

COS(Misc) 93/742/1

Copy No ⁴⁷ ... of 57 copies

AIRFIELDS IN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

At your meeting this afternoon (1) you were briefed on airfields in the Falkland Islands. The full note by DS Int is now forwarded for your information.

Attachment:

Airfields in the Falkland Islands - Note by DS Int (2 pages).

Note:

1. COS 8th Meeting/82.

Distribution:

CDS
CNS
CGS
CAS

EMH
2 PM

Copy to:
PUS
VCDS(P&L)
DCDS(I)
ACDS(Pol)
ACDS(Ops)
AUS(D Staff)
FCO(Defence Dept)

ALQ 0504/1

15 APR 1982

7 April 1982

AIRFIELDS IN FALKLAND ISLANDS(NOTE BY DS INT)MINOR STRIPS

1. There are 32 small landing strips in the Falkland Islands. They are mainly grass and they range from 1000 ft to 3000 ft long. They are designed for use by light civil aircraft up to Britten Norman Islander aircraft. Four of them have been drained and were kept open through last winter.

PORT STANLEY AIRFIELD2. Construction:

a. The airfield was constructed by a British Civil Engineering Contractor for ODA and was completed in 1977. The existing runway (08/26) is 4100 ft long, 147 ft wide, and was designed for FOKKER F27/F28 aircraft. Design LCN was 25 but the strip is known to be up to LCN 40 in many places. Construction is 300mm of compacted crushed stone mainly on in-situ white sand. The pavement is surfaced with a minimum of 32mm of Asphalt, but it is up to 100mm thick in places.

b. Aids. RT, WT and NDB.

c. Lighting. No fixed lighting.

d. Usage. The existing airfield has been recently repaired and it should be able to take a large number of C130 sorties without serious deterioration. With regular minor repairs it should stand up to heavy usage for several months.

e. Fuel. No fuel is stored on the airfield. There is a storage capacity of 50,000 litres in Port Stanley Town belonging to the Argentine Air Force. Until the invasion, aircraft refuelling was by bowser.

f. Aircraft Parking Apron. There is a small asphalt apron (270 ft x 180 ft) near the terminal building. This would be too small to take more than three C130 Hercules, but there is a car park nearby which could be converted by Argentine engineers in a few days, and which could then take additional aircraft.

3. Airfield Development by Argentine Engineers. Argentine Air Force Engineers constructed a temporary airstrip 4000 ft long 50 ft wide in 1971 near Rookery Bay between Port Stanley and the

existing airfield. This airstrip was surfaced with US AM2 aluminium surfacing expedient which was lifted and removed from the Falkland Islands in 1978. With the engineer plant available on East Falkland Island, augmented by extra plant which is known to be in transit from Argentina, the Air Force Engineers could level and surface a completely new airstrip on a suitable site like the one previously used at Rookery Bay. Alternatively in 2 to 3 weks it is estimated that the existing airfield could be extended to 6000 ft maximum if a surfacing expedient such as the US AM2 was imported. We have no knowledge of Argentine ability to provide bulk refuelling facilities on shore. There are several sites near the airport where an LST could beach, and this could be one way of bringing in a large quantity of fuel in drums or tanks. Even if they have no dracones and pillow tanks they could very quickly set up a significant reserve of aviation fuel near the airfield.

4. Argentine Air Force Air Transport Operations from Stanley. If pressed, the Argentine Air Force should be able to operate C130 Hercules into Stanley Airport carrying a maximum payload of 17000kg. In addition the FOKKER F27 and F28s could fly in fully laden. All this assumes that the aircraft do not refuel at Stanley and that they arrive from the nearest mainland base. Because there is no perimeter track and the apron is restricted, the number of sorties will be limited. They should have no difficulty however in unloading and clearing a minimum of say 12 aircraft per day, which would give an inward airlift in the order of 200 tons of stores per day.

5. Argentine Offensive/Defensive Air Operations. The Argentine Mirage III, Mirage V and their A4 Skyhawks could operate from Stanley Airfield with almost full payloads to defend the island. The limited parking area would again be a problem. If the Argentine Air Force Engineers choose to improve this, however, there is no reason why, say, 4 of these fighter aircraft could not operate from Stanley. The factor most likely to limit the sortie rate is that of fuel supply. With forward planning and the engineer work described above it must therefore be assumed that the Argentine Air Force could give themselves at least some air defence cover.