



MO 5/21

PRIME MINISTERTHE FALKLANDS GARRISON AND ITS COSTS

/ I attach a paper on this subject which was prepared for me to forward to colleagues for discussion. The paper sets out the MOD's proposals for the garrison force levels which should be achieved by October, together with an indication of the extra costs.

2. The costs of sustaining a garrison at this level in the longer term would be substantial. Over a five year period the average annual extra running costs could be of the order of £200-250M a year: total capital costs could be of the order of £600M. This does not include the new airbase whose cost would be very substantial.

3. A force level of some 3,500 with a large military infrastructure will impose considerable social pressures on a small community of 1,800 islanders. The garrison will be subject to review but as the paper makes clear, there is a danger of setting the levels too high now and then sending the wrong signal to the Argentines by making significant reductions later.

4. These are formidable problems and I think that the need now is for us to give the Chiefs of Staff clearer political guidance on the force level which we are prepared to commit to the Falkland Islands and for how long. My own view is that the commitment of up to 6 frigates and a garrison of 3,500 men to the defence of the Falkland Islands beyond the short term is disproportionate



to our interests in the area. The South Atlantic cannot be compared in its strategic importance to us to say the Middle or Far East. The question we have to consider is whether, despite the risks inherent in such a course, we should revert to a smaller garrison, supported by the ability to reinforce much more rapidly (assuming the existence of an adequate airfield to take wide-bodied jets) and in greater strength than was the case before the invasion and by better intelligence to give us early warning of Argentine intentions. The alternative is to commit ourselves to substantial extra resources for defence, as we cannot afford yet further detriment to our main defence tasks.

5. I am copying this minute to the other members of OD(FAF) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

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Ministry of Defence  
2nd September 1982

FUTURE FORCE LEVELS IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

Note for OD(FAF) by Ministry of Defence officials

1. The level of forces which needs to be maintained in the South Atlantic is critically dependent on the degree of advance warning we can expect of any major Argentine attack on the Falkland Islands or its Dependencies and on our ability to carry out a swift and effective reinforcement of the Islands. The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) has now been able to consider with his colleagues what level of forces would be appropriate to meet our needs in the light of the JIC's assessment of the warning time likely to be available to us and the views of the new Military Commissioner. This minute sets out his main conclusions.
2. It should be made clear at the outset that the CDS believes that the level of forces required should be subject to regular review, initially on a quarterly basis, in order to take account of such factors as further refinements in intelligence assessments about the future trend of Argentine intentions. The discussion at OD(FAF) on 28th July about the need for a permanent airfield capable of taking wide-bodied jets is also crucially important in the longer term. The force level set out in this minute is therefore that which it is judged appropriate to achieve by the beginning of October, at which point it should be reviewed in the light of our ability to provide more rapid reinforcement than at present.
3. The current threat is low. Argentina has neither the capability nor unity to mount a further invasion at present or in the near future. She could harass the Islands and Dependencies and threaten the lines of communication, but the current risk of such action is slight. It may, however, increase and could occur through some maverick action on the part of an individual Argentine service. More likely is some

form of provocative action which stops short of military confrontation. Linked to the likelihood of such hostile or provocative action is the warning time which could be expected. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office have reported separately that at present we could hope for some weeks political warning of any reinvasion attempt, while the military indicators could be expected to confirm such intentions about two weeks ahead. Warning of hostile or other action short of major operations is much more difficult. It is only likely to produce tactical warning for forces stationed in the Falklands area and not give time for strategic moves of reinforcements.

4. Against this background, the forces which are to be stationed in the South Atlantic must be sufficiently strong to provide convincing evidence of our determination to defend the Islands and their Dependencies against further military adventures. If the Argentines undertook military action despite such evidence, our forces must be strong enough to deal with more minor incidents, such as harassment or probing attacks, and capable of keeping the airhead open in the face of a major attack on the Islands to permit the arrival of air and ground reinforcements. The ability of the airfield to accept a flow of transport aircraft will be critical to the success of this strategy.

