

SECRET



Secretary of State

VULCAN ATTACK

1. We received a call sign at 1050 indicating that the weapon load had been released. The aircraft is now at the top of its climb and we will not receive any more information until after its rendezvous with the Victor tanker at 1200. The Vulcan is due back at Ascension at 1500.
2. Attached is the proposed line which I can would use at the 12 o'clock briefing.

Also attached is a situation report on recent incidents which, in particular, seeks to explain the Belgiano incident. Ian is under great pressure on this and would wish to use it as a briefing. The only question is the extent to which it preempts your statement this afternoon.

Unless we hear to the contrary from you
we shall assume that you are content
for Ian to brief in this way.

3
4/5.

STATEMENT - 4 MAY

Early this morning a further bombing attack was carried out against the airfield at Port Stanley. The previous attacks on 1 May were successful. It was possible however that repairs to the airfield had started to give it a limited capability. We said in the announcement of the Total Exclusion Zone that Port Stanley airport would be closed. A further bombing attack was therefore mounted to ensure this. It is not impossible that further attacks may be necessary from time to time.

I have no further details at present but more information will be made available as soon as possible.

I have very little to add to the statements I have already made both about the engagement of two armed Argentinian patrol craft type naval auxiliary by Lynx helicopters and about the attack on the Argentinian cruiser General Belgrano.

We now know that the vessels I described as "Argentinian patrol type naval auxiliaries" were armed ocean going tugs used by the Argentinian Navy as patrol craft. One of these we have provisionally identified as the Al/Ferez Sobral. If this is so, she would according to all the references, be armed with 40mm and 20mm guns. I am not able to say whether it was this vessel or the other one which was sunk. Neither am I able to say whether there are any survivors. As I announced to you subsequently we did drop life saving equipment close to the damaged vessel. But the night was described as inky black with intermittent rain and strong winds.

As for the cruiser Belgrano. She for some time had been in the general area in which she was attacked. She may have been going in and out of the total exclusion zone or perhaps skirting it. She was accompanied by two Argentinian destroyers. The cruiser was armed with fifteen 6inch guns (with a range of 13 miles) and the short range sea cat missile. Both destroyers were fitted with exocet missiles which have a range of over 20 miles. This force because of its position relative to our task force and its weapon capability overall posed a significant threat to us. In accordance with the warning given to the Argentinian Government on 23 April, the cruiser was therefore attacked by an RN vessel. She was hit by 2 conventional high

explosive torpedos. The capital ship of the group was therefore disabled and the RN vessel in accordance with normal practice then withdrew.

We have no further direct information about the cruiser or its two destroyers which incidentally were not attacked. The Argentinian Government has now announced that the cruiser drifted for some time out of radio contact and has now sunk. We have no reason to disbelieve this account. We have no knowledge of Argentinian casualties.

The task force is now continuing its patrols both by air and sea and by night and day to enforce the total exclusion zone around the Falkland Islands.