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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

26 January 1982

David G Jones Esq
 D Sales 2
 Ministry of Defence
 Stuart House
 23 Soho Square
 LONDON W1V 5FJ

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DESK OFFICER		REGISTRY
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ARGENTINA: VULCAN AIRCRAFT

1. Thank you for your letter of 18 January. 3
2. Our original clearance was given in response to an Arms Working Party application of 7 September 1981, which referred to the early availability of 'a suitable aircraft'. Our submission to Ministers was therefore based on a request for one aircraft only and our advice in favour of acceptance was based on an assumption (confirmed by MOD) that a single aircraft would not materially improve the Argentines' strike capability. Even then it was only with the greatest reluctance that our Ministers approved the clearance.
3. It is therefore clear that we have not given clearance for the sale of any larger number of aircraft. Furthermore, if we were to submit to Ministers at this stage, without any indication why the Argentines might want these aircraft and what use they would put them to, I can see little prospect of their agreeing to the sale. In particular we would need rather more specific reassurance than the DA's conviction that Vulcans would be 'inappropriate' for use against the Falkland Islands.
4. It seems to me that the best course is for the DA in Buenos Aires to find out not only, as you suggest, whether the Argentine interest is genuine, but also the reason for the interest. On the face of it, a strike aircraft would seem to be entirely suitable for an attack on the Falklands.

P R Fearn
 South America Dept

cc Defence Dept

*with 18/1 Miss V Evans,
 DS 133, 2 0204, MOD*