

SECRET

Prime Minister

25A

A.J.C. 22/12



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

Telephone 01-218 2216 (Direct Dialling)
01-218 9000 (Switchboard)

MINISTER OF STATE FOR
THE ARMED FORCES

D/MIN(AF)/PB/5/1/5

22 December 1982

MS

Dear John,

FALKLAND ISLANDS: INCREASED ARGENTINE AIR ACTIVITY

1. The Prime Minister will wish to be aware that we have received intelligence reports indicating increased activity at the Argentine air base at Rio Gallegos. Although this is most probably associated with the build-up of the 10th Air Brigade, it may signal a greater possibility of provocative action by the Argentine Air Force over the Christmas period or on 3 January, which is the 150th Anniversary of British settlement in the Falklands.

2. The JIC met this afternoon and concluded that there was no significant increase in the threat of direct action against our forces. Nevertheless the Commander, British Forces has requested an additional Phantom aircraft to replace one which is currently unservicable due to an accident on landing, and also that the Harrier force of 6 aircraft should not be reduced over the next few weeks. In the circumstances we have decided it is prudent to meet these requests. Major General Thorne is also bringing his forces to a greater state of readiness. It is possible that the move of the Phantom may attract public attention; if so we intend to take the line that this is a routine deployment to maintain the strength of the Garrison.

3. I am copying this letter to John Holmes and Richard Hatfield.

Yours ever

Peter Craine

R P CRAINE

A J Coles Esq

SECRET
SECRET