



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

29 November 1982

SOUTH ATLANTIC FUND

Following her consideration of your Secretary of State's letter of 26 November, the Prime Minister had a personal word today with Air Chief Marshal Sir David Evans, Chairman of the Trustees of the Fund. Mr. Jerry Wiggin and Mr. Steel (of the Attorney General's Office) were also present.

The Prime Minister said that she believed there was a good deal of public concern that disbursement of monies from the Fund to the seriously injured and the bereaved was proceeding too slowly. She was inclined to think that those who had contributed to the Fund did so in the expectation that capital sums of considerable size would be paid without delay to all in these categories. It was not felt to be right that the onus should be put on those in need to come forward and seek payment.

In further discussion it was emphasised that the Trustees had to proceed in accordance with the terms of the Trust Deed and with the law on charities in general.

The Prime Minister stressed that, with Christmas approaching, there was likely to be a good deal of public interest in the cases of the seriously injured and of bereaved families - she hoped that as many of these as possible would receive at least interim capital payments shortly.

In the light of the meeting, the Prime Minister decided that she would like herself to answer a suitable Question in Parliament this week describing the state of disbursements from the Fund. A text was agreed at the meeting and arrangements are in hand here for the Question to be answered.

A number of other points arose for action.

The Prime Minister would be grateful for a detailed fact sheet, showing what progress has been made so far in disbursing money from the Fund to those in need. It would be helpful if this could include details of the most seriously injured and of any obstacles or difficulties which are obstructing progress. Similar progress reports, at perhaps fortnightly intervals, would be useful in the future.

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There was some discussion of the problem of when and how to wind up the South Atlantic Fund. Contributions were still being made but the point could be reached quite soon when there was no foreseeable use for monies over and above those which had already been contributed. The Prime Minister would be grateful for a note on this problem, prepared in consultation with the Attorney General's Office.

On a different point, Mrs Thatcher would also be grateful for a note about the law and procedures affecting members of the Armed Forces who have been the object of Irish terrorist attacks outside Northern Ireland and are thereby not able to receive compensation in the same way as those who suffer such attacks within Northern Ireland.

I am copying this letter to Henry Steel in the Attorney General's Office.

A. J. COLES

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.