



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

17 May 1982

Dear John,

As the Prime Minister knows, we have been doing our utmost to stop EXOCET missiles being supplied to Argentina, either direct or through third countries. In the latter category, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary raised with M Cheysson on 14 May the case of four such missiles about to be despatched to Peru. M Cheysson undertook to check the position.

The French have gone some way to be helpful by arranging slow delivery (by ship) and have not yet made any decision as to the date of despatch. But in present circumstances it is clearly essential that all deliveries should be stopped altogether.


The matter was raised again yesterday with the Quai, but the response has not given us the assurance we sought. HM Ambassador, Paris, considers that President Mitterrand would not countenance export of EXOCETS that might find their way to Argentina. We therefore recommend that the Prime Minister raises the subject with the President. I enclose short speaking and background notes.

Yours ever

J E Holmes

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street



SECRET

SPEAKING NOTE

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MITTERRAND AT 12 NOON
ON 17 MAY

EXOCET MISSILES

1. I understand that no decision has been made on the date of despatch of four missiles ordered from SNIAS (Aerospatiale) by Peru. Any delay is helpful in case the missiles should eventually find their way to Argentina. But I feel very strongly that shipment should be withheld in present circumstances. I hope that you will agree.

SECRET



BACKGROUND

EXOCET MISSILES FOR PERU

1. The French Government stopped shipment by air last week of four missiles to Peru following intervention by HM Ambassador Paris. But arrangements are being made to send the consignment by sea.
2. Assurances were given by the Quai that the French Government took our request about nondelivery seriously; that the question was being re-examined, and no decision had been reached about despatch.
3. With only this limited assurance, Mr Pym raised the question with M. Cheysson on 14 May, and HM Ambassador Paris raised it with a member of M. Cheysson's office on 16 May. He was again told that the French Government would take full account of the British Government's concern, and that no decision had yet been made on the date of delivery. He was also told that the missiles were not yet on board a ship. Sir J Fretwell believes that there will be strong industrial and other pressures on the French Government to allow the missiles to go ahead, but believes that President Mitterrand would be very unlikely to countenance any exports of EXOCETS that might find their way to Argentina. HM Embassy Paris considers that our views would be strengthened if the Prime Minister raised the subject with President Mitterrand.