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FM WASHINGTON 291810Z MAY 82
TO IMMEDIATE F C O
TELEGRAM NUMBER 1962 OF 29 MAY
INFO IMMEDIATE UKMIS NEW YORK, MODUK (DS11, DSB)

YOUR TELNO 1084; FALKLANDS: U S ASSISTANCE.

62
WE HAVE DISCUSSED WITH STATE DEPARTMENT THE PROBLEM POSED BY THE SHIPMENT OF AIRFIELD MATTING I.E. THE POSSIBILITY THAT ITS VISIBILITY WHEN LOADED AT YORKTOWN COULD GIVE RISE TO WELL INFORMED PRESS STORIES.

2. STATE DEPARTMENT AGREE THAT WE NEED A PRESS LINE BUT THEY ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT THE PRECISE NATURE OF THE SHIPMENT WILL BE OBVIOUS AND, UNLESS THERE IS ANOTHER INFORMED LEAK, HOPE THAT WE CAN STICK TO A SOMEWHAT MORE GENERAL LINE THAN THAT PROPOSED IN TELEGRAM UNDER REFERENCE.

3. IN REPLY TO ANY GENERAL ENQUIRIES ABOUT SHIPMENTS, THE AMERICANS HOPE WE WILL CONTINUE TO REFUSE TO BE DRAWN ON THE NATURE OF OUR REQUESTS OR OF U S RESPONSES. IF A JOURNALIST HAS OBVIOUSLY OBTAINED FAIRLY PRECISE INFORMATION, THEY SUGGEST WE USE THE FOLLOWING VARIANT OF THE LINE YOU HAVE PROPOSED:-
QUOTE WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO DISCUSS THE NATURE OR PROVISION OF MATERIEL SUPPORT FROM THE UNITED STATES. THERE'S, HOWEVER, BOTH A SHORT AND A LONG-TERM NEED TO BE ABLE TO REPAIR OR REPLACE DAMAGED FACILITIES ON THE FALKLAND ISLANDS. SOME MATERIEL TO FULFIL THIS FUNCTION IS ALREADY DEPLOYED WITH THE TASK FORCE, AND FURTHER EQUIPMENT IS BEING OBTAINED FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES. WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO PROVIDE FURTHER DETAILS. UNQUOTE

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4. THE ABOVE STRIKES US AS SATISFACTORY. THE STATE DEPARTMENT HOPE (PROBABLY IN VAIN) THAT THIS MORE RESTRICTIVE PRESS LINE WILL DISCOURAGE THOSE IN THE PENTAGON WHO ARE TEMPTED TO REVEAL TOO MUCH. IT MAY ALSO MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR JOURNALISTS TO DRAW HARD AND FAST CONCLUSIONS ABOUT WHAT IS BEING SUPPLIED AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DEPLOYMENTS.

HENDERSON

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2

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