

7 (107)

Mr Foggin, S.A.

We spoke - Mulca has discussing this with Mr Stradling Thomas (Whip). He did not in the event have the opportunity to discuss the matter with Mr Baker.

Presented u/1

PA Mr Ure  
14/11  
14/11  
Bones 23/12  
Mr Ure  
PS/Mr Luce

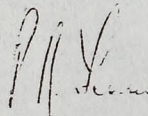
HMS ENDURANCE

1. You may wish to know the present position on HMS Endurance.

Ans 076/1

- A 2. Following discussion with the FCO in November, Ministers decided not to press the MOD to reverse their decision on HMS Endurance's withdrawal, despite the considerable press, public and parliamentary criticism and the political implications of the position on the Falklands dispute and in Antarctica. Mr Nott has continued to maintain firmly that there is no prospect of the ship remaining in service.
- B 3. MOD Ministers have, however, agreed that careful consideration must be given to the final disposal of HMS Endurance. In particular, they have agreed that the ship should not be sold to the Brazilian Government - at the moment the only prospective purchaser - for the reasons set out in para 6 of the attached MOD submission of 7 December, which was cleared with us. The alternatives now are either to scrap her or to keep her on the sales list. MOD officials expect Mr Nott to wish to do the latter, but it will cost a considerable sum of money to maintain her in reasonable working order and the RN dockyards, which are in any case being run down, may not have the capacity. If the ship cannot be sold to Brazil, it is doubtful whether another purchaser can be found and HMS Endurance cannot be kept in reserve for an unlimited amount of time. This was discussed at a meeting of officials on 21 December, at which the Department was represented.
- C 4. MOD officials are now preparing a further submission to Mr Nott, recommending that a decision be taken soon on the final disposal of the ship: and that Mr Nott should formally notify Lord Carrington of the position, while also recommending that a ministerial message should be sent to the Brazilian Government to explain why it is not possible to sell HMS Endurance to them.
- B 5. We have at official level supported the proposal for a ministerial message to the Brazilian Government on the lines suggested in para 11 of the MOD submission of 7 December. The Brazilians have made clear their interest in purchasing HMS Endurance and have so far been told only that no final decision has been taken on the ship's disposal. If no further explanation is given and the Brazilians learn (as they will) that the ship is either to remain available to other potential purchasers or is to be scrapped, it will inevitably cause ill-feeling, which could prejudice both our overall relations and the valuable prospects for our other defence sales to Brazil. It will be for consideration whether any message should be sent by an FCO or an MOD Minister.

6. A firm MOD decision against a sale to Brazil (or to any other Latin American country) meets one of our main objectives. It remains however improbable that Mr Nott will change his mind on the ship's withdrawal from service despite the political pressures, eg the current Early Day Motion signed so far by 145 MPs, of whom the large majority are Conservatives. Of the remaining alternatives, the maintenance of HMS Endurance in reserve would provide a continuing focus for criticism, much of which would be directed against the FCO. From our point of view, the best decision in the circumstances would be for her to be scrapped.



P R Fearn  
South America Department

23 December 1981

cc: PS  
PS/PUS  
Mr Day  
Mr Gillmore  
Defence Department