



PM/82/31  
PRIME MINISTER

Th. Colby ✓ *WA 5/5*  
we spoke! *f-a.*  
*Revis 2/5*

*19A*  
cc Sir M. Pelling  
M. Wedderburn  
M. Facer

Attack on Argentine Aircraft Carrier

1. Following our decision in OD(SA) yesterday to authorise an attack without warning on the Argentine aircraft carrier outside our exclusion zone, I have been giving a further thought to the line we should take in public after the event.
2. After discussion with the Attorney General the way in which our action would have to be publicly justified and its legality defended, I believe our position would be immeasurably strengthened if we had given a warning to the Argentine Government, requiring the aircraft carrier to stay within the narrow zone which we discussed yesterday or within territorial waters South of about 41° South.
3. I attach a draft of a possible warning message which we could ask the Swiss to convey urgently to the Argentine Government. This in no way alters the substance of the decision we took yesterday. But I believe it would greatly strengthen our hand in dealing with criticism at home and abroad once an attack on the carrier has been carried out.
4. I am copying this minute to the Secretary of State for Defence, the Home Secretary, the Attorney General and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
1 May 1982

*FF*  
(FRANCIS PYM)



NOTIFICATION TO THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT

In announcing a Total Exclusion Zone around the Falklands on 28 April, HMG made it clear that these measures are without prejudice to the right of the UK to take whatever additional measures may be needed in exercise of its right of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter. In the light of the Argentine statement of 30 April of an intention to consider hostile British vessels within 200 miles of the Argentine mainland, the Falklands and their dependencies, the British Government has decided on the following measures. The Argentine carrier quote THE 25TH OF MAY unquote is hereby warned not to move East of a line [45° West] or South of a line [38° South] or outside a limit of 12 nautical miles from the coast of the mainland North of [41° South]. If the quote 25TH OF MAY unquote moves beyond these limits she will be regarded as constituting an immediate threat to British forces in the South Atlantic and will be liable to be dealt with accordingly. Further, if any attack anywhere in the South Atlantic is made upon British naval or air forces by an Argentine unit, all other Argentine naval units operating on the high seas, including the carrier quote THE 25TH OF MAY unquote, even if she is still inside the limits defined in this communication, and all Argentine military aircraft operating in air space over the South Atlantic will be regarded as hostile and are liable to be dealt with accordingly.

SECRET - UK EYES 'A'