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CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY (OFFICIAL) COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND
THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

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EVACUATION OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS: CONTINGENCY
RECEPTION ARRANGEMENTS

Note by the Secretaries

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The Sub-Committee will recall that papers have already been circulated on the financial implications of an evacuation from the Falkland Islands (ODO(SA)(82) 27) and on guidance which might be offered to islanders wishing to leave (ODO(SA)(82) 29). The attached paper, prepared by the Home Office in consultation with interested Departments, sets out contingency plans for the reception of evacuees from the Falkland Islands. At this stage it is circulated for the information of the Sub-Committee and Ministers are not being informed collectively of these contingent arrangements.

2. The circulation of this document has been restricted and recipients are asked to ensure that the need to know principle is strictly observed.

Signed C H O'D ALEXANDER
G R G MIDDLETON
S D SPIVEY

Cabinet Office

26 April 1982

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EMERGENCY PLAN FOR THE RECEPTION OF EVACUEES FROM THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Note by the Home Office

- Such indications as are available suggest that the present mood of the Falkland Islanders is that few wish to leave, but that they are waiting on events. This mood might change, and in place of the present trickle of people wishing to leave, a large number (perhaps the majority) would wish to leave. The time also might come when HMG decided to arrange for an evacuation of all the inhabitants. All such expectations assume the continued willingness of the Argentines - who at present control the means of exit - to allow the Islanders to leave.
2. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office have considered (in a separate paper) the financial implications of assisting travel to the UK in the event of such partial or complete evacuation. The present paper considers arrangements which might be necessary to assist Islanders on their arrival in this country.
 3. Ministers will no doubt wish to consider whether to treat the Falkland Islanders as a unique case, for whom more generous arrangements than normally apply in such cases would be appropriate. The paper, therefore, outlines three schemes for subsistence allowances, one on a minimum basis, and others with more generous provision. The proposals in this paper are not intended to apply to British subjects resident in Argentina.
 4. Little is known about the needs of potential evacuees from the Falkland Islands, but it is assumed that many (probably the majority) would have relatives or other points of contact in this country, with whom they would wish to stay immediately on arrival. Some, however, would have no accommodation to turn to, and some might be lacking in any means of support.
 5. In the ordinary way it is expected that small numbers of destitute families arriving from abroad could be accommodated, if need be, and given assistance by the local authority in whose area they find themselves on arrival. This solution is not recommended in the case of the Falkland Islanders because (a) it is doubtful whether all or even most of those in need would fall within the priority categories of the Homeless Persons legislation (b) the local authorities could be expected to protest that the Falkland Islanders were a central government responsibility (Crawley Borough Council has already expressed anxiety lest it should be held responsible for displaced Islanders who land at Gatwick) and that they
(the local

(the local authorities) had neither the finance nor the accommodation required (c) the Islanders would not be coming here for permanent settlement but only for the period of the emergency (d) not only would a public dispute with the local authorities be ill received by public opinion, but it would be wrong to subject the Islanders to this indignity.

6. The following measures are, therefore, proposed.

- (a) A special programme of assistance should be under the general supervision of a committee under the chairmanship of the Governor of the Falkland Islands, composed of the WRVS and the relevant Government Departments, FCO, ODA, VSU. Officials from DHSS, MOD or DOE could be co-opted as and when appropriate.
 - (b) The WRVS (assisted if necessary by a small secretariat composed of ODA contract employees from the Falkland Islands who have already made their way here) should be the main channel of assistance.
 - (c) There should be made available for each Islander on arrival up to one week's residence at Government expense in a hotel near the airport of arrival. This will enable those who have accommodation to go to or contacts to follow up, time to make practical arrangements. Hotels would be booked in advance (on receipt of notice of departure from Montevideo), and payment made direct to the hotels. Those who wished to proceed direct to their own accommodation could be paid the single rail fare to their destination in lieu of the free hotel accommodation. For those who need accommodation to be provided (paragraph (d) below), the period in the hotel would enable their need to be assessed and suitable accommodation provided. In addition to a hotel booking or onward rail fare, each person could be provided on arrival with a modest lump sum (? say £10 for immediate out of pocket expenses).
 - (d) For those with no accommodation to go to, accommodation should be provided in furnished quarters at MOD establishments. The MOD are provisionally identifying suitable accommodation initially up to 100 married quarters. The extra costs of providing such accommodation would be met by the Home Office and subject to review after 3 months.
- /(e) For

