

CONFIDENTIAL



Minister for Housing and Construction

Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street London SW1P 3EB
Telephone 01-212 7601

2 May 1985

Dear Richard ,

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MOUNT PLEASANT AIRPORT: OPENING CEREMONY

My Minister would be grateful to know if your Secretary of State has any comments on the enclosed draft speech he proposes to make at the opening ceremony on Sunday 12 May.

I am copying this to Alistair Harrison (FCO), Wing Commander Adam Wise (HRH Prince Andrew's Office) and Charles Powell (No 10).

Yours ever,

Neil Kigh

N KINGHAN
Private Secretary

Richard Mottram Esq

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SPEECH BY MR GOW AT THE OPENING CEREMONY FOR MOUNT
PLEASANT AIRPORT

1. YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS, YOUR EXCELLENCY, MY LORDS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

2. IT IS ENTIRELY FITTING THAT SIR REX HUNT, WHOSE
NAME WILL BE ASSOCIATED FOREVER WITH THE FREEDOM OF
THE FALKLANDS, SHOULD WELCOME US AT ONE OF THE MOST
MOMENTOUS CEREMONIES IN THE ISLANDS' HISTORY.

3. AS MINISTER FOR CONSTRUCTION AND FOR THE PROPERTY
SERVICES AGENCY, I TAKE PARTICULAR PRIDE IN BEING
HERE. TODAY WE SALUTE A SPECTACULAR FEAT OF CIVIL
ENGINEERING ACHIEVED BY A DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR. THIS PROJECT IS ONE OF
THE LARGEST AND MOST REMARKABLE EVER UNDERTAKEN OVERSEAS
BY THE BRITISH CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

4. REMARKABLE BECAUSE, APART FROM WATER, STONE AND SAND, EVERY COMPONENT OF THE RUNWAY, EVERY ITEM OF PLANT, EVERY PIECE OF EQUIPMENT AND ALL OF THE WORKFORCE CAME MORE THAN 8000 MILES FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM. AND REMARKABLE TOO, BECAUSE HAVING MADE THAT JOURNEY, THE TERRAIN WAS DIFFICULT AND THE CLIMATE REVERSE OF IDEAL.

5. BARELY TWO YEARS AGO ON 20 JUNE 1983, HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT DECIDED TO BUILD A NEW AIRPORT AT MOUNT PLEASANT.

6. IT WAS A DESOLATE SITE. THE CONTRACTOR, LAING, MOWLEM AND AMEY ROADSTONE, THEIR SUB-CONTRACTORS, SURVEYORS, ENGINEERS - CIVIL, MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL - ARCHITECTS, CONSULTANTS, THE PROPERTY SERVICES AGENCY AND A MAGNIFICENT WORKFORCE FACED A HERCULEAN TASK.

7. THE FIRST SHIPS CARRYING SUPPLIES ARRIVED IN OCTOBER 1983; THE ROAD FROM EAST COVE TO MOUNT PLEASANT WAS

USABLE BY DECEMBER 1983. WORK ON THE RUNWAY BEGAN ON THE LAST DAY OF DECEMBER 1983. THE FIRST AIRCRAFT ARRIVED ON THE FIRST OF THIS MONTH. THE SECOND ARRIVED TODAY.

8. 2000 MEN AND WOMEN HAVE TOILED HEROICALLY. SO FAR HALF A MILLION TONS OF MATERIALS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT HERE - AND THERE IS MORE TO COME.

9. THE MERCHANT PROVIDENCE HAS BEEN MOORED AT EAST COVE FOR EIGHTEEN MONTHS.

10. AND SO, TODAY, WE HONOUR THE MEN AND WOMEN WHOSE ACHIEVEMENT REALLY IS ONE OF THE WONDERS OF THE WORLD. OUR OWN PRIME MINISTER, TO WHOM THE PEOPLE OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS OWE SO MUCH, DESCRIBED THAT ACHIEVEMENT AS "A TRIUMPH WHICH SPEAKS VOLUMES FOR WHAT THE BRITISH CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY IS CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES AROUND THE WORLD".

11. THOUGH THE MAIN RUNWAY HAS BEEN COMPLETED - AND

ON TIME - THE TASK IS NOT YET DONE. BUT NINE MONTHS
FROM NOW, THE AIRPORT WILL HAVE BEEN FINISHED.

12. THE AIRPORT SYMBOLISES THE COMMITMENT OF THE
BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO THE DEFENCE AND TO THE LIBERTY
OF THE BRITISH PEOPLE IN THE BRITISH TERRITORY OF
THE BRITISH FALKLAND ISLANDS. BUT IT MEANS EVEN MORE
THAN THAT. THIS AIRPORT WILL HELP TO TRANSFORM THE
ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL FUTURE OF THE FALKLANDS.

13. OUR TRIBUTE TO ALL THOSE - AT WHATEVER LEVEL
- WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THIS GREAT PROJECT IS MATCHED
BY OUR TRIBUTE TO THE PEOPLE OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS,
WHOSE FREEDOM AND PROSPERITY WILL BE ASSURED BY THE
MOUNT PLEASANT AIRPORT, WHICH I NOW ENTRUST TO THE
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE.

-2 MAY 1985

