

Mr Luce

PS

*Secretary of State* (7)

*Minute overleaf*

AW 062/2		
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INDEX	PA	Action Taken

HMS ENDURANCE

- A 1. Following his meeting with Mr Michael Shersby MP on 21 January, the Secretary of State wishes to write to the Secretary of State for Defence to persuade him to reverse the decision to withdraw HMS Endurance from service. I submit a draft.
- B 2. The Secretary of State wrote to Mr Nott on 5 June 1981 putting the political arguments for excluding HMS Endurance from the defence review cuts. The case for returning to the charge with the Ministry of Defence was last considered in November 1981, when Ministers decided against intervention because of reluctance to reopen one element of a difficult package in the defence review.
- C 3. We know that Mr Nott is now about to write to the Secretary of State to make proposals for the disposal of HMS Endurance. It would therefore be desirable for the Secretary of State's minute to Mr Nott to issue without delay.

*P. R. Fearn*

P. R. Fearn  
South America Dept

22 January 1982

cc PS/Mr Luce  
PS/PUS  
Sir A Acland  
Mr Day  
Mr Weston (Defence Dept)

/My fear

1. My fear is that if the Secretary of State invites Mr Nott to reconsider the withdrawal of HMS Endurance on the grounds of the political embarrassment which that action is causing to the FCO, then Mr Nott may invite the FCO to bear the cost of running the ship for political purposes.
2. However I understand from Mr Weston that Mr Nott has now circulated a minute to OD members warning them of the need for drastic further defence cuts, and at the same time offering - as a sop to public and Parliamentary opinion - the reinstatement of HMS Intrepid and HMS Fearless. I think this opens the way to a slightly different approach and I would propose that paragraph 3 of the draft should be recast as follows:

'In view of these considerations and of the strength of feeling in the House and outside about HMS Endurance, I wonder if you could not see your way to reinstating her - in the same way as I understand you are considering doing with Intrepid and Fearless - to ease the passage of more far-reaching defence cuts through the House and in the country? I can think of no single gesture which would have such an immediate effect with public opinion, and which would also serve a very real operational purpose'.



J B Ure

22 January 1982

cc:

PS/Mr Luce  
PS/PUS  
Mr Wright  
Mr Day  
Mr Weston, Defence Department

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:  
SECRETARY OF STATE

Reference

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

The Rt Hon John Nott MP  
Secretary of State for Defence

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT: HMS ENDURANCE

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

1. In my minute FCS/81/70 of 5 June 1981, I put the political arguments for the retention in service of HMS Endurance. The decision was nevertheless taken, as part of the defence review, to withdraw her from service this April: and you are, I understand, now considering how the ship should be disposed of.
2. The news of her withdrawal has, as expected, led to strong protest. As you know, an Early Day Motion has already been signed by over 150 MPs, the majority from <sup>own</sup> own party. The debate in the House of Lords on 16 December centred on HMS Endurance. The decision is being interpreted as a stage in a deliberate British policy of reducing our support for the Falkland Islands: and as demonstrating a lack of commitment to our sovereignty position (and to the related economic potential) in Antarctica. Our denials have had little effect; and the issue is having a disproportionate impact on the credibility of our policy in the area.
3. I fully understand the defence reasons for the withdrawal of HMS Endurance. But I now wonder whether the financial savings are worth the high political cost we are having to face. I would value an opportunity to discuss this with you.

Enclosures—flag(s).....