

SECRET

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FM FCO 301850Z MAY 82
TO FLASH PARIS
TELEGRAM NUMBER 311 OF 30 MAY

PERSONAL FOR AMBASSADOR

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T 116/82

M.I.P.T. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF MESSAGE.

BEGINS:

*Subject -
Argentina
Handlip
Part 7*

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT.

1. YOU WILL REALISE HOW VERY SERIOUSLY CONCERNED I WAS BY YOUR TELEPHONE CALL ABOUT THE POSSIBLE DELIVERY OF EXOCET MISSILES TO PERU. THIS AFTERNOON I DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH MY CABINET COLLEAGUES MOST CLOSELY INVOLVED IN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS DISPUTE AND WITH THE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF.
2. I HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT THEY WERE ALL DISMAYED BY THE PROSPECT OF FRANCE SUPPLYING THESE MISSILES TO PERU WHEN, AS YOU YOURSELF AGREED, THERE CAN NO DOUBT THAT PERU WILL PASS THEM ON TO ARGENTINA. YOU WILL HAVE SEEN SINCE WE SPOKE THE RESOLUTION PASSED IN THE ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES WHICH SPECIFICALLY REQUESTS THE STATES' PARTIES TO GIVE THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC THE SUPPORT THAT EACH JUDGES APPROPRIATE TO ASSIST IT IN THIS SERIOUS SITUATION. PERU WOULD TAKE THIS AS FULL JUSTIFICATION FOR PASSING ON THE EXOCETS WHICH YOU PROPOSE TO SUPPLY. THEY HAVE ALREADY BEEN USED WITH DEADLY EFFECT AGAINST OUR SHIPS.
3. I UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM WHICH FACES YOU IN RELATION TO THE CONTRACT WITH PERU BUT I MUST ASK YOU WITH ALL THE EMPHASIS AND URGENCY AT MY COMMAND TO FIND A MEANS OF DELAYING THE DEPARTURE OF THESE MISSILES FROM FRANCE FOR AT LEAST A FURTHER MONTH. NATURALLY WE WOULD PREFER THEM NOT TO BE SUPPLIED AT ALL BUT THE NEXT FEW WEEKS ARE GOING TO BE PARTICULARLY CRUCIAL: WE CANNOT BE SURE HOW QUICKLY THE OPERATIONS TOWARDS PORT STANLEY WILL GO, OR WHETHER ARGENTINA WILL AGREE TO A FULL CEASE-FIRE EVEN IF THEY ARE FORCED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE FALKLANDS.
4. I WAS GREATLY REASSURED WHEN YOU TOLD ME AT NO. 10 THAT YOU HAD DECIDED THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXOCET CONTRACT WOULD BE DELAYED FOR AS LONG AS NECESSARY AND, AS YOU KNOW, WE HAVE BEEN MUCH HEARTENED BY FRANCE'S STALWART SUPPORT BOTH IN PUBLIC AND IN PRIVATE. IF IT BECAME KNOWN, AS IT CERTAINLY WOULD, THAT FRANCE WAS NOW RELEASING WEAPONS TO PERU THAT WOULD CERTAINLY BE PASSED ON TO ARGENTINA FOR USE AGAINST US, FRANCE'S ALLY, THIS WOULD HAVE A DEVASTATING EFFECT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. INDEED, IT WOULD HAVE A DISASTROUS EFFECT ON THE ALLIANCE AS A WHOLE. THIS IS THE LAST THING THAT EITHER OF US WOULD WISH. I GREATLY HOPE THEREFORE THAT FOR THE TIME BEING YOU WILL BE ABLE TO FIND SOME WAY OF KEEPING THESE MISSILES IN FRANCE.

WITH BEST WISHES,
MARGARET THATCHER.

MESSAGE ENDS.