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(MALVINAS)

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Fortieth year

Letter dated 2 August 1985 from the Deputy Permanent Representative
of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the
United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the letter of 29 July 1985 from the Permanent Representative of Argentina (A/40/516-S/17370) about an incident involving an Argentine naval aircraft and two Phantom aircraft of the Royal Air Force in the South Atlantic on 25 July 1985 and, on instructions from my Government, to state the following.

On 25 July 1985, United Kingdom forces defending the Falkland Islands detected an aircraft 8 miles beyond the western edge of the Falkland Islands protection zone. Two Phantoms were dispatched to inspect the aircraft and to ensure that there was no threat to the integrity of the protection zone. They identified it as an Argentine Electra, which had been heading north, but changed course and headed westwards. The Phantoms were in sight of the Electra for only 10 minutes and at no time made contact or in any way harassed it. The three aircraft were flying in international airspace.

This was a routine operation, comparable to those which regularly occur elsewhere, including around the United Kingdom. There is therefore no justification for the Argentine Government to describe it as a "blatantly provocative situation".

The letter from the Permanent Representative of Argentina is also incorrect in referring to an "exclusion zone". On 22 July 1982, the United Kingdom Government announced the lifting of the 200-mile total exclusion zone and its replacement by a protection zone of 150-miles radius. The United Kingdom Government asked the

* A/40/150.

Argentine authorities through the protecting powers to ensure that their warships and military aircraft did not enter this zone. To minimize the risk of misunderstandings and thereby to reduce tension, Argentine civilian aircraft and shipping were also requested not to enter the zone unless by prior agreement with the United Kingdom Government.

The Argentine Permanent Representative refers to this incident as a violation of the cessation of hostilities in the area. On 15 June 1982, the United Kingdom Government sought confirmation from the Argentine authorities through the protecting powers that there was now a total cessation of hostilities. In their reply, circulated on 18 June 1982 as a document of the Security Council (S/15234), the Argentine authorities stated only that there was a de facto cessation of hostilities. To the regret of the British Government, the present Argentine Government has still not declared a formal and definitive cessation of hostilities, and through the continuing purchase of sophisticated weaponry cannot be said to have demonstrated that they have renounced the future use of force. This is self-evidently a cause of concern to the United Kingdom; and, as a consequence, United Kingdom forces in the Falkland Islands have no choice but to remain on the alert, with the sole purpose of deterring any possible aggression and to defend the islands against any attack. The United Kingdom's forces are maintained at the minimum level necessary to fulfil this defensive role. The Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom drew attention recently to this point in his letter of 29 May 1985 (A/40/345-S/17229), in which he also made it clear that Mount Pleasant Airport's sole military purpose is the defence of the Falkland Islands.

The Argentine Permanent Representative suggests that this incident contradicts the United Kingdom Government's statement as to their intention of restoring confidence between the two nations. The United Kingdom Government has repeatedly reiterated its wish to restore more normal relations with Argentina. It has convincingly demonstrated its sincerity, most recently by unilaterally announcing the lifting of restrictions on Argentine imports into the United Kingdom. The Argentine Government has yet to respond constructively to any of these initiatives.

I request that this note be given the same distribution as that from the Permanent Representative of Argentina.

(Signed) P. M. MAXEY

