



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

16 April 1982

Dear David,

Rules of Engagement for SSNs

Avail. not  
 Regs.  
 19/4  
 p.a.

Mr Pym has asked me to seek your help in clearing up the following problem.

Yesterday's ad hoc Ministerial meeting is recorded as having decided to make 'an addition to the Rules of Engagement set out in OD(SA)(82)5 to the effect that any submarine found within the Maritime Exclusion Zone should be presumed to be an Argentine submarine and might be attacked'. Until then the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had been under the impression (which he had thought shared by colleagues) that this wording had not been authorised for communication to the Task Force, even as part of a catalogue from which specific Rules could subsequently be activated as and when Ministers instructed. It is clear however to Mr Pym, both from yesterday's signal by the Commander of the Task Force (151101Z) and from MODUK Navy signal 071045Z setting out 'Rules of Engagement authorised for SSNs' (now seen in the FCO for the first time), that this impression was mistaken. The Rule quoted above has evidently been included in the list communicated to the Fleet ever since 7 April. He is somewhat surprised by this. There also seem to be textual variations between the Rules authorised by Ministers in OD(SA)(82)5 and the corresponding Rules in the numbered list held by Naval Commanders.

Mr Pym takes the view that, with events moving so fast and with so much at stake, the utmost care should be taken to ensure that the results of ministerial discussion are accurately reflected in the instructions given. If we are right in thinking that there has been a discrepancy in the crucial text on this occasion he hopes very much that steps can be taken to avoid a repetition.

I am sending a copy of this letter to David Wright (Cabinet Office) and to John Coles (No. 10).

Yours ever,  
 J.P.F.

(B J P Fall)  
Private Secretary

D B Omand Esq  
 Ministry of Defence