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1914 April 1988

Dear Geoffrey,

Prime Minister
to be aware how consideration
of this issue is progressing.

C9P204

OD(FAF)(88)2: ALTERNATIVE CIVILIAN PRESENCE ON SOUTH GEORGIA

I have seen a copy of your memorandum of ^{attached} 7th April (OD(FAF)(88)2) covering a paper prepared jointly by officials from our two Departments and from the Department of Education and Science.

I agree the recommendation in the paper that there should be a study of existing information about fisheries around South Georgia, and that Ministers should then receive a report with a view to deciding which option for an alternative civilian presence should be adopted. I believe that the study should be launched as soon as possible.

I note that it is considered unlikely that the construction of civilian accommodation could begin before October 1989. In my view, we should adopt this as a firm target and I propose that, when we have had an opportunity to consider the results of the fisheries study, we should endorse a timetable for putting a civilian presence in place which would include this milestone.

This is not the moment to re-open the debate about the utility of the military presence on South Georgia. I shall therefore confine myself to re-stating that the threat level remains very low and that, in any case, a South Georgia garrison could do little about an

The Rt Hon Geoffrey Howe QC MP



Argentine attack anywhere other than in the immediate vicinity of the base. The function of the garrison is therefore limited to maintaining the sovereignty claim - something which would more properly be performed by a civilian presence.

My final point relates to the possible establishment of a fisheries regime. Paragraph 13 of the paper rightly mentions enforcement as one of the matters which would require careful consideration if a fisheries zone proved to be a viable option. To avoid misunderstanding, I should like to caution now against any expectation that military resources would be available to help with this task.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, to other members of OD(FAF), the Secretary of State for Education and Science and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours truly,

George

George Younger