



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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MO 5/21

26th May 1982

N.S.P.N.

Dear John

MR 27/5

h.a.

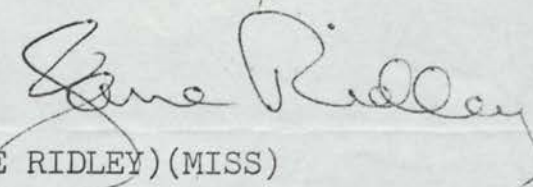
NON-COMBAT AIRCRAFT: CONTINGENCY PRESS RELEASE

Thank you very much for your letter of 24th May concerning our draft press release against the possibility that we shoot down a non-combat aircraft.

We had originally included the third paragraph to which you refer because, at the time it was drafted, the Press would undoubtedly have asked as their first question whether the incident took place inside or outside the TEZ. However, since the concept of the TEZ is now less prominent, the Secretary of State has agreed that your arguments against including the paragraph are over-riding.

To avoid any confusion over drafts, I am attaching a revised press release.

I am copying this letter to John Coles (No 10), David Wright (Cabinet Office) and John Rhodes (Department of Trade).

Yours ever,

 (J E RIDLEY) (MISS)

J Holmes Esq

DRAFT PRESS RELEASE FOR ARGENTINE 707/C130 ENGAGEMENT

At [time] an Argentine military aircraft, [a Boeing 707/C130], which was engaged on surveillance duties against our own forces was shot down by a (missile/aircraft). We have no reports of any survivors.

We warned the Argentine authorities on 23rd April and again on 7th May that all Argentine aircraft engaging in surveillance of British forces would be regarded as hostile and were liable to be dealt with accordingly.

The intelligence gained from this type of surveillance operation can be used to direct air, surface ship and submarine attacks against our forces, with consequent risk to British lives.

The need for such action in our self-defence can easily be avoided if Argentina heeds our public warnings in future.