

PRIME MINISTER

c. Mr. Whitmore

BOMBING OF SHIP IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

The Ministry of Defence have given us some further details about the incident which Clive mentioned to you before you left for Windsor.

The oil tanker, called "The Hercules", was bombed late this afternoon by a four-engined aircraft, presumed to be a Hercules, about 480 miles north of the Falkland Islands. The ship, which is of 216,000 tons, is owned by a Monrovia company called United Carriers Incorporated, and is leased to a US company, called the Maritime Overseas Corporation. The Ministry of Defence suspect that this is an arrangement of convenience, and that the ship is actually owned by the US company. It is registered in Liberia, and has an Italian crew of 30. It was heading for Alaska, via Cape Horn, to load up with crude oil, and can therefore be assumed to have no cargo.

The ship was not badly damaged. It was holed in the deck, possibly by an unexploded bomb. It is however listing by six degrees. It has turned round and is heading North East out of the area. It is in no need of immediate assistance as yet.

The Ministry of Defence have warned the President's staff of this incident. The Ministry has also put out a statement saying that no UK aircraft were in the area, and that

/HMS Hydra

HMS Hydra, a hospital ship, has left from Montevideo
to investigate and offer any necessary assistance.

cm

8 June 1982