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ALQ 050/6 PA. rch

RECEIVED IN REGISTRY - 5 MAY 1982		
<i>23</i> TASK OFFICER	REGISTRY cc:	
IND/4	PA	Action Taken

Mr Wright

PS/PUS
Mr Darwin
Mr Weston

SURVEILLANCE OF THE TASK FORCE BY ARGENTINE TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT

1. Following discussion at the Chiefs of Staff meeting this morning (my minute to you of today) we have discussed with MOD what action might be taken to prevent further surveillance of the Fleet by Argentine transport aircraft. We have also considered what instructions should be sent to the Task Force Commander.
2. As I reported in my minute earlier today, the CDS wants to minute Mr Nott this evening. His original intention was that once an Argentine aircraft had been positively identified as conducting surveillance an intercepting Sea Harrier should use internationally accepted signalling procedure to order the departure of the Argentine aircraft from the area. The area should be defined as a 25-mile radius from the nearest British unit.
If the Argentine aircraft did not comply the Sea Harrier should be permitted to fire across its path and, if that was not effective, to attack it.
3. Mr Weston and I have misgivings about allowing a Harrier to shoot down an unarmed transport aircraft. In effect this would be the first publicly known engagement by the Task Force. It would probably produce an outcry, which the Argentines would use for propaganda purposes (eg by claiming that the aircraft was on a normal transatlantic flight with a filed flight plan). We have therefore suggested to the MOD that:
 - a. the CDS' recommendation should not include authority to attack the aircraft, which should confine its action to harrassment in order to turn the Argentine aircraft back; and
 - b. that we should inform the Argentines through the Swiss that we would treat any Argentine aircraft engaged in surveillance of the Task Force as hostile and liable to be dealt with accordingly.
4. It remains to be seen how the CDS will react to our recommendation. He may well insist upon his original approach involving authority to attack Argentine aircraft if a warning and harrassment did not deter it. It is likely that this issue will be discussed at the Chiefs of Staff meeting tomorrow and at Sir R Armstrong's meeting subsequently. We have made the point to the MOD that if the CDS persists

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in recommending authority for an attack on Argentine surveillance aircraft, and if this is endorsed by Mr Nott, we would need to consult the Secretary of State urgently. We have also pointed out that the shooting down of an Argentine aircraft of this kind during Mr Pym's visit to Washington could be particularly damaging.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "D H Gillmore", with a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

D H Gillmore

22 April 1982

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