

14/1/2000.

4 pages.

Dear Alice & Cormac,

I am attaching a newspaper cutting which appeared in the Times on Wednesday.

Joe wanted to write an article in the paper criticizing the authorities because Sultana from Civil Aviation seems to be getting promotions in the Civil Aviation when he is under inquest by the Board of Inquiry about our case but knowing the journalists they will not get anything like that and besides we are afraid that Joe will write some things that we do not want him to write just like he did in the past so Gillian offered to speak to a journalist that she knows who promised to let her have a copy of what he would print but of course he did not and just printed this article without showing it to us.

The article in itself is good but we did not really want to be mixed up with what Malcolm Pace says although his points are what we always mention. The journalist also quoted us without actually speaking to us and Gillian has been quite upset about him saying we want the story "sealed".

As an article it is good and at least it is keeping it alive.

My only fear now is what Joe is going to write because I know he sent an article to the paper. Let us hope that he does not write one of his famous articles saying he thinks it was a genuine aviation incident.

Regards,

Alicia

FOREIGN NEWS

Scud missile report

THE MALTA TIMES
12 Jan 2000

Britain knew of shipment to Libya in April

British officials were first aware of a consignment of Scud missile parts being smuggled to Libya last April as they discussed resuming ties with Tripoli, a Foreign Office official said.

"Suspicions were first roused in April," the official said. Britain immediately launched an inquiry into the consignment, which was designated as auto spare parts destined for Malta.

But he said the issue was not raised with Libyan officials during talks to end the 15-year diplomatic break between the two countries because Britain "did not want to prejudice the inquiry".

"This is part of a wider story and the inquiry was not complete," the official said. "We wanted the strongest case possible."

He said the consignment was impounded in July, just before the two countries re-established diplomatic relations, and was then inspected by Ministry of Defence experts. Formal seizure of the shipment took place four months later in November.

Britain only announced it had uncovered the Scud parts over the weekend after a newspaper reported the consignment had been intercepted.

Libya on Monday said press stories about the seizure were

Dominic Evans in London

aimed at damaging improving relations between Libya and Britain.

"We weren't intending to take issue now but it was always the intention that the issue would be raised," the official said.

The export of missiles to Libya is illegal under a European Union arms embargo and an international treaty against the proliferation of ballistic missiles.

The Foreign Office official said the shipment, found at Gatwick airport, contained spare parts for Libya's existing Scud arsenal but would not have extended Tripoli's missile range.

The Sunday Times said that among the missile parts were components of a jet propulsion system for Scuds with a distance of up to 600 miles, which would bring Italy into range. Libya's existing Scuds could travel only about 200 miles, it said.

Scuds are short-range, road-mobile, ballistic missiles that can carry chemical, biological or nuclear warheads in addition to traditional explosive payloads.

They were first developed by the Soviet Union, which built

thousands, but reports indicate that Scuds have also been manufactured in Egypt, Iran, Iraq and North Korea.

The official said revelations about the shipment reinforced Britain's view that an invitation by European Commission President Romano Prodi to Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to visit Brussels was premature.

But he defended Britain's decision to press ahead with its own resumption of ties with Libya while it had been investigating the shipment and said he did not expect the naming of a Libyan ambassador to London to be affected.

"It is not our view that the discovery (of the Scud parts) should prejudice confirmation of the Libyan ambassador's appointment," he said.

Having an envoy in Tripoli also meant Britain could convey its protest directly to senior Libyan officials, he added.

Britain and Libya announced in July last year that they were reestablishing diplomatic relations after Tripoli agreed to pay compensation for the 1984 fatal shooting of a policewoman in London and handed over two suspects wanted for the bombing of an airliner over Lockerbie in Scotland in 1988 which killed 270 people. (Reuters)

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