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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~937 7077~~ 218 2111/3

MO 5/21

15th April 1982

Dear John,

You were present this morning when the Prime Minister had a short discussion with the Foreign Secretary and the Defence Secretary here in the Ministry of Defence. CDS, CNS and DCDS(I) were also present.

DCDS(I) described the secret report which had been received about the movement of 2 or more Argentinian warships, and outlined the technical and other uncertainties surrounding the assessment of the raw intelligence. After a short discussion it was agreed that it was necessary to safeguard ourselves against a propaganda exercise by the Argentinians whereby their ships could briefly enter, or at least skirt the MEZ. It was agreed that at the regular MOD press briefing at noon today the defence correspondents should be told of the possible movement of Argentinian warships and the opportunity they might seek to create for propaganda purposes. I attach the form of words which it was agreed should be used by our Chief of Public Relations.

There was also reference during the discussion to the Argentine auxiliary which it was believed was still in Port Stanley. This is the Bahia Buen Suceso, a naval auxiliary transport ship. We believe that it arrived in Port Stanley on 11th April before the MEZ was imposed. We have no information about her likely future movements.

I am copying this letter to Brian Fall (FCO).

*John
D B Omand*

D B OMAND

A J Coles Esq

5/21

By word of mouth only

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LINE TO BE TAKEN AT MOD PRESS BRIEFING AT 1200, 15TH APRIL

Since the Maritime Exclusion Zone was established at 0400 GMT on 12th April no Argentinian major warship or naval auxiliary has entered the zone. Indeed our reports have confirmed that the vast majority of their Navy has either remained or returned to Argentinian mainland ports. This situation has not changed. But there are some indications which suggest that some elements of the Argentinian fleet may come out of harbour and in that case we would expect them to sail southwards. If they put ships to sea we can only speculate on their intentions in the present dangerous situation. But in the light of their undoubted knowledge of British resolve and military capabilities we do not believe they would risk breaching the Maritime Exclusion Zone. They may however sail close to the Argentinian mainland and even skirt the Maritime Exclusion Zone in an attempt to score some propaganda advantage and bolster up morale in Argentina. We are keeping a close watch on the situation.

I am copying this letter to Brian Fell (FCO).

*John and
David*

D. B. OMAND

A. J. Coles Esq

SECRET
UK EYES A

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CDS

The following is recommended in response to APS/SofS Note.

At your meeting with the Prime Minister before OD(SA) this morning to discuss the possible moves of the Argentine Fleet, DCDS(I) listed among the options (should the fleet be at sea) that the Argentines could move towards South Georgia to intercept our Task Force. We have received no further intelligence. This therefore remains merely one of 4 or 5 courses open to them. In short, no change since this morning.

There may of course be an element of disinformation in the BBC announcements from Buenos Aires.

Thus, I suggest there is little point in "the small group" meeting again tonight.

✓ APS/SofS.

CDS and his colleagues have agreed this answer to your note.

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