

RESTRICTED



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

20 January 1983

*Dear John,*

Franks Report: Debate

In order to help counteract the expected concentration by the opposition on the 'signals' to the Argentine Government of HMS Endurance's withdrawal, the Nationality Act etc, you asked for an account of signals in the opposite direction given to the Argentine Government since May 1979.

We have not been able to identify any specific measures to which we could point. But I enclose a list of statements made either in Parliament or to the Argentine Government covering the Government's attitude to the defence and support of the Islands, to the paramountcy of Islander wishes, and to British sovereignty. I am not sure how much use this will be, but you may find it a useful quarry in any case. The essential point is that at every opportunity, ministers and officials stressed our commitment to the Islands, our respect for the Islanders' wishes and our confidence in our sovereignty case.

*Yours ever*

*J E Holmes*

(J E Holmes)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

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1. Commitment to defend and support the Islands

(a) House of Commons

'I confirm that our long-standing commitment to their [Islanders'] security and economic well-being continues.'  
(Mr Ridley - 2 December 1980)

'The decision [to withdraw HMS Endurance] does not affect our policy towards the Falkland Islands.'  
(Mr Ridley - 2 December 1980)

'The Government are committed to support and defend the Islands and their Dependencies to the best of our ability.'  
(Mr Luce - 23 March 1982)

(b) 'There is no doubt of the Government's commitment to the Falkland Islanders. We will support them in every practicable way... That commitment will continue, whatever their views may be about the best way of making progress in the dispute'.  
(Lord Carrington - 16 December 1980)

'We remain firmly committed to the defence of the Falkland Islands.'  
(Lord Skelmersdale - 16 December 1981)

2. Wishes of the Islanders

(a) House of Commons

'We have made it clear that any proposals for a settlement would have to be acceptable to the Islanders and would be laid before the House.'  
(Sir Ian Gilmour - 27 November 1980)



'It is for the Islanders to advise on which, if any, option should be explored in negotiations with the Argentines.'

(Mr Ridley - 2 December 1980)

'We have many times made it clear that the interests of the Falkland Islanders are paramount.'

(Sir Ian Gilmour - 21 January 1981)

'...the wishes of the Islanders are paramount.'

(Mr Ridley - 26 June 1981)

(b) Anglo-Argentine Talks in New York, 1980, 1981 and 1982

At each round the Minister leading the British delegation stressed HMG's commitment to the paramountcy of the Islanders' wishes.

(c) Other meetings

In Lord Carrington's meeting with the Argentine Foreign Minister in September 1981, he stressed that HMG could not coerce the Islanders or act over their heads. HMG were committed to respect the Islanders' wishes.

3. British Sovereignty

(a) House of Commons

'Successive British Governments have left the Argentines in no doubt as to British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies.'

(Sir Ian Gilmour - 25 May 1979)

'We have no doubt about our sovereignty over the Islands.'

(Mr Ridley - 2 December 1980)

'The constitutional links between the UK and the Falkland Islands remain unchanged.'

(Prime Minister - 11 December 1980)

(b) New York Talks

In all three rounds of talks (April 1980, February 1981 and February 1982) the Minister who led the British delegation stressed that HMG had no doubt about our legal title to the Islands and the Dependencies.

(c) Messages to the Argentine Government

In a note delivered on 8 February 1982 (cf para 127) HM Ambassador Buenos Aires reaffirmed that the British Government were in no doubt about sovereignty. They could not accept the Argentine assumption that the purpose of the negotiations was the eventual recognition by HMG of Argentine sovereignty in the area.



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