

SECRET

Secretary of State

(51)

v.d.

Private Secretary

jm

PS/PUS

ALQ 062/3

3.26

cc: Mr Wright  
Mr Giffard  
Mr Ure  
Mr Fearn  
Mr Weston

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Pa. J.W. 4/6

DIVERSION OF VULCAN TO BRASILIA

1. As I told you on the telephone, an RAF Vulcan has had to divert in emergency to Rio de Janeiro where it has now landed. We believe, but await confirmation from the MOD, that the aircraft was on the return leg from an attack on Stanley when at the final air-to-air refuelling point the refuelling nozzle broke before the aircraft had taken on sufficient fuel to get back to Ascension Island. The aircraft's mission was to attack Argentine radar installations to the north and south of Stanley airport. For this purpose, it was fitted with American Shrike radar-homing missiles.

2. I have spoken on the telephone to Mr Harding, making it clear to him that we would not say anything publicly here until we had heard from him. Speaking on the open line, I emphasized that our purpose was not to cause embarrassment to the Brazilians. He clearly understood, however, that we expect from him confirmation of the line which the crew are briefed to take: ie that they were on a training flight from Ascension Island and had to divert when practising an air-to-air refuelling operation. I have told the MOD that on no account should any public statement be made by them until we have had from Brazil confirmation that the crew has stuck to the line which it was briefed to take. We must of course avoid a situation in which what is said here differs from what is being said in Rio de Janeiro.

3. There is a further complication over the Shrike missiles. It is not public knowledge that the Americans have supplied us with this specialised equipment. Although it is likely that the missiles themselves will have been fired in the course of the mission, it is not impossible that a close inspection of the aircraft would reveal to the experienced eye what it had been carrying. We have accordingly warned Washington on the secure line and told them that we will let them have the agreed public line as soon as it is available.

4. Since drafting the above, Mr Harding has called back from Brazil to say that his Air Attaché has now been summoned by the Air Minister. The Air Attaché is fully briefed on what he should say. We await further news.

*D H Gillmore*

D H Gillmore

3 June 1982

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