



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

2 December 1983

Dear John,

French Arms Sales to Argentina

You will have seen from Paris telegram No 1116 that the French Government have decided in principle to remove the existing restraints on arms sales to Argentina (I enclose a copy). The Foreign Secretary is being briefed to raise this issue bilaterally with Cheysson if he gets the opportunity. He would take the line that we regret the French decision; appreciate the limitation on French arms sales until now; are concerned that the decision will send the wrong signals to the Argentine military, and that we hope that our particular concerns will be borne closely in mind, especially the highly emotive subject of the sale of advanced air-launched weapons, particularly EXOCET.

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

FALKLAND ISLANDS GENERAL (ADVANCES)

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PS
PS/LADY YOUNG
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SIR J BULLARD
SIR I SINCLAIR
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RESIDENT OFFICE

MR CARTLEDGE
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ED/PUSD (2)
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ED/FID
~~ED/NEWS DEPT~~
ED/EDD
ED/ECG(E)
ED/UND
ED/PLANNING STAFF

~~Mr. [unclear] [unclear]~~

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FM PARIS 011800Z DEC 83
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 1116 OF 1 DECEMBER
INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK DS11
INFO ROUTINE WASHINGTON

FRENCH ARMS SALES TO ARGENTINA

1. IN ANSWER TO A ROUTINE ENQUIRY FOUQUET, SOUS-DIRECTEUR FOR SOUTH AMERICA AT THE QUAI, REVEALED TODAY THAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED IN PRINCIPLE TO REMOVE THE EXISTING RESTRAINTS ON ARMS SALES TO ARGENTINA. EACH CASE WOULD BE CONSIDERED BY AN INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE CHAIRED BY THE PRIME MINISTER, BUT THE TACIT AGREEMENT NOT TO SIGN NEW CONTRACTS FOR ITEMS ON THE LIST HANDED OVER ON 17 DECEMBER NO LONGER APPLIED. THE REASON FOR THIS CHANGE OF POLICY WAS THE ADVENT OF THE ALFONSIN GOVERNMENT. THE FRENCH WERE ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENT THAT ALFONSIN WOULD NOT LAUNCH ANY FRESH MILITARY ADVENTURE AGAINST THE FALKLANDS, IN SPITE OF HIS RELUCTANCE FORMALLY TO RENOUNCE HOSTILITIES.

2. FIRST SECRETARY CHANCERY SAID THAT THIS NEWS WAS VERY UNWELCOME. ALFONSIN HAD NEITHER INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO RENOUNCE THE USE OF FORCE NOR EVEN TO NORMALISE COMMERCIAL RELATIONS. THERE REMAINED A REAL POSSIBILITY THAT ANY ARMS SOLE BY THE FRENCH MIGHT BE USED AGAINST BRITISH FORCES. HE WOULD REPORT FOUQUET'S COMMENTS AND EXPECTED THAT WE WOULD WANT TO TAKE THIS UP FORMALLY.

COMMENT

I EXPECT YOU WILL INDEED WISH TO FOLLOW THIS UP. THE MARGINS

COMMENT

3. I EXPECT YOU WILL INDEED WISH TO FOLLOW THIS UP. THE MARGINS OF THE ATHENS EUROPEAN COUNCIL MAY PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO SO. YOU MAY ALSO WISH ME TO SPEAK TO THE QUAI AT SENIOR LEVEL.

4. GIVEN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN FRENCH MINISTERS AND THE ALFONSIN GOVERNMENT, WHICH FOUQUET DESCRIBED AS INTIMATE, WE ARE UNLIKELY TO GET THIS DECISION REVERSED. OUR BEST HOPE WOULD SEEM TO LIE IN THE CASE-BY-CASE EVALUATION PROCEDURE, WHERE WE CAN SEEK TO PERSUADE THE FRENCH TO CONTINUE TO BLOCK THE EXPORT OF THE MOST SENSITIVE KINDS OF WEAPONS.

5. WE MIGHT ALSO QUESTION WHETHER THE FRENCH ARE DOING ALFONSIN ANY REAL FAVOUR BY FEEDING THE APPETITE OF THE ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES FOR EXPENSIVE NEW WEAPONRY.

FRETWELL

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SENT AT 011904Z JW

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5 December 1983

French Arms Sales to Argentina

Thank you for your letter of 2 December to John Coles. The Prime Minister saw this over the weekend and has noted the contents.

D BARCLAY

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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