



Prime Minister

KWL

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MO 5/21

Discussed at ODSA today.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY

A-F-C-1/6

LT CDR ASTIZ

K-a.

When we last considered the case of Lt Cdr Astiz at OD(SA) it was agreed that he should return to the UK. He is at present onboard the MV BRITISH AVON which is expected to arrive in the UK on about 6th June. Arrangements have been made for Astiz to be accommodated in the Keep at Chichester which forms part of the RMP Training Centre. This will provide a secure, self-contained area with all the necessary facilities for a POW. It will however be expensive in terms of the manpower required.

2. As you know the ICRC saw Astiz at Ascension Island and although they were satisfied with the conditions under which he was being kept they refused to take any part in questioning him. As expected Astiz refused to see any representatives of the French or Swedish Governments and refused to answer any questions about his activities in Argentina. I understand that the French and the Swedes have now been informed of the outcome of the approach to Astiz. Since Astiz cannot be either extradited from the UK or handed over to another Government and since no pressure may be put upon him there is no more we can do to help the French and the Swedes.

3. Although the ICRC have kept a relatively low profile so far and tried not to comment on the retention of Astiz our latest contacts with them suggest that they are coming under increasing pressure to make their position clear. If they do make a statement it is unlikely to support the UK's position. I feel that we must



do all that we can to avoid an unhelpful or possibly even hostile comment from the ICRC which would clearly put us in a difficult position internationally - and indirectly create unnecessary dangers for our POWs in Argentinian hands.

4. I believe strongly that all the factors now point towards repatriating Astiz immediately he returns to the UK. We have done all that we legally can to help the French and Swedish Governments but, given the refusal of Astiz to co-operate, there is nothing more that we can do. Now that we have resolved this question the detention of Astiz when all other Argentinian prisoners have been, or are in the process of being, repatriated is even more difficult to justify. We also need to try and avoid a hostile reaction from the ICRC. The arrival of Astiz in the UK is an opportunity to make a clear-cut decision and although facilities for holding him are available they will be very expensive in terms of manpower and facilities. I therefore favour repatriating Astiz on the first available flight.

5. I am copying this minute to OD(SA) colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*MHL[ran] (Private Secretary)  
(Draft approved by Mr Mott and signed in his absence)*

Ministry of Defence

28th May 1982