

Ref: B06475

*You are already aware of**etc.*MR COLES*A.S.C. 23/4**Who represents  
the P.M?  
Mrs.**h.a.  
MR 4/5*Falklands: Military Decisions

7  
1

Sir Robert Armstrong, who has now left for Paris until tomorrow, has asked me to report two urgent decisions on military matters which were authorised at his meeting this morning with Sir Antony Acland, Sir Frank Cooper, Sir Michael Palliser and (in the Chief of the Defence Staff's temporary absence) the Chief of Naval Staff.

2. SSN Conqueror. This submarine has been deployed off South Georgia in the context of Operation Paraquet. The Ministry of Defence consider that she is no longer required there and that, in order not to waste a valuable asset, she should be immediately redeployed in direct support of the main Carrier Battle Group, which as you know is now south of latitude 35° South and will arrive at the Falklands MEZ on 29th April. But if she is to leave the South Georgia area, where she is covered by the Paraquet Rules of Engagement (ROE), she will need to be given new ROE. Apart from the Paraquet area, our submarines have at present ROE only for the Falklands MEZ. But our surface ships south of latitude 35° South have ROE which allow them to take necessary action to achieve their military task (transit) and to attack any submarine (or ship or aircraft) that demonstrates hostile intent; in these contexts they are allowed to presume that any conventional submarines detected are Argentinian. The equivalent ROE for an SSN reads

"Any submarine detected not classified nuclear may be presumed to be Argentinian and may be attacked".

The Ministry of Defence consider it essential that, if Conqueror is redeployed as they suggest, she be given this ROE (you are aware of the reasons why our submarines cannot afford to wait for a conventional submarine encountered to demonstrate hostile intent). Sir Robert's meeting concluded that this was unexceptional from Ministers' point of view; and therefore authorised both the proposed deployment and the proposed ROE. Sir Antony Acland did not consider that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary need be consulted or informed in Washington. The chances of an encounter between Conqueror and an Argentinian submarine are not in fact very high.

3. Argentine 707s. Boeing transport aircraft, with Argentine military markings, have been overflying the British Task Force. If this reconnaissance activity continues it could involve military danger, not least from submarines. Sir Robert's meeting therefore agreed -

(a) that the Task Force's Harriers should be authorised by the Ministry of Defence to "warn off" any further 707s which attempt such surveillance, using internationally recognised signals;

(b) that the Argentines should be confidentially warned, through the Swiss, that with immediate effect any Argentine aircraft engaging in such surveillance will be regarded as hostile and will be liable to be dealt with accordingly;

(c) that, once (b) had been done, the Ministry of Defence should authorise our Harriers to fire warning shots across the path of any 707 which ignores the signals at (a);

(d) that as soon as further urgent work on the legal position is complete a separate submission should be made to Ministers on whether any 707 which ignores the warning shots at (c) should be shot down.

If the steps at (a) or (c) succeed, (d) will of course not arise. The Defence Secretary is content with (a) and (c); Sir Antony Acland is informing the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in Washington and is confident that he too would not object. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office will prepare a public statement which could be made if, as a result of warning shots as at (c), the Argentines publicly complain that their aircraft have been attacked.

!! 4. Since the above was written I have, as you know, mentioned these points to the Prime Minister and she has indicated that she is content with both.

5. I am sending copies of this minute to the Private Secretaries of the other members of OD(SA); and to the Chief of the Defence Staff, Sir Antony Acland, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Michael Palliser.

R L Wade-Gery

23rd April 1982