

PS (6)
PS/EX HURD
PS/EX ONSLOW
PS/PJS
MR HULLARD
SIR I SINCLAIR
MR GIFFARD
MR WRIGHT
MR ADAMS
LORD N. GORDON LENNOX
LORD BRIDGES
MR URE
MR GILLMORE

HD/PUSD (2)
HD/S AM D
HD/DEFENCE D
HD/NEWS D
HD/ERD
ED/ECD(B)
HD/UND
HD/PLANNING STAFF
MR ANTHONY WILLIAMS W60

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RESIDENT CLERK

ADVANCE COPY

DBY 281600Z

IMMEDIATE

PS/NO 10 DOWNING ST (2)

PS/S OF S FOR DEFENCE

MR J STEWART AUSD STAFF MOD

PC/CHANCELJOR }
MR TLETT } TREASURY
MR LITTLER }

MISS DICKSON D/ENERGY

SIR R ARMSTRONG }
SIR M PALLISER } CABINET OFFICE
MR WADE-GERY }
MR FULLER SAPU/DIO }
DIO }

Room 8 FOR MODUK C IN C FLEET

[Passed to E.R.]

[Typists a.a.]

CONFIDENTIAL

DESKBY 281600Z

FM BRASILIA 281440Z MAY 82

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 217 OF 28 MAY

INFO MODUK (DIC ARMS CONTROL CELL, MOD (ROOM 3356)

FALKLANDS: EXOCETS

1. FRENCH NAVAL ATTACHE TOLD ME LAST NIGHT THAT A CLASSMATE OF HIS WAS WORKING IN THE DASSAULT FACTORY ON THE PRODUCTION OF EXOCET MISSILES. WHEN HE WAS IN FRANCE ON DUTY SOME TWO OR THREE WEEKS AGO HE HAD HAD AN OPPORTUNITY OF DISCUSSING THE FALKLANDS CONFLICT WITH THIS FRIEND AND WAS TOLD, AS A MATTER OF CERTAINTY THAT ONLY 5 SUPER ETENDARD AIRCRAFT AND 5 EXOCET AM 39 MISSILES HAD BEEN SUPPLIED BY FRANCE TO ARGENTINA.

2. CAPTAIN DEBEDDE WENT ON TO SAY THAT 10 ARGENTINE PILOTS HAD BEEN TRAINED ON SUPER ETENDARDS ABOARD A FRENCH AIRCRAFT CARRIER. THEY HAD ALSO RECEIVED TRAINING IN THE LAUNCHING OF EXOCET MISSILES. BUT HE WAS QUITE CERTAIN THAT THE ARGENTINE SUPER ETENDARDS HAD NOT AS YET BEEN OPERATED FROM THEIR OWN AIRCRAFT

EXOCETS HAD NOT AS YET BEEN OPERATED FROM THE 14 018 AT SEA. THE CARRIER, THE QUOTE 25 DE MAYO UNQUOTE, WHOSE DECK WAS TO BE USED TO CARRY THESE HEAVY AIRCRAFT AND WOULD REQUIRE STRENGTHENING FOR THAT PURPOSE.

AS TO THE USE OF EXOCETS IN THE FALKLANDS CONFLICT, CAPTAIN DEBEDDE SAID THAT THE ARGENTINE PILOTS HAD NOT PRESSED THEIR ATTACK CLOSELY ENOUGH AND HAD TENDED TO LET OFF THEIR MISSILES TOO SOON. HE IMPLIED THAT THE ATTACK AGAINST HMS SHEFFIELD WAS LUCKY TO HAVE SUCCEEDED. ON THE OTHER HAND, A PILOT WHO HAD BEEN PROPERLY TRAINED IN THE USE OF EXOCET COULD HARDLY MISS: THE COMPUTERISED TARGET ACQUISITION AND DIRECTION ASSEMBLY WAS AMAZINGLY EFFICIENT AND SHOULD NOT NORMALLY MAKE A MISTAKE, PROVIDED THAT THE AIRCRAFT WAS POINTED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION AND THE RADAR WAS LOCKED ON TO THE RIGHT TARGET.

4. I ASKED HOW IT WAS THEN THAT ONE OF THE MM 38 EXOCETS FIRED IN TRIALS BY THE BRAZILIAN NAVY LAST YEAR HAD MISSED. CAPTAIN DEBEDDE SAID THAT AN INVESTIGATION BY THE FRENCH EXPERTS WHO HAD BEEN PRESENT AT THE FIRING HAD NOT PRODUCED ANY CLEAR-CUT EXPLANATION. THE FIRING PROCEDURES USED BY THE BRAZILIANS APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN ABSOLUTELY CORRECT. THEY WERE LESS CERTAIN, HOWEVER, ABOUT THE PREPARATION OF THE MISSILES FOR FIRING, WHICH HAD BEEN DONE BY THE BRAZILIANS THEMSELVES WITHOUT FRENCH SUPERVISION. THE IMPROVED MM 40 MISSILE WAS MORE FOOL-PROOF AND THE FRENCH WERE HOPING TO INTEREST THE BRAZILIANS IN ITS PURCHASE.

5. WHEN I MENTIONED YESTERDAY'S MEDIA REPORTS THAT THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES HAD CONFIRMED THAT THEY WERE SUPPLYING EXOCET MISSILES TO PERU, WHICH WE FEARED MIGHT BE PASSED ON BY PERU TO ARGENTINA, CAPTAIN DEBEDDE SAID THAT HE COULD PROBABLY VERIFY THE ARRIVAL OF THESE MISSILES IN PERU THROUGH HIS FRENCH ATTACHE COLLEAGUE IN LIMA, IF HE WISHED.

6. I ASSUME THAT THE ABOVE IS ALREADY WELL KNOWN TO THE MOD. BUT IN VIEW OF THE ACUTE INTEREST ABOUT EVERY ASPECT OF EXOCETS AT THE MOMENT I REPORT IT NEVERTHELESS. IF YOU OR MOD WISHED ME TO PUT ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS TO CAPTAIN DEBEDDE, I AM SURE THAT HE WOULD DO HIS BEST TO ANSWER THEM. HE IS A SINGULARLY AGREEABLE AND STRAIGHTFORWARD COLLEAGUE, WITH WHOM MY OWN NA IS ON CLOSE TERMS.

HARDING