

Extra Copy for Com. Uncle  
as requested by phone.

Argentina

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ZZ WASHINGTON

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FM FCO 221445Z APR 82

TO FLASH WASHINGTON

TELEGRAM NUMBER 796 OF 22 APRIL.

ASCENSION ISLAND : VULCAN BOMBERS

1. AS THE PRIVATE SECRETARY WAS AWARE BEFORE LEAVING LONDON, A POSSIBLE PROBLEM HAS ARISEN OVER THE PROPOSED VULCAN DEPLOYMENT TO ASCENSION ISLAND. FOLLOWING IS PART OF A SIGNAL RECEIVED BY THE MOD YESTERDAY FROM THE COMMANDER OF THE BRITISH FORCES SUPPORT UNIT THERE:

BEGINS:

ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE USAF BASE COMMANDER ASKED IF THERE WERE PLANS TO DEPLOY VULCAN AIRCRAFT TO ASCENSION. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY AND STATED HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT OPERATING VULCANS AT WIDEAWAKE WAS OUTSIDE THE US/UK AGREEMENT, WHICH COVERS THE PROVISION OF LOGISTIC SUPPORT ONLY, AND HE WOULD HAVE TO SEEK GUIDANCE FROM HIGHER AUTHORITY.  
ENDS.

2. THIS DOES NOT CONFORM WITH OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE 1962 UK/US EXCHANGE OF NOTES WHICH PROVIDES FOR THE USE GENERALLY OF WIDEAWAKE AIRFIELD BY THE ROYAL AIR FORCE. THIS AGREEMENT ESTABLISHES A CLEAR RIGHT FOR THE UK TO LAND MILITARY AIRCRAFT AT WIDEAWAKE, SUBJECT ONLY TO THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF HOURS OF ADVANCE NOTIFICATION. WE THEREFORE DO NOT (NOT) AGREE THAT THE PROPOSED VULCAN DEPLOYMENT FALLS OUTSIDE THE TERMS OF THE UK/US EXCHANGE OF NOTES.

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3. IT IS ALSO THE CASE THAT THE AGREEMENT PERMITS HMG TO QUOTE ESTABLISH, MAINTAIN AND USE UNQUOTE WHATEVER ADDITIONAL LOGISTIC, ADMINISTRATIVE OR OPERATING FACILITIES AT THE AIRFIELD ARE CONSIDERED TO BE NECESSARY QUOTE IN CONNECTION WITH ITS USE BY UK MILITARY AIRCRAFT UNQUOTE, SUBJECT ONLY TO AGREEING THE RELEVANT ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS. THUS AGAIN WE HAVE A RIGHT TO SET UP OR TO USE ADDITIONAL FACILITIES IF WE NEED TO. BUT IT MAY BE PREFERABLE NOT TO OPEN UP THIS QUESTION WITH THE AMERICANS, PARTICULARLY AS THE US BASE COMMANDER SEEMS ONLY TO WANT TO SEEK GUIDANCE FROM WASHINGTON.

4. WE DO NOT (NOT) OF COURSE DISPUTE HIS RIGHT TO DO SO. BUT WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF, IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE SECRETARY OF STATE WOULD AUTHORISE HM EMBASSY OR A MEMBER OF HIS PARTY TO APPROACH THE STATE DEPARTMENT AT A SUITABLE LEVEL AND TO SEEK CONFIRMATION URGENTLY THAT THERE WOULD BE NO DIFFICULTY IN PRINCIPLE OVER DEPLOYING TWO VULCAN AIRCRAFT TO ASCENSION. IT WOULD BE AS WELL IF THE US AUTHORITIES COULD MAKE IT CLEAR TO THEIR BASE COMMANDER THAT THIS IS THE CASE SINCE WE INTEND THE PROPOSED DEPLOYMENT TO TAKE PLACE QUITE SOON, ASSUMING MINISTERS SO DECIDE.

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MR WRIGHT

MR GILLMORE