(e) For those who arrive without adequate financial resources, a subsistence allowance should be paid. We have considered three ways of doing this:

- (i) the regular supplementary benefit system might be used. This would have the merit of ensuring a careful assessment of need, and assimilating the Falklanders at the earliest possible moment to normal arrangements in this country. It would also be economical, and represent the minimum that should be done. It would be easy to administer but would be open to the following objections.
 - It would subject the Islanders to a means test which might well be thought to be inappropriate in the circumstances.
 - In most circumstances, claimants of supplementary benefit who are under pensionable age are required to register and be available for work in order to receive benefit. Although there would be no objection to Islanders working while here, there might be objections to a requirement to register.
 - It would provide benefit at a rate less than might be justified in the special circumstances of deprivation suffered by the Islanders.
 - There are objections of principle in paying an enhanced rate of supplementary benefit (which is basically a subsistence allowance) to a particular group with no clearly identifiable extra need and to do so would in any case be technically difficult.
 - Problems would arise over those who, while having suffered loss of most of their assets or being unable to realise their value in this country, nevertheless had just sufficient resources to disqualify them for supplementary benefit.

The last objection might be met by providing a fund to be used at the discretion of the Governor (within guidelines drawn up by the

Home Office) to assist those who were not eligible for supplementary benefit, but could nevertheless prove hardship.

- (ii) a special allowance at rates at or above normal supplementary benefit rates should be paid, across the board, to all Islanders. While such an arrangement would be administratively simple, and avoid means-testing or discretion, it would clearly include payments to those who were in no way in need.
- (iii) Provision should be made to pay to any who demonstrate need to the satisfaction of the Governor, a special subsistence allowance. In addition to rent-free accommodation in MOD married quarters, for those who require it, the amount to be paid should depend on financial circumstances and should be up to a maximum of £60 per week for a married couple with pro-rata allowances for single Islanders and dependent children. (This figure represents some £10-12 above the pensioner scale rates payable under supplementary benefit and, taking the rent figure as £25, approximate to the average weekly pay of labourers which in the last quarter of 1981 was £85.)

Lighting and heating would be provided without additional charge in MOD quarters and there might be some modest deduction from the allowance for this service.

It is believed that the Governor and the Chief Secretary of the Falklands between them know personally all families on the Islands and would be well placed to exercise this discretion. If a large contingent were to arrive, there would be a fairly substantial administrative task. It is believed that some of the technical cooperation officers employed by the ODA in the Falklands who have now returned to this country would be available to do this work under the director of the proposed committee.

The scheme has been discussed in outline with the Governor and the ODA, and they are content with what is proposed.

7. The cost of the above arrangements cannot be accurately estimated in the absence of information about potential needs, numbers of take up and the length of time for which the arrangements would be necessary. Since, however, all arrangements are based on the expectation that the Islanders would return to the Falklands, it does not seem feasible at this stage to plan moving them out of MOD accommodation. It would, however, be necessary to review arrangements if the emergency were prolonged.

8. On the assumption of subsistence allowance on the lines of 6 (e) (iii) above, and assuming a need to help 400 people the cost of these proposals would be around £160,000 for one month, £200,000 for two and £250,000 for three months. If we assumed the worst possible situation where we had to help some 1700 people the corresponding costs would be in the region of £700,000, £900,000 and £1.1 million. The arrangements would be subject to review within three months.

9. The programme would be administered as economically as possible, and in the first instance the Home Office would consider whether the money could be found from within existing allocations. There can be no guarantee that this would be possible, and it might, therefore, be necessary to seek a special allocation from the Contingency Reserve for this purpose.

Home Office

23 April 1982