5. These factors have led the CDS to recommend the mix of forces shown at Annex up until October. This would involve a Garrison of about 3,550 for the defence of the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. The military capabilities of the force are deliberately weighted in favour of air and sea defence, with the aim of preventing the Argentines from launching attacks on the Islands. The smaller land component, built around one battalion group, is designed to deal with minor

incursions should the Argentines nonetheless succeed in landing forces on the Islands and, more importantly, to play its part in retention of the airhead if reinforcements are required. Military plans for reinforcement of the Islands are now being prepared. It will almost certainly be necessary to position some stockpiles of weapons and supplies on the Islands to ensure a sufficiently rapid build-up of forces. It will also be necessary to test our reinforcement plans. It is hoped to undertake the first such exercise in January 1983.

6. In addition to the Garrison force levels, some 750 Army personnel including 600 Royal Engineers are currently deployed to carry out work on the runway extension, Garrison accommodation, rehabilitation, mine clearance and EOD tasks. The first two tasks should be completed by early 1983, but it is difficult at this stage to estimate the extent and duration of the mine clearance operations and any further tasks which the Royal Engineers may be asked to fulfill on behalf of the civil authorities. Moreover, experience is showing how difficult it is to make progress on major engineering work during the Falklands winter. To expedite the important work which lies ahead, particularly on the accommodation for the garrison, the Military Commissioner has proposed that 300 more Royal Engineers should be deployed during the forthcoming Falklands summer (from November 1982 to April 1983), making 900 additional Royal Engineers in all, and that this should reduce to a total of 300 during the following Falklands winter. Plans are currently being made to do this. The garrison will also need to be supported by a significant number of ships taken up from trade to provide a number of essential services. Currently, more than 20 such ships are employed.

7. Among the other factors relevant to the level of forces to be stationed in the area, two are particularly important. Firstly,

there is the need to guard against over-insuring now at the risk of sending wrong signals to the Argentines if it were subsequently decided to reduce the force level to any significant degree. Secondly, we must be conscious of the political and social strains which a large military garrison must pose for a small island community. On the latter point, Lord Shackleton has recommended that the MOD consider maximising the number of women in the garrison and allowing accompaniment of married servicemen by their wives. We shall see what we can do to meet these understandable objectives, but as is being reported separately in the context of the Shackleton Report, this is unlikely to prove significant. The current plan is to limit tours of duty in the Falkland Islands to 4-6 months. This affords a number of benefits, but does mean that accompanied tours would be very hard to justify. Ultimately, factors such as these must be set against the consequences of deploying a level of forces which might prove inadequate to deter the Argentines or to mount a sufficiently effective defence.

8. There is also a need to minimise the adverse implications of these deployments for our NATO and home defence capabilities. The delayed availability to respond to an emergency in the Alliance area, and the loss of opportunities to conduct joint training with NATO allies, will effect the NATO duties of all three Services in a variety of ways. The forces lost to NATO in this way will be greater than those deployed in the South Atlantic at any one time in view of the transit of forces to and from the area. In the case of the Royal Navy for instance, there will on average be about half as many ships en route to and from the South Atlantic as are stationed in the area at any one time.

9. Ministers have decided that the costs of protecting the islands in future, as with the costs of the operation and of replacing lost or expended equipment, will be met from monies additional to that required to meet our commitment to NATO of 3% a year real growth. An accurate assessment of the cost of the garrison will depend on a clear definition of its size and of the length of time it is to be maintained. A provisional estimate suggests that the extra cost of establishing and maintaining a garrison of the size set out at Annex A for a period of 5 years would be of the order of £600M for capital costs and £200-250M a year for running costs. The elements are in Annex B: they include the cost of enhancements to existing force levels and equipment inventories where these are needed to avoid detriment to other capabilities and commitments. the principal capital components are additional Phantoms and DC10 tanker aircraft, helicopters and Rapier air defence missiles. Running costs cover the additional personnel required, fuel, freight and personnel movements and logistic support as well as the cost of running ships from the Standby Squadron to maintain fleet availability in the North Atlantic.

