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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

24 May 1982

Prime Minister

A. F. C. 25/5.

Dear John,

h-a.  
AR 27/5.

Israeli Arms Supplies to Argentina

At this morning's meeting of OD(SA) it was agreed that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office would produce a short general brief which Ministers and Senior Officials could use with suitable contacts. I enclose such a brief.

I am copying this letter to Private Secretaries to the members of OD(SA), Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Michael Palliser.

Yours ever

(J E Holmes)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

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## ISRAELI ARMS SUPPLIES TO ARGENTINA

Background

1. At the beginning of the current crisis we asked Israel to embargo arms sales to Argentina, in common with other western countries. The Israelis refused to give us an assurance but said that whilst existing contracts would be fulfilled, no new contracts would be signed during the crisis. In addition, they undertook not to accelerate deliveries under existing contracts, for example, by airfreighting equipment. Finally, there have been a number of statements that no military items have in fact been shipped since the beginning of the crisis. The Americans have also raised the issue with the Israelis on our behalf and received similar replies.

2. Despite these assurances, we have seen clear indications that Argentina is making a major effort to obtain arms and military equipment from Israel, and that Israeli companies have made offers or are involved in negotiations on the supply of weapons. Some of the negotiations concern highly sophisticated equipment which could cause considerable damage to our forces if it is supplied. Many of the reports involve shipments via third countries, which suggests that Israeli companies are using this approach to circumvent the restriction.



## ISRAELI ARMS SUPPLIES TO ARGENTINA

Points to Make

1. (a) The UK was disappointed that Israel was unable to impose a ban in common with our other partners;
- (b) We were not asking Israel to do more than others had willingly accepted; we do not believe that this action would have put Jewish interests in Argentina at risk;
- (c) Although certain assurances were given by Israeli representatives, we have received a good deal of information suggesting that Israeli companies are negotiating sales with Argentina and that deliveries are being made, frequently via third countries. This fact throws doubt on the value of the assurances which we have been given.
- (d) Some of the equipment concerned is highly sophisticated and could significantly enhance the Argentine military threat to our forces. Public opinion in this country would be deeply shocked if a British ship or aircraft were to be destroyed as a result of equipment supplied by the Israelis.
- (e) It is becoming increasingly difficult for Ministers to ignore this situation and to continue to make reassuring public statements about Israel's position. We therefore very much hope that Israeli authorities

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will reassess their policy and take urgent steps to ensure that there is a genuine ban on deliveries to Argentina or to third countries which sympathise with the Argentine cause.

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