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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~930 7022~~ 218 2111/3

MO 25/3/4

1st October 1982

Dear Jim,

VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER
TO THE FALKLANDS

It has been agreed that we should advise on transport arrangements and security implications of the Prime Minister's proposed visit for the Falkland Islands 150th Anniversary celebrations. I gather that John Holmes will be writing to you about other aspects of the visit.

The Prime Minister and party would be flown from the UK to Ascension Island in an RAF VC10 under the normal VIP arrangements. From Ascension Island to Port Stanley the RAF would plan to use a Nimrod long-range maritime patrol aircraft. This leg is too far for a VC10 which cannot be refuelled in flight. The Nimrod has not yet been used on this journey but with the extension of the temporary runway at Port Stanley the flight should be possible by next February. *how long?*

The Nimrod will be substantially quicker and more comfortable than the Hercules, which is the only alternative, but it has no VIP fit. Space will be limited by refuelling lines etc; and it should be assumed that at the maximum 15 passengers could be carried. It would not be possible to use a civilian aircraft. The airfield at Port Stanley even when extended will not take a long haul aircraft and aircraft with shorter range would need in-flight refuelling or an assured diversion airfield en route, neither of which is possible.

The Prime Minister will be fully aware of the difficulties of travel to the Falklands but there are one or two points which I should draw to your attention. First, should future experience show there are difficulties with operating Nimrods on this route, a Hercules would have to be used instead. In this event the flight will be slow (12 hours each way as opposed to 9 for the Nimrod), uncomfortable and exhausting for the party. Second, whichever aircraft

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is used, inflight refuelling, which always carries a certain risk and is uncomfortable for those on board, would be necessary. Finally, diversion airfields in the event of an emergency or failure to land at Port Stanley would have to be on the South American mainland.

Whichever aircraft is used, security for the flights should present no major problems. On board the aircraft an Air Transport Security Squad of 1 Officer and 2 RAF Policemen would accompany the flight. Air defence cover in the Falklands area will be provided by RAF fighter aircraft; and should the threat warrant it, cover could also be provided in the area of Ascension Island.

For completeness we have considered the possibility of sea travel. Assuming we cannot use a South American port a RN ship or Royal Fleet Auxiliary could be used from Ascension Island to the Falklands. However, the journey would take 7/10 days each way, and I assume that this would not be acceptable.

I am copying this letter to John Holmes (FCO) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Your ever

Nich Evans

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