

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

3 June 1982

Prime Minister

MF

A.S.C. $\frac{4}{6}$

Dear David,

Bombing of the BRITISH WYE

OD(SA) on 1 June invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to arrange for a suitable protest to be made to Argentina over the attack on the BRITISH WYE. As you will recall, the attack involved an Argentine Hercules aircraft dropping 8 bombs at the ship north east of South Georgia. One bomb hit the ship but bounced off unexploded into the sea.

I understand, however, that in reaching this decision, Ministers may not have been fully aware that the BRITISH WYE was in fact being used as a tanker to supply fuel to the Task Force, even though she was not actively engaged in this at the time of the Argentine attack. An Argentine merchant vessel engaged in comparable tasks would, under existing Rules of Engagement, be regarded by us as a fair target, both within and outside the TEZ.

Following further discussion in the Chiefs of Staff Committee on 2 June, the Chief of Defence Staff agreed that this point had not been fully brought out in discussion at OD(SA) and that he would not wish to press the idea of a protest. In the circumstances Mr Pym takes the view that a protest could appear hypocritical and would serve little purpose. He therefore recommends that no further action should be taken.

I am copying this to the Private Secretaries to the other members of OD(SA), the Attorney General, Sir Robert Armstrong and to Sir Michael Palliser.

Yours ever
John Holmes

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

David Omand Esq
Ministry of Defence