


Mike P.

pl. see P. R.'s note.

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(2)



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

5 April 1982

*Thank you  
for this  
in my  
Peklands  
file*

Prime Minister

A J Coles Esq  
NUMBER 10

*You may care to see.*

*A.J.C. 5/4*

*Dear John*

COMMUNICATIONS WITH PORT STANLEY

We have been examining how our communications with Port Stanley functioned immediately before the Argentinian invasion. The results of our investigation are set out in the enclosed note, which Sir Michael Palliser thought you might wish to see.

*Yours ever,  
Andrew*

R A Burns  
Private Secretary to the  
Permanent Under Secretary

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## COMMUNICATIONS WITH PORT STANLEY

Equipment

1. Official communications with Port Stanley are carried via Cable & Wireless commercial link which normally operates for 12 hours each day Monday to Saturday 1200-2400 and 11 hours on Sunday 1200-2300 (all times in this note are expressed in local London time). At our request the availability of the line was extended on 1 April to 24 hours operation. The equipment is highpowered, a 30 kw transmitter in Britain and a 7.5 kw transmitter in Port Stanley. They were installed in the early 1960s. The size of the Port Stanley transmitter is fully adequate for its purpose. Messages are sent by telex over a radio circuit and the service is available to any British Telecom telex subscriber. In addition there have been periodic tests with the Royal Marines Unit on the Falkland Islands (Naval Party 8901) to establish the viability of a hand morse circuit to be used in crisis conditions. The successful tests were carried out during 1 April.

Maintenance

2. Cable & Wireless have confirmed that the radio equipment both in the UK and Port Stanley is subject to routine maintenance procedures. This is preventative maintenance to ensure that the equipment is in good working order. Standby equipment is included in the programme. Cable & Wireless headquarters require monthly reports from their overseas stations about the technical state of their equipment. All their overseas equipment is additionally subject to a two yearly engineering visit. The Port Stanley equipment was last inspected in 1980 and was due for its next visit in approximately 3 months.

Radio Propagation

3. As with any radio circuit, however modern or powerful, radio propagation problems, usually during night hours, can prevent messages being passed successfully. Such problems normally stem from ionospheric conditions which prevent radio signals being received. The only way to avoid radio propagation problems is to use a physical cable link or a satellite. There is no existing submarine cable to the Falklands. Cable or satellites are very expensive and only commercially justifiable for a company like Cable & Wireless where a large volume of traffic has to be passed.

/Contacts



Contacts on night of 1/2 April

4. The last official inward message from the Governor was logged in at 2155 on 1 April and the last outward message from London at 0833 on 2 April. There were some propagation difficulties between 0245 and 0320 and 0540 and 0600. Nevertheless, between 0001 and 0833, 21 official telegrams were passed to Port Stanley at various times during the night, eleven of them between 0600 and 0833. The signal light in the FCO COMCEN indicating that the line was alive went out at about 0845. At 0918 British Telecom told Cable & Wireless that they had lost contact with Port Stanley because of propagation conditions but were trying to restore the line once again. We received no inward message to say that the invasion had taken place, although we now know that the Governor attempted unsuccessfully to send such a message at 0900.

5. At about 1100 on 2 April, the Whitehall Wireless Station offered to try and pass urgent traffic via HMS Endurance. A message was sent from the FCO through the MOD Communications Centre at 1110. At 1410, Whitehall Wireless reported that HMS Endurance had been unable to pass this traffic to Naval Party 8901.