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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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MO 5/21

14th May 1982

Dear John

NON-COMBAT AIRCRAFT: CONTINGENCY PRESS
RELEASE

Further to my letter of 12th May on this subject I am now attaching an amended version of the draft Press Release which has been approved by my Secretary of State. I hope that it now takes into account Lord Cockfield's concern that the 707s engaged in surveillance would be military aircraft and should be clearly described as such. If, in the event, the aircraft concerned had Argentine Air Force markings - a point raised by Sir Robert Armstrong - this could also be put into the Release.

I should be grateful for your confirmation that the Trade Secretary is now content.

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

Yours,
Jane Ridley
(J E RIDLEY)(MISS)

J Rhodes Esq

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Gen. Minister. 49

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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 23rd April and again on 7th May that all Argentine aircraft engaging in surveillance of British forces would be regarded as hostile and were liable to be dealt with accordingly.

The aircraft which is a type [] we know the Argentines use for military purposes (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.



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