

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

28 April 1983

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c AD.  
MOD  
HMCT.  
COL.  
+ below

Dear John,

Falkland Islands: Argentine Next of Kin

With his minute of 27 April David Goodall enclosed a draft statement which he suggested should be issued on the record by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office this morning.

The views of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence on the draft were conveyed to me orally yesterday evening. I now enclose a text which, in the light of those views, the Prime Minister has approved. She agrees, on the assumption that the other members of OD(EM) and the Attorney General are content, that the statement should be issued this morning.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to the Private Secretaries to the other members of OD(EM), the Attorney General and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours ever  
John

John Holmes, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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PA



WE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE REPORTS THAT SENOR DESTEFANIS INTENDS TO SAIL FOR THE FALKLAND ISLANDS ON 30 APRIL WITH A PARTY INCLUDING NEXT OF KIN OF ARGENTINE SERVICEMEN KILLED DURING THE FIGHTING THERE. SENOR DESTEFANIS IS APPARENTLY PERSISTING IN THIS INTENTION DESPITE THE CLEAR STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS THAT THEY ARE NOT WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN HIS VENTURE BECAUSE THE ARRANGEMENTS HE PROPOSES ARE CONTRARY TO THE PRINCIPLE OF NEUTRALITY WHICH THE ICRC <sup>ARE</sup> ~~IS~~ CALLED UPON TO DEFEND.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAVE ALL ALONG MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY HAVE NO OBJECTION TO A VISIT TO THE FALKLAND ISLANDS BY RELATIVES OF ARGENTINE SERVICEMEN WHO DIED DURING THE HOSTILITIES THERE, PROVIDED THAT THE VISIT IS ORGANISED AND SUPERVISED BY THE ICRC AND IS PURELY HUMANITARIAN IN NATURE. THE CONDITIONS WHICH WE SPECIFIED TO THE ICRC, AND WHICH THEY RELAYED TO SENOR DESTEFANIS, WERE THOSE NECESSARY TO ENSURE THIS. THIS REMAINS OUR POSITION. WE WILL PLACE NO OBSTACLE IN THE WAY OF A VISIT BY A BONA FIDE GROUP OF RELATIVES WHICH MEETS OUR CONDITIONS AND IS PREPARED TO COME UNDER ARRANGEMENTS MADE AND SUPERVISED BY THE ICRC.

SENOR DESTEFANIS HAS NOT ONLY REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE CONDITIONS CONVEYED TO HIM; HIS ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN JUDGED UNACCEPTABLE BY THE ICRC FOR REASONS OF PRINCIPLE. THERE CAN THEREFORE BE NO QUESTION OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ALLOWING HIS GROUP THE ACCESS TO THE FALKLAND ISLANDS WHICH HE SEEKS. THE PROPOSED VISIT IS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND WOULD BE TREATED AS SUCH.



PRIME MINISTER

FALKLAND ISLANDS: ARGENTINE NEXT OF KIN

I ATTACH A DRAFT STATEMENT WHICH IS AGREED BY THE FOREIGN AND DEFENCE SECRETARIES AND WHICH, I THINK, IS AS YOU WOULD WISH.

IF YOU AGREE WITH IT, THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE WILL ISSUE IT TOMORROW MORNING. WE COULD ALSO HAVE IT AVAILABLE FOR QUESTIONS.

AGREE THAT THE STATEMENT SHOULD BE ISSUED?

A-J-C.

Yes

27 APRIL 1983

Ref: B06772

MR COLESFalkland Islands: Argentine Next of Kin

At the meeting of OD(EM) on 27th April, officials were instructed to draft a statement which could be issued before Senor Destefanis and his party set sail on 30th April, with the object of making the British Government's position clear and (if possible) deterring Senor Destefanis from going ahead. I attach a draft statement on these lines which has been prepared in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

2. The final sentence of the draft is in square brackets in case the Prime Minister prefers to stop short at this stage of a categorical statement which would commit us to preventing a landing in any circumstances.
3. As to handling, the best way of getting maximum publicity for the statement would probably be for it to be issued on the record by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, if possible tomorrow morning; and if the Prime Minister were able to reply in similar terms to a question in the House tomorrow afternoon. The statement could at the same time be telegraphed to posts with instructions to bring it to the attention of governments as appropriate; and the Swiss could be asked to draw it to the attention of the Argentine authorities.
4. I am copying this minute and its attachment to the Private Secretaries to the other members of OD(EM), the Attorney General and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*David Goodall*27th April 1983

A D S GOODALL



We continue to receive reports that Senor Destefanis intends to sail for the Falkland Islands on 30th April with a party <sup>including</sup> of next of kin of Argentine servicemen killed during the fighting there. Senor Destefanis is apparently persisting in this intention despite the clear statement by the International Committee of the Red Cross that they are not willing to participate in his venture because the arrangements he proposes are contrary to the principle of neutrality which the ICRC is called upon to defend.

The British Government have all along made it clear that they have no objection to a visit to the Falkland Islands by relatives of Argentine servicemen who died during the hostilities there, provided that the visit is organised and supervised by the ICRC and is purely humanitarian in nature. The conditions which we specified to the ICRC, and which they relayed to Senor Destefanis, were those necessary to ensure this. This remains our position. We will place no obstacle in the way of a visit by a bona fide group of relatives which meets our conditions and is prepared to come under arrangements made and supervised by the ICRC.

Senor Destefanis has not only refused to accept the conditions conveyed to him; his arrangements have been judged unacceptable by the ICRC for reasons of principle. There can therefore be no question of the British Government allowing his group <sup>the</sup> access to the Falkland Islands. <sup>which he seeks</sup> [If

Senor Destefanis and his group set sail it will be in the knowledge that their venture is unauthorised and that the responsibility for any consequences which may follow from an attempt to go ahead without the British Government's agreement will lie with them and with the Argentine authorities. [It will also be in the knowledge that no member of Senor Destefanis group or of the crew of the vessel in which they are travelling will be permitted to land on the Falkland Islands.]

The proposed  
Such a visit is  
unacceptable to the  
British Government and would  
be treated as such.