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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

2 December, 1983

*I told the F/C.O. that
I did not propose to trouble
the Prime Minister with this -
which would be established*

*policy. A.J.C. 2/12
p.c.*

Dear John,

US Arms Sales to Argentina

The Foreign Secretary considers that we need to move one stage further in our representations to the US Administration on this issue as the date for Alfonsin's inauguration draws nearer. I enclose the text of a message which the Foreign Secretary proposes to send to Mr Shultz, whom we will be seeing in the margins of the NATO Ministerial next week.

You will see that the draft message does not refer to the question of certification. As a matter of substance we believe that the US decision to certify Argentina, when the new government takes office, is beyond our influence. As a matter of tactics we therefore believe that it would be better not to press this point in the message to Shultz. Sir Geoffrey proposes instead to instruct HM Ambassador Washington, in handing over this message, to say that, although we would of course be very glad if the US decided in the event not to certify Argentina, our understanding is that they are resolved to do so. If this is so, we attach importance to the public presentation of such a decision; and we would hope to have the earliest possible consultations with the Americans on this point to enable us to develop a coordinated press line.

Sir Oliver Wright expects to see Shultz on 5 December and Vice-President Bush on 6 December. These meetings would provide a good opportunity to act on the instructions summarised in this letter, provided that the Prime Minister is content.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (MOD).

*Yours ever,
Peter Ricketts*

(P F Ricketts)
Private Office

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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Message from Secretary of State to Mr Shultz: Argentina

Margaret Thatcher and I discussed the whole question of the probable resumption of US arms sales to Argentina with Ken Dam at Chequers early in November, and Janet Young has since been over the ground with both Ken Dam and Larry Eagleburger.

I do not therefore need to labour our serious concern about the possible implications of US arms sales for our defences in the Falklands particularly while the Argentines continue to refuse to declare a cessation of hostilities. I wanted to let you have this message now to underline the importance we attach to this issue in advance of the installation of the new Argentine President. I would like to have a word with you in the margins of the NATO Ministerial in Brussels next week.

In preparation for that, I should say that we were very pleased to note Cap Weinberger's public assurance that the Administration would exercise caution over major new supplies, especially of weapons that could be used in a renewed attempt to invade the Falklands. We also welcome Larry Eagleburger's undertaking to Janet Young personally to vet all proposed export licences and Ken Dam's invitation to let you know which weapons systems would cause us particular concern. I very much hope that you will feel able to consult us before decisions are taken about any Argentine request for weaponry which could affect the security of the Falklands. I thought you might find it helpful to know without delay the broad categories of arms which are of particular concern to us. I enclose a list and suggest that our officials might look at this in more detail. *Nickel Henkel will, I know, want to discuss the subject with Cap Weinberger in Washington last week.*

As regards our policy towards the new Government in Argentina, I should like to emphasise that our aim is to re-establish more normal relations between our two countries. The previous Argentine Government failed to respond positively to our various proposals: I hope the new Government will be more constructive. Margaret Thatcher has declared publicly her willingness to resume full

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commercial and diplomatic relations with Argentina. I understand that George Bush will be representing the USA at Dr Alfonsin's Inauguration. I believe it would be very useful if he could take the opportunity to emphasise that the normalisation of relations between Britain and Argentina is the most realistic point from which to start building.

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ARGENTINA : US CERTIFICATION ARMS SUPPLIES

List of Weaponry for discussion with the US Administration

1. Combat aircraft.
2. Anti-submarine warfare equipment.
3. Anti-ship missiles.
4. Aircraft with an air lift capability.
5. Naval missiles and sea mines.
6. Sophisticated tactical communications equipment.
7. Electronic warfare equipment.
8. Advanced avionics equipment.
9. Modification equipment for air-to-air refuelling.
10. Late generation (ie recent versions of) torpedoes.
11. Late generation air-to-air missiles.
12. Anti-radar missiles.
13. Cluster munitions and runway attack weapons.
14. Equipment for special forces.

Preamble proposed by MOD

This list is illustrative and designed to demonstrate the range of our concerns. It highlights the main areas for consultation and reflects our views of Argentine requirements and hence possible requests for US equipment.

It is not suggested that supply of all items in each category should be vetoed.