

GRS 507

CONFIDENTIAL

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TO IMMEDIATE CERTAIN MISSIONS AND DEPENDENT TERRITORIES

GUIDANCE TELEGRAM NUMBER 109 OF 26 MAY 82

SOUTH AFRICA AND THE FALKLANDS CRISIS: ALLEGATIONS OF MILITARY SUPPLIES TO ARGENTINA

BACKGROUND

1. THERE HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE INTEREST IN SOUTH AFRICA AND BRITAIN IN ALLEGATIONS IN A SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS ARTICLE ON 24 MAY THAT SOUTH AFRICA WAS SUPPLYING ARMS TO ARGENTINA FOR USE AGAINST THE BRITISH FORCES IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC. THESE WERE SAID TO INCLUDE GABRIEL SEA-SKIMMING MISSILES AND SPARES FOR MIRAGES. ARTICLE INCLUDED EXTENSIVE DETAIL OF COVERT AIR FREIGHT ARRANGEMENTS.

2. THE ARTICLE QUOTED THE BRITISH EMBASSY COMMENT THAT 'BRITISH PUBLIC REACTION WILL BE ONE OF ANGER IF IT EMERGES THAT SOUTH AFRICA IS INDEED SUPPLYING ARGENTINA WITH MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO BE USED AGAINST BRITISH TROOPS IN THE PRESENT CONFLICT.'

3. AFTER INITIAL REFUSAL TO DENY OR CONFIRM THE REPORT, SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENCE MINISTER MADE A STATEMENT LATE ON 24 MAY IN SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENT, IN WHICH HE DENIED THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAD SUPPLIED TO ARGENTINA 'ANY MISSILES OR AEROPLANE PARTS IN ANY WAY AS HAS BEEN REPORTED, BEFORE OR DURING THE FALKLANDS CONFLICT'. HE ALSO GAVE AN ASSURANCE THAT NO SUCH ARMAMENTS HAD BEEN SUPPLIED TO ANY SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRY FOR POSSIBLE DIVERSION TO ARGENTINA. SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN MINISTER IN AN EARLIER STATEMENT STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE FOR SOUTH AFRICAN SECURITY OF REFUSING TO REVEAL INFORMATION ABOUT ARMS SUPPLIES TO OR FROM COUNTRIES WITH WHICH SOUTH AFRICA HAS DEALINGS.

LINE TO TAKE (ATTRIBUTABLE)

4. IF ASKED, YOU MAY CONFIRM THAT HMG WAS AWARE OF THESE AND SIMILAR REPORTS BEFORE THEY APPEARED IN THE PRESS, AND HAD ALREADY TAKEN STEPS TO ENSURE THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT WAS AWARE OF THE SERIOUS VIEW WE WOULD TAKE IF IT SHOULD BE CONFIRMED THAT MILITARY SUPPLIES WERE REACHING ARGENTINA FROM SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE CONFLICT. HMG HAS NOTED SOUTH AFRICA'S ASSURANCE THAT IT IS NOT SUPPLYING AND WILL NOT SUPPLY EXOCET MISSILES TO ARGENTINA, AND THE DEFENCE MINISTER'S DENIAL THAT MISSILES OR AIRCRAFT PARTS HAVE BEEN PROVIDED BEFORE OR DURING THE FALKLANDS CONFLICT. WE HAVE HOWEVER ALSO NOTED THE LIMITED SCOPE OF THAT DENIAL AND THE FACT THAT IT CONCERNS ONLY THE PAST AND NOT THE PRESENT OR FUTURE. WE HAVE IMPRESSED ON THE SOUTH AFRICANS OUR STRONG HOPE THAT ALL MILITARY SUPPLIES WILL BE SUSPENDED FOR DURATION OF THE CONFLICT.

5. IF ASKED ABOUT ALLEGATION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS REPORT THAT BRITAIN HAD REQUESTED SOME MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM SOUTH