



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

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PS/Minister (AF)
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DNOT
DNW
Head of DS5

D/S of S/71/84

14 May 1984

Thank you for your further letter of 1st May.

Your purpose in asking the questions you put to me is to pursue your campaign that the Belgrano was attacked in order to destroy the prospects for peace negotiations rather than for the military reason that she posed a threat to the Task Force. I do not believe that there is any point in prolonging this argument by a further round of detailed correspondence.

Michael Heseltine

Tam Dalyell Esq MP



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mo 5/21

11th May 1984

PS/Minister (AF)

BELGRANO

The Secretary of State has seen your minute of 10th May together with that from Head of DS5 of 9th May.

2. The Secretary of State agrees with Minister (AF)'s view that we should not enter into a detailed point-by-point answer by letter to the questions which Mr Dalyell has raised. He intends instead to reply to Mr Dalyell's latest letter of 1st May broadly on the lines of the attached draft - I have yet to clear the precise words with him. The Secretary of State recognises that Mr Dalyell may yet table a series of detailed questions which he would propose to reply to by referring back to the account of the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the Belgrano which has already been given in the Prime Minister's letter.

3. As to the terms of the answer by the Prime Minister to PQ 9143C, the Secretary of State can see the difficulty raised by Head of DS5 over using explicitly the argument that it is not our practice to comment on military operational matters or the details of military operations. This is not entirely consistent with the Prime Minister's letter of 4th April to Mr Denzil Davies which provided further detail and said that ~~we~~ she felt able to do so now as, with the passage of time, those events have lost some of their original operational significance. The Secretary of State would prefer to reserve the argument that we could not reveal operational matters for those cases where it is the professional judgement of those concerned within the Department that there are genuine security objections to giving this information. He would, therefore, prefer to stick with the approach originally agreed with Minister (AF) and perhaps the answer might be the second sentence of the Minister's revised formulation that is:

"The circumstances leading to the sinking of the BELGRANO were described in my letter to the Rt Hon Member for Llanelli of 4th April."

R C Mottram
(R C MOTTRAM)
PS/S of S

RESTRICTED

DRAFT LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO MR TAM DALYELL

Thank you for your further letter of 1st May.

Your purpose in asking the questions you put to me is to pursue your campaign that the Belgrano was attacked in order to destroy the prospects for peace negotiations rather than for the military reason that she posed a threat to the Task Force. I do not believe that there is any point in prolonging this argument by a further round of detailed correspondence.



MINISTER OF STATE FOR
THE ARMED FORCES

5/21

LOOSE MINUTE

D/MIN(AF)/JS/5/1/5

10 May 84

PS/S of S

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Hd of DS5

BELGRANO

Reference:

- A. D/DS5/9/9/46 - 85 dated 9 May 84 (attached, not for copy addressees)

Minister(AF) disagrees with the advice in the attached Minute of 9 May from the Head of DS5. He believes that to reply as Head of DS5 has proposed would be in complete contradiction to

- a. The Prime Minister's letter of 12 April in reply to Mr Dalyell's of 5 April which asked a series of naval operational questions (for example, Question 6) and,
- b. the Secretary of State's letter of 18 April in reply to Mr Dalyell's of 19 March which did so similarly.

Both the Prime Minister and S of S relied basically by referring back to the Prime Minister's letter of 4 April to Denzil Davies.

2. The line Minister(AF) proposes is that contained in Paragraph 2 of APS/Minister(AF)'s minute of 9 May (attached) to Head of DS5. The Question to the Prime Minister asks for details of HMS CONQUEROR's "sonar stalk" of the BELGRANO and Mr Stanley personally has no difficulty whatsoever on operational grounds of declining to give this information. The text of the draft letter to Mr Dalyell, attached to Head of DS5's Minute, abundantly illustrates, in Minister(AF)'s view, the depth of the water Secretary of State would get into if he were to send it. He would be grateful for S of S's views before his departure this evening since we shall need to advise No 10 tomorrow of the draft reply to PQ 9143C.

Handwritten signature

P M W FRANCIS
PS/Minister(AF)



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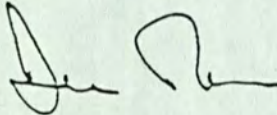
18th April 1984

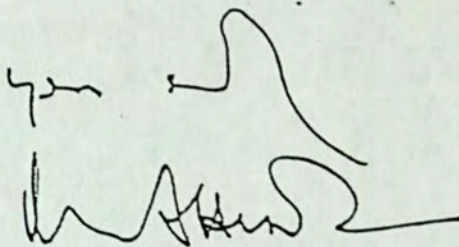
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Copies:

Mr A J Coles, No 10
Mr P F Ricketts, PCO

 Thank you for your letter of 19th March asking some questions about the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the General Belgrano. Since you wrote this letter, you have seen the Prime Minister's letter to Denzil Davies of 4th April and you have yourself had a further round of correspondence in your letter of 5th April and the Prime Minister's reply of 12th April. There is nothing that I can usefully add.



Michael Heseltine

Tam Dalyell Esq MP



MINISTER OF STATE FOR
THE ARMED FORCES

LOOSE MINUTE

D/MIN(AF)/JS/5/1/5

13 April 1984

PS/S of S

Copy to:
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PS/PUS

BELGRANO

Reference: D/DS5/9/9/46-54 dated 12 April 1984

Minister(AF) does not agree with the draft reply to Tam Dalyell's letter of 19 March to S of S, attached to Head of DS5's minute of 12 April, because he feels that it is incompatible with the way in which the Prime Minister has just replied to a series of 11 related questions to her in his letter of 5 April.

2. Mr Stanley has discussed with John Coles today how we should deal with the 9 questions in Dalyell's letter of 19 March and he thinks - and John Coles agrees - that S of S should take basically the same line as in the Prime Minister's latest reply to Dalyell which effectively is on the military - not the diplomatic side - to rest on what the Prime Minister said to Denzil Davies in her letter of 4 April.

3. Minister(AF) has also discussed with John Coles how we would respond if Dalyell's 9 questions were either tabled as PQs or as a further letter from Denzil Davies on behalf of the Shadow Cabinet. The view he and John Coles both take is that we should wait and see until after next Monday's Panorama programme, and the Easter Recess, as to whether the Shadow Cabinet or Dalyell are going to run this issue before deciding whether to go any further than the Prime Minister's latest reply to Dalyell.

P M W FRANCIS
PS/Minister(AF)
MB 6113 6385 MB