



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London S.W.1

17 October 1979

*Dear Michael,*

## MANDATORY ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

Thank you for your letter of 8 October.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary considers it essential that the UK should have an adequate defence against accusations that it is not complying fully with the mandatory arms embargo against South Africa.

There is likely to be pressure at the United Nations this session for stronger measures to ensure that the embargo is being applied, and closer scrutiny of the performance of member States. The UN Arms Embargo Committee set up to examine compliance with the embargo has already asked the United Kingdom to investigate allegations that the Plessey contract to supply a radar air traffic control system to South Africa constitutes a breach. We should not expose ourselves unnecessarily to further criticism for not having fully complied with the embargo, particularly in a period in which we may face strong criticism in the UN over Rhodesia.

Lord Carrington therefore considers it important that we should be able to show that we have taken some action to comply with paragraph 3 of Security Council Resolution 418. He would suggest the addition of the following sentence to the draft enclosed with your letter:

"Companies having any such arrangements are therefore invited to review them in the light of the United Nations Resolution."

Lord Carrington believes that without this sentence companies would be uncertain about where responsibility for compliance with paragraph 3 of the Resolution lay. This sentence would make it clear that it is not for the Government to conduct the review called for by the Resolution. We understand that officials in the Departments of Trade and Industry would see no objection to this amendment.

If, as the Prime Minister fears, a notice in Trade and Industry were to give rise to questions about the supply of arms to the Patriotic Front, these could be answered by pointing out that we already take extensive precautions to prevent the supply of arms to the Patriotic Front directly or indirectly from sources in the United Kingdom. If the guerrilla war continued following the granting of legal independence to Rhodesia, we should press other countries to take similar steps. There is of course no prospect of winning support in the United Nations for a mandatory embargo on the supply of arms to the Patriotic Front.

M O'D B Alexander Esq  
10 Downing Street

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I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other members of OD and to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

*yours ever*

*Roderic Lyne*

(R M J Lyne)

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*S. Africa*

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

8 October 1979

Mandatory Arms Embargo Against South Africa

The Prime Minister has seen the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's paper (OD(79)23) of 24 September on this subject.

The Prime Minister is unhappy about the course of action proposed by Lord Carrington. She believes that the reaction of many people to a notice on the lines suggested will be to ask who is going to stop arms going to the Patriotic Front should they continue hostilities. She would prefer that no notice should be published. If, however, it is considered essential to put out a notice then the Prime Minister would wish the text to be along the lines set out in the enclosure to this letter.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other Members of OD and to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

**M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER**

R.M.J. Lyne, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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