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HMS INVINCIBLE: SALE TO AUSTRALIA

The Prime Minister has received a message from the Prime Minister of Australia concerning the proposed sale of HMS INVINCIBLE to the Royal Australian Navy. Whilst the Australian Government are still keen to purchase HMS INVINCIBLE they have informed us that they would not hold us to the sale if, as a result of the Falkland Islands operation, we were to decide that we wished to retain the ship. This is a most helpful gesture wholly in keeping with the tremendous support which the Australian Government has given us throughout the Falklands crisis and which underlines yet again the close ties between our countries.

The Prime Minister has thanked Mr Fraser for his typically generous message and has told him that we will be making a rapid assessment of where we stand on the future of HMS INVINCIBLE as soon as the situation in the Falkland Islands permits. We hope to have taken final decisions on the sale within a few months.

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