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From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO

Ref. A084/3229

4 December 1984

Dear Richard,

OD and OD(FAF) Meetings on 11 December 1984

Memoranda on the Beach Report and the latest Falkland Islands Force Level Review are due to be considered at the meetings of OD and OD(FAF) on 11 December, and should therefore have been circulated not later than today in accordance with the standing instruction that papers for consideration by Ministerial Committees should be tabled at least seven days in advance. I understand that these memoranda are not yet cleared for circulation, although both meetings were arranged three weeks ago, and that because the Secretary of State for Defence will be in Brussels until tomorrow evening, you may have some difficulty in circulating the papers before the end of the week.

The seven-day rule is designed to allow the Prime Minister and other Ministers adequate time to consider Committee papers and to receive briefing from officials. There is also ample evidence that last-minute circulation of papers is a recipe for an unsatisfactory discussion particularly on a subject as complex as that of the Beach Report. Sir Robert Armstrong has therefore said that the two memoranda must be circulated by 13.00 hours at the very latest on Friday 7 December so that Ministers may consider them over the weekend if the meetings of OD and OD(FAF) on 11 December are to proceed. Should you be unable to meet this timescale I can see no prospect, given the pressure of other business, of rearranging these two meetings before Christmas.

I am copying this letter to Charles Powell (No 10).

Yours

(R P Hatfield)
Private Secretary

R C Mottram Esq

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