10. These costs do not however include provision for the new airbase which is an essential element in the defensive concept for the Islands. A survey of sites will be completed in October and this will enable an estimate of the cost to be made. But it is already clear that in addition to the runway costing about £45M a very substantial investment, possibly of some hundreds of millions of pounds, would be needed to provide the full range of facilities for the support and operation of sophisticated modern aircraft.

11. These cost figures will be further refined and discussed with the Treasury before a final estimate is presented to Ministers.

~~SECRET~~ANNEXPLANNED FORCE LEVELS IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC BY OCTOBER 19821. Falkland Islands and Dependenciesa. Navy

1 SSN

1 SSK (occasionally on station depending on threat and availability)

4/6 Destroyers/Frigates

1 Ice Patrol Ship

1 Multi-purpose stores ship (AEFS)

1 Tanker (AO)

5 Sea King Mk V Helicopters

2/3 Armed Patrol Craft

1 Tug

1 Heavy Repair Ship

} until May 1983

Notes: (1) CTF 317 intends to retain a Wessex 5 support helicopter squadron until 1 November 1982 to meet essential tasks.

(2) The withdrawal of the CVS Group is scheduled for the end of September but is dependent on the completion of the extension to Port Stanley runway and provision of adequate air defence ashore.

b. Army

1 Headquarters Unit

1 Infantry Battalion, reinforced by one Company Group, elements of which will be based on South Georgia

1 Blowpipe Detachment (8 firing units)

1 Field Battery (6 light guns)

1 Rapier Battery (12 firing units)

1 Signals Squadron

1 Army Air Corps Flight (9 Helicopters)

1 Field Squadron (Royal Engineers)

1 Field Support Squadron (Royal Engineers)

1 Composite Logistic Battalion

~~SECRET~~



b. Army (Continued)

Until their tasks are complete:

1 Ammunition Company, 2 Pioneer Platoons and extra Royal Engineer units comprising an additional increment of 750 men (600 of whom are RE) for runway extension, garrison accommodation and mine clearance. RE numbers will, however, fluctuate seasonally, increasing to 900 during next Falklands summer (Nov 82 to Apr 83) and decreasing to 300 during next Falklands winter.

c. Air Force

- 4 Ground Control Intercept/Early Warning Radar (one of which is in reserve)
- 4 Phantom F4 Aircraft (on completion of runway extension - see Note (2) above)
- 6 Harrier GR3 Aircraft
- 2 Hercules C130K Aircraft
- 5 Chinook Helicopters
- 1 Air Defence Rapier Squadron (8 firing units). This may be adjusted upwards when the radars are fully deployed
- 3 Search and Rescue (SAR) Sea King Helicopters for use for SAR and as medium lift helicopters for logistic support.

d. Overall Manpower Estimates

Approximate strengths

Navy: 100 (plus 150 from Wessex 5 squadron until 1 November 1982)

Army: 2250 (plus 750 Royal Engineers and other specialist units until their tasks are complete)

RAF: 1200

Total: 3550 (plus 900 Royal Engineers, Naval personnel and other specialist units until their tasks are complete)

2. Merchant Ships

A significant number of ships taken up from trade will also be required. The number will vary according to requirements, but at present more than 20 are employed.

3. Ascension Island

a. Navy

2 Wessex V SAR Helicopters

b. Army

Some logistic support and personnel

c. Air Force

A number of Tanker aircraft and Hercules C130K Aircraft, to be determined primarily by the availability of South American staging facilities

4 Phantom F4

1 Air Defence Radar

ANNEX B

COMPONENTS IN THE COSTING OF THE FALKLANDS GARRISON

Principal Items of Capital Expenditure Excluding Airbase

- a. Aircraft: 12 Phantoms, 3 DC10 tankers, 3 Chinooks, 8 Sea Kings.
- b. Other equipment: 24 Rapier fire units and missiles, 12 light guns, support vehicles and communications.
- c. Logistic stockpile.
- d. Works.

Principal Running Costs

- a. Additional personnel and extra personnel costs.
- b. Additional fuel and logistic support.
- c. Chartered shipping.
- d. Running frigates in the Standby Squadron.

23 SEP 1982

