

File No.

Department

Drafted by
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OUTWARD

TELEGRAM

Security Classification
CONFIDENTIAL
Precedence
IMMEDIATE
DESKBYZ

FOR
COMMS. DEPT.
USE

Despatched (Date)
(Time)Z

POSTBYZ

PREAMBLE

(Time of Origin) Z (G.M.T.) (Restrictive Prefix)

(Security Class.) CONFIDENTIAL (Caveat/ Privacy marking)

(Codeword) (Deskby) Z

TO IMMEDIATE MOD LONDON Tel. No. of
(precedence) (post)

AND TO (precedence/post) IMMEDIATE FCO LONDON

AND SAVING TO

REPEATED TO (for info)

SAVING TO (for info)

Distribution:-

[TEXT]

FOLLOWING PERSONAL FOR PS TO SECRETARY OF STATE AND
PS TO FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY FROM PS TO
PRIME MINISTER

FCO tel. no. 578; US Certification and arms sales

The Prime Minister saw last night Mr. Heseltine's message in the telegram under reference. After careful consideration, Mrs. Thatcher decided that we should not, repeat not, make a major issue of US certification of Argentina but instead be prepared, ~~if necessary~~, to take up the cudgels if and when a major American arms sale to Argentina is in prospect.

2. The Prime Minister also authorised a reply to President Reagan's message on this matter which you will see in a separate telegram.

6 December 1983

A.S.C. 6/12

Copies to:-

LLG 292/φ5

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IMMEDIATE

* DD φ5193φZ ATHENS *
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CONFIDENTIAL

DESKBY φ5193φZ

FM FCO φ5183φZ DEC 83

TO IMMEDIATE ATHENS

TELEGRAM NUMBER 578 OF 5 DECEMBER

FOLLOWING PERSONAL FOR PS/PRIME MINISTER AND PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

ARGENTINA: US CERTIFICATION AND ARMS SALES

1. MR HESELTINE'S PRIVATE OFFICE HAVE ASKED US TO PASS THE FOLLOWING PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM MR HESELTINE TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

BEGINS. I DISCUSSED US CERTIFICATION OF ARGENTINA WITH GEOFFREY HOWE AT THE END OF LAST WEEK AND I HAVE NOW SEEN PRESIDENT REAGAN'S MESSAGE TO YOU OF THE 4TH OF DECEMBER, TOGETHER WITH THE FCO DRAFT REPLY.

I MUST REITERATE MY VIEW THAT WE SHOULD TAKE AN UNEQUIVOCAL STAND AGAINST THE US DECISION, AND SHOULD BE SEEN TO BE DOING SO. I BELIEVE THAT THE SUPPLY OF ARMS TO ARGENTINA IS SO CLEARLY CONTRARY TO OUR INTERESTS THAT WE CANNOT AFFORD TO COMPROMISE ON THIS MATTER.

I HAVE AS YOU KNOW EXPRESSED THIS VIEW CONSISTENTLY, BUT EVEN SINCE YOUR DEPARTURE FOR ATHENS THE MOOD HAS WORSENERED. I HAVE DISCUSSED THE REACTION TO MALCOLM RIFKIND'S STATEMENT TODAY ABOUT LEBANON WITH WILLIE WHO I KNOW WILL ENSURE THAT YOU ARE BRIEFED.

I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT GEOFFREY CAN GO TO THE HOUSE TO DEFEND AN AMERICAN DECISION TO SUPPLY ARMS TO A COUNTRY WHICH IS STILL IN A STATE OF HOSTILITIES WITH US AND EXPECT ANYTHING OTHER THAN A CATASTROPHIC REACTION. I HAVE EXPLAINED THIS VIEW TO GEOFFREY PERSONALLY. I URGE YOU MOST STRONGLY TO STAND RESOLUTE UPON THIS MATTER. ENDS.

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