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 TO IMMEDIATE FCO
 TELEGRAM NUMBER 4544 OF 19 DECEMBER
 INFO IMMEDIATE PARIS

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FOLLOWING FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY

ARMS SALES TO ARGENTINA

1. THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAD A WORD WITH CHEYSSON IN THE MARGINS OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL THIS MORNING ABOUT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO REMOVE EXISTING RESTRAINTS ON ARMS SALES TO ARGENTINA.

2. THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID THAT HE HOPED TO HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BRIEF COLLEAGUES OVER LUNCH ABOUT THE STEPS WE HOPED MIGHT BE TAKEN TO HELP NORMALISE RELATIONS WITH ARGENTINA. HE HAD, HOWEVER, BEEN DISMAYED BY THE FRENCH DECISION ON ARMS SALES. THERE WAS A REAL RISK THAT IT WOULD ONVEY THE WRONG SIGNAL. THERE WERE INDICATIONS THAT ALFONSIN DID NOT WISH TO UNDERTAKE A PROGRAMME OF HEAVY MILITARY EXPENDITURE: THERE WERE NEVERTHELESS PRESSURES ON HIM FROM THE MILITARY, AND THE FRENCH DECISION WOULD NOT HELP. ALFONSIN'S REGIME HAD NOT YET DECLARED A CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES.

3. ON THE PATTERN OF SALES, THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID HE HOPED THAT HE AND CHEYSSON COULD KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH. A LIST SPECIFYING THE MOST SENSITIVE ITEMS, HAD BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO THE QUAI A YEAR AGO. EXOCET WAS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE, BUT THE OTHER ITEMS ON THE LIST WERE ALSO VERY IMPORTANT. HE HOPED THE FRENCH WOULD CONSULT US ON THE BASIS OF THAT LIST, BEFORE ANY PARTICULAR SALE WAS AGREED.

4. CHEYSSON SAID THAT HE WAS UNSIGHTED ON THIS SUBJECT. HE ^{Agreed} WITH THE SUGGESTION FOR CONSULTATION. HE WOULD MAKE ENQUIRIES IN PARIS, AND LET US HAVE A CONSIDERED COMMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

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