



Prime Minister.
 May Mr Nott and
 reply to Eldon Griffiths
 as proposed below?

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

14 May, 1982

Dear John,

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Yes

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P. a. M 17/5

Mr Pym has seen a copy of your letter of 11 May to Nick Evans in the MOD.

He understands the reasons for making the proposed reply to Mr Botha warmer, but nevertheless has some reservations about the idea. The South Africans are always anxious to seize on the slightest indication that our attitude to them may be changing and quick to exploit politically any request we might put to them. There is thus a real danger that they would deliberately leak the message from the Prime Minister which could be represented as implying that we were likely to ask for facilities. Such a leak could have serious repercussions in terms of the loss of international support for our position over the Falklands, both in the UN and elsewhere. In Mr Pym's view, it would be preferable to avoid this risk unless there is a much clearer likelihood than now seems to be the case that we shall in fact need to approach the South Africans for naval or other facilities.

Furthermore, despite the relatively forthcoming message already given to Mr Eldon Griffiths there is still a real risk (to which Mr Pym drew attention in his minute of 5 May) that the South Africans might either reject or seek to attach unacceptable political conditions to any offer of assistance. Mr Pym has been reinforced in this view by the unsympathetic South African response to our request to them to suspend the supply of arms and ammunition to Argentina. In their reply (which we understand was considered by the South African Cabinet) the South Africans indicated that their cooperation could depend on a guarantee by HMG to supply arms to South Africa in contravention of the UN mandatory arms embargo (Cape Town telnos 326 and 327 refer). (The South Africans have however told us that there is no question of their supplying EXOCET to Argentina).

In the light of these indications of South Africa's inclination to turn the Falklands issue to its own political advantage, Mr Pym considers that the response to Mr P W Botha should be couched in the more neutral, but still friendly, terms originally suggested by Mr Nott in his minute of 29 April, with the addition of the Prime Minister's endorsement. Mr Pym has noted from Nick Evans's letter that Mr Eldon Griffiths professed himself 'entirely content' with the terms of that reply.

Finally, and subject to Mr Nott's views, we might perhaps

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suggest to Mr Eldon Griffiths that in replying to the South Africans he should add that the most immediate and tangible help that the South African Government could give us would be to take all possible steps, without preconditions, to ensure that for the duration of the conflict no arms or other war material reaches Argentina from or through South Africa.

Yours over.

Francis Richards
(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street

cc: N Evans Esq, MOD

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