



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

14 January 1983

From what we were told about the Electra aircraft to monitor the movements of our aircraft & civil air report - this wire compliance not

Prime Minister
To note.

A.S.C. 14/1

Dear John,

Electra Aircraft

You asked about the recent Reuters Report quoting military sources in Buenos Aires as saying that Argentina had recently bought three or four Lockheed Electra Airliners from the United States for conversion into maritime patrol aircraft.

This is the first indication we have had that Argentina has bought more Electra aircraft although we know that since last June Argentina has been interested in buying all types of civilian transport aircraft including the Electra. In the past Argentina has converted civilian transport aircraft to a military role. There is very little we can do to prevent Argentina purchasing them. The Electra is a civilian commercial transport aircraft and is therefore not subject to the US ban on arms sales to Argentina, nor subject to export licencing procedures.

Conversion to a proper maritime patrol aircraft is a major task (similar to transforming a Comet into a Nimrod) and would, MOD tell us, be beyond the capability of the Argentines themselves. It is more likely that extra equipment would be installed so that the aircraft could be used to some extent in a maritime patrol role. But this could take some considerable time and the Argentines would almost certainly need help from elsewhere.

Argentina already owns four Electra aircraft which they use for routine military transport but this would be the first occasion such a conversion will have been made. Although the report denies the aircraft will be equipped for anti-submarine warfare we understand that the Electra could be fitted with a torpedo capability.

/I am

It was an Electra that seemed to monitor our Phantoms.

CONFIDENTIAL



I am copying this to Richard Mottram (MOD).

Your ever
J E Holmes
(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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Handwritten text

12 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11





MO 26/9/1

PRIME MINISTERPrime Minister

To note - you asked for the
 further information.

HR 1/11.

ELECTRA AIRCRAFT

see 14.183

John Coles' letter to John Holmes sought more information about Argentine possession and operation of Electra aircraft. As this is primarily a matter for the Ministry of Defence I am replying.

2. By way of background I should explain that the Lockheed Electra is a relatively old turbo-prop aircraft which entered airline service in 1959. It is also the airframe used by the United States Navy for their Orion Maritime Patrol aircraft. The maximum range of Electra, with internal fuel, is 2,800 nautical miles with a 1,800 lb pay load.

3. The Argentine Navy acquired 4 Electras for general transport duties prior to 1976. Since June 1982, as John Holmes explained on 14th January, we have seen a number of Argentine enquiries to purchase further Electras. They are readily available. The evidence for an actual purchase is inconclusive but it would seem that the Argentine Navy could have bought up to 4 more. They would be the transport version.

4. There have been 2 approaches close to the Falkland Islands Protection Zone (FIPZ) by Argentine Electras, one on 8th January and the other on 11th January 1983. On the first occasion the aircraft may have penetrated the FIPZ to a depth of 7 nautical miles. On the other the Electra came no nearer than 20 nms.



5. The Electras are usually fitted with a Bendix Weather radar which is by no means a sophisticated radar for maritime surveillance. It would however give the Argentines a limited capability to detect ships in a moderate sea state; for example they could be expected to detect a frigate at 50 nms, although the radars' performances would fall off very rapidly in high sea states. The Bendix would also give a rudimentary submarine detection capability. From recent reports it seems that at least some of the Argentine Electras have been retrofitted with a new Primus radar but this is not significantly better than the Bendix for maritime surveillance.

6. As well as weather radar we think it possible that the Electras have an intelligence-gathering capability. The first Electra turned away when illuminated by HMS Liverpool's Sea Dart radar, which suggests that the Electra had been fitted with equipment to detect our radar transmissions.

7. It would be feasible to modify the Electra, as the USA have done, to provide a sophisticated maritime patrol capability. But to do so would require substantial assistance from Western aerospace industries and there is no evidence that this has been forthcoming. A more limited fit, perhaps to give some restricted anti-submarine warfare capability cannot be ruled out.

8. We have already asked Commander British Forces Falkland Islands to arrange for one of the Phantoms based at Stanley to photograph an Electra so that we can evaluate any aerials, domes or arrays. We will provide further briefing once this information has been obtained.

W. S. A.
Ministry of Defence

25th January 1983

ARGENTINA : Relations : Nr 22



25 JUN 1986



MFJ

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27 January 1983

Electra Aircraft

The Prime Minister has noted the contents of your Secretary of State's minute of 25 January.

AJC

Richard Mottram Esq
Ministry of Defence.

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FILE

RW

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

17 January, 1983

ELECTRA AIRCRAFT

Thank you for your letter of 14 January about press reports that Argentina has recently bought three or four Lockheed Electra Airliners from the United States for conversion into maritime patrol aircraft.

BR
The Prime Minister would be grateful if this matter could be investigated further. She received the strong impression from her military briefings during her visit to the Falkland Islands that at least one Electra aircraft owned by Argentina was already monitoring the movements of our Phantoms. Are we sure that one or more Electras have not yet already carried out maritime control functions?

I am sending a copy of this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

A. J. COLES

J. Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

RW