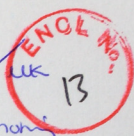


SECRET



→ file cc. Assistance to UK

LOOSE MINUTE

D/DS11/10/6

DS know nothing  
INOR " "

∴ NFA. Agreed with NFA

AUS/Air (PE)

EMM

Copied to:

Can I think it has to be correct?

- Hd of DS5 ✓
- Hd of DS6
- Hd of DS8

mg 27/5

W.  
22

OPERATION CORPORATE - SOUTH AFRICAN ASPECTS

Reference: D/Air(PE)Gen 21/1/22 (279/82) dated 26 May 1982 (not to all)

1. Thank you for your minute at reference. I now need to submit a draft reply to Mr Gillmore's letter of 20 May to AUS(D Staff) (copy attached for non-recipients) and should be grateful for your comments on the attached draft.

2. There are two aspects in particular on which I should welcome your advice. The first concerns the reference in the Capetown telegrams to the approach having been made "through Service channels". It would be useful to know whether British Aerospace first raised the matter with the South African Defence Attaché either in London or in Capetown: if so, I think this would explain the reference. Secondly, I should be grateful for your confirmation that, so far as you are aware, no further approaches of this kind are planned. If so, we will be able to toughen up paragraph 2 of the attached draft.

3. Unless I hear to the contrary from copy addressees, I shall assume that there have been no further approaches to the South Africans which could be described as having been made on

2

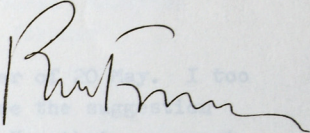
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**SECRET**

Service channels. It would be helpful to have any comments or clearance by close of play Thursday 27 May.

SOUTH AFRICA/ARGENTINA

26 May 1982

  
P M W FRANCIS  
DS11  
MB 9346 7446

1. Thank you for your letter of 23 May. I too was somewhat surprised to receive your letter. It seems that you are referring to the "Service Channels" for certain equipment. As we have informed the South African Department, there have been no approaches of this kind by the Ministry of Defence.

2. We think the South Africans may have been referring to a purely commercial enquiry by British Aerospace which, at an earlier stage of the crisis, approached the South Africans over the possible supply of aircraft drop-tanks. The approach was entirely private and was in no sense prompted by the Ministry of Defence. So far as I am aware, there have been no further approaches by British Aerospace nor is there any immediate intention to procure the latter. RAF Buccaneer aircraft do use a drop-tank which is similar to the South African type, but smaller, but there is no intention at this stage of procuring the latter nor, as you know, are Buccaneer aircraft currently deployed in the South Atlantic.

3. I am, of course, fully aware of the political sensitivity of military contacts between the UK and South Africa and have

- 2 -

Covering - 1 -

**SECRET**

DRAFT LETTER FROM AUS(D STAFF) TO MR GILLMORE, FCOSOUTH AFRICA/ARGENTINA

1. Thank you for your letter of 20 May. I too was somewhat surprised to see the suggestion in Capetown telno 326 of 11 May that a request had been made to the South Africans "through Service channels" for certain items of equipment. As we have informed the South African Department, there have been no approaches of this kind by the Ministry of Defence.

2. We think the South Africans may have been referring to a purely commercial enquiry by British Aerospace which, at an earlier stage of the crisis, approached the South Africans over the possible supply of aircraft drop-tanks. The approach was entirely private and was in no sense prompted by the Ministry of Defence. So far as I am aware, there have been no further approaches by British Aerospace nor is there any immediate intention to pursue the matter. RAF Buccaneer aircraft do use a drop-tank which is similar to the South African type, but smaller, but there is no intention at this stage of procuring the latter nor, as you know, are Buccaneer aircraft currently deployed in the South Atlantic.

3. I am, of course, fully aware of the political sensitivity of military contacts between the UK and South Africa and have

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

now taken steps to ensure that this is recognised by all concerned in the Ministry of Defence. We shall, of course, continue to keep you informed of any further developments.

*My dear Mary,*

*To discuss with  
DSSG & before hand  
a draft reply.*

SOUTH AFRICA/ARGENTINA

1. We have seen, as a result of reflections of them elsewhere, copies of communications between the MOD and the Defence Attachés in Pretoria about possible supplies of arms to Argentina through South Africa, and related matters, eg Pretoria Attachés' telegrams Nos 1085 and 1087 to MODUK (Air). We also noted from Cape Town telegram No 326 to MOD (copied to MOF but attached for ease of reference), that the South Africans told HM Ambassador on 11 May that they had already responded favourably to a request put to them 'through Service channels' (whether British or South African was not stated) for 'certain equipment'. The South Africans naturally assumed that HM Ambassador was aware of this exchange and he has told us subsequently that he felt at a serious disadvantage through being in complete ignorance.

2. I am rather concerned that no-one in the FCO was consulted or even informed about all this, despite the evident political undertones of the whole subject. As you will see from FCO telegram No 175 of 7 May (copied to MOD), we instructed HM Ambassador in Cape Town to raise with the South Africans certain reports of arms supplies to Argentina, and took parallel action in London. It would have been useful for both the Ambassador and us to have known that enquiries were being made through the Attachés in Pretoria about similar reports. And in view of the Government's policy of not collaborating with South Africa in the military field and the possible repercussions for support on the Falklands from elsewhere, both political and practical (eg facilities in Dakar, Freetown and Banjul), it would also have been useful to have been consulted before (if it proves to be true) any request was put to the South Africans on service channels for what was presumably military equipment. Even now, at this rather late stage, we should be grateful for a full account from MOD of the background to all this.

3. I appreciate the current pressures on the MOD, and that the political angle may not - 2 - be clear to those initiating action. However, there are potentially strong political implications both bilaterally and internationally in South African reactions to the Falklands and - even leaving aside the

CONFIDENTIAL

(Falklands

21 MAY 82  
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