

CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister (2)



MUS 17/6  
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MO 11/16

17th June 1983

Dear John

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VISIT BY COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF CHILEAN NAVY

The Prime Minister may wish to know that the Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean Navy and, as such, a member of the ruling junta, Admiral Merino, is visiting London from 20th to 26th June, at his own initiative, at the start of a private tour of European countries. While here he will be calling on and lunching with the First Sea Lord and he will also be visiting the Commander-in-Chief Fleet at Northwood and the School of Maritime Operations, HMS DRYAD, at Portsmouth. The remainder of his programme will be private.

The intention has been that the visit should be a low-key affair: the Admiral will be accorded the usual courtesies during his two visits to naval establishments but this will take place away from the public eye. In the event, news of the visit has leaked out prematurely. As the Prime Minister may have seen there have been references to it in the media, in particular speculation that the Admiral is coming to discuss the possible purchase of HMS HERMES, and it has been criticised by Lord Avebury and a number of Labour MPs.

In answer to questions, it is being stressed that the visit is private but that while here Admiral Merino will have informal discussions with the First Sea Lord and other senior naval officers. As for HMS HERMES, the point is being made that her future following her planned paying off in 1985 has not yet been decided and that we are not in negotiation about her sale with Chile (or indeed any country).

I am copying this letter to John Holmes (FCO).

Yours ever  
John R. Evans  
PP (N H R EVANS)

A J Coles Esq

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