft engaged on surveillance duties against our own forces was shot down by a (missile/aircraft). We have no reports of any survivors.

We warned the Argentine authorities on 23 April and again on 7 May that all Argentine aircraft, including civil aircraft, engaging in surveillance of British forces would be regarded as hostile and were liable to be dealt with accordingly.

The aircraft which was a (Boeing 707/C130) was (outside/inside) the TEZ and it was clear from its observed behaviour that it (intended to obtain/was engaged in acquiring) intelligence about our forces.

The intelligence gained from this type of surveillance operation can be used to direct air, surface ship and submarine attacks against our forces, with consequent risk to British lives.

The need for such action in our self-defence can easily be avoided if Argentina heeds our public warnings in future.