



CONFIDENTIAL

10 DOWNING STREET

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From the Private Secretary

26 May 1982

USE OF RNZN FRIGATE

The Prime Minister has seen Mr. Nott's minute of 25 May. She agrees that we should now formally accept Mr. Muldoon's offer to make a frigate available to the Royal Navy.

The Prime Minister has approved the draft message from herself to Mr. Muldoon, subject to the insertion of the word "generous" before "offer" in paragraph 1 and the deletion of the word "generous" in paragraph 3. She has also approved the press release.

We agreed on the telephone that you would arrange for the transmission of the Prime Minister's message and for the subsequent issue of the press release.

I am copying this letter to John Holmes (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

A. J. COLES

Miss Jane Ridley,
Ministry of Defence

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Prime Minister

DM Has Seen ①

Agree

(a) to attached message to Mr. Muldoon formally accepting offer of frigate?

(b) to attached press release which will issue after (a) has been despatched?

MO 14/12

PRIME MINISTER

A.J.C. 26/5

USE OF RNZN FRIGATE

My officials have been examining as a matter of urgency last week's offer by the New Zealand Prime Minister to make a frigate available to the Royal Navy during the present hostilities in the Falklands.

2. Discussions yesterday with New Zealand House have confirmed that the ship, the Leander Class frigate CANTERBURY, could be most profitably and conveniently employed as a substitute for one of the two RN warships conducting the Indian Ocean patrol (Operation ARMILLA). Over the next few months this would enable two frigates to be released for deployment to the South Atlantic. The CANTERBURY is due to arrive in Singapore today before taking part in exercise STARFISH with us and our Five Power Defence Agreement allies at the beginning of June. Thereafter we would hope that she would take up the planned programme of exercises and port visits in company with the remaining RN ship. It will of course be necessary to consult the posts in question as well as the New Zealand authorities about this but no insuperable problems are foreseen.

3. There must of course, be a possibility that the CANTERBURY or her successor - the New Zealand Navy contemplate replacing her by her sister ship WAIKATO in August - might become involved in military action in the Gulf, especially now that hostilities between Iraq and Iran have again flared up. Mr Muldoon has made it clear that he envisages the frigate operating in every way like a RN ship. As it is, the New Zealand authorities have been approached on the question of Rules of Engagement; it may well be necessary to build in provision for Wellington to be consulted before the ship entered the Gulf in an emergency.

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4. I am in no doubt that we should lose no time in formally accepting this very generous offer, which comes at a most opportune moment after the losses of the last few days. The New Zealanders are themselves forcing the pace and are anxious that the ship should be transferred to CINCFLEET's operational control as a matter of urgency; on present plans this would take place on 27 May. They wish also to make a very early announcement. As Mr Muldoon made the offer to you in person I imagine that you would wish to convey the Government's acceptance of the New Zealand offer yourself. I attach a suitable draft message. The First Sea Lord would send a similar message to his New Zealand counterpart. I would also propose that the attached press release should be issued once your message to Mr Muldoon has been transmitted.
5. I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

Ministry of Defence
25th May 1982

DRAFT MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER
OF NEW ZEALAND

1. I promised last week that we should look very quickly at how we might make best use of your ^{generous} offer to make a RNZN frigate available during the present hostilities in the Falkland Islands.
2. May I first of all repeat my warmest thanks to you and your Government for the staunch and unwavering support that you have given us over the last difficult weeks. This has been a source of much comfort to us.
3. I am now writing formally to convey my Government's acceptance of your ~~generous~~ offer and to say that we should like to take it up as soon as practicable. I understand that, following an approach by your Chief of Naval Staff to the First Sea Lord, it has been tentatively agreed that our mutual interests would best be served if the HMNZS CANTERBURY were to replace one of the two RN warships on patrol in the Indian Ocean. I would for my part see no difficulty about our Commander in Chief, Fleet assuming operational control of the CANTERBURY as soon as convenient to you.
4. I propose to issue a short announcement of our formal acceptance of your offer. Should you make a public statement on what has been agreed I would hope that you will stress the value which my Government attaches to your offer. We are indeed deeply grateful.

DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

1. The Prime Minister has today conveyed to the New Zealand Prime Minister the Government's formal acceptance of the offer to make a New Zealand frigate temporarily available to the Royal Navy. Operational control of the frigate, the HMNZS CANTERBURY, will pass immediately to the Royal Navy and it is envisaged that she will operate in the Indian Ocean. This will enable one of the two RN ships on patrol in the area to be released for other operational duties.

2. The Government is deeply grateful to the New Zealand Government for this generous offer which is indicative of the unstinting support which they have given over the last weeks and is a further example of the close ties which exist between our two navies.

Amend no.

26 MAY 1982

