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PS/Minister(AF)  
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DN Plans  
DNOT  
Head of DS 11  
D Sales 2  
FCO, South America Department (Mr Fearn) ✓

I enclose a draft reply to Mr Shersby's question, together with  
supplementaries and a background note.

21 January 1982

*N. H. Nicholls*

N H NICHOLLS  
Head of DS 5

For answer  
on 26/1

PQ 4121 C

MR MICHAEL SHERSBY (CON) (HILLINGDON, UXBRIDGE)

Mr Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what visits will be made by HMS ENDURANCE during her current deployment to British Antarctic Survey bases situated on Signy Island, Farady on Galinde Island, Rothera Adelaide Island, Halley, Coats Land, on the moving ice shelf, South Georgia and the Falkland Islands.

PROPOSED REPLY

(Mr Wiggin)

During her current deployment HMS ENDURANCE has visited the BAS bases on South Georgia and Signy Island in the South Orkneys. She is planned also to visit both Faraday and Rothera bases. There are no BAS bases in the Falkland Islands.

BACKGROUND NOTE

1. HMS ENDURANCE normally conducts three work periods in the Antarctic. This season she will conduct hydrographic surveys of a previously uncharted but potentially important area off the Antarctic peninsula, as well as research (in conjunction with scientists of the Scott Polar Institutes) into the feasibility of towing icebergs, and will support scientists of the BAS in their geological and life science work. She will also carry out magnetic observations on behalf of the Edinburgh Institute of Geological Sciences.
2. Supplies and stores and occasionally personnel are delivered to BAS bases as a matter of course. (Similar co-operation is also frequently offered or accepted by the many foreign bases in the British Antarctic Territory).
3. The BAS (funded by the National Environment Research Council) have expressed regret at the decision to pay off ENDURANCE, but they possess two vessels of their own, BRANSFIELD and JOHN DISCOE, so that their work will be able to continue after ENDURANCE's withdrawal.
4. From 9 to 23 December HMS ENDURANCE transported stores to BAS bases in South Georgia (Grytviken) and the South Orkneys (Signy) which are conducting life science projects. The Governor of the Falkland Islands was embarked in order to visit his dependent territories and the BAS bases.
5. ENDURANCE is currently operating off the Antarctic peninsula, having just completed extensive support for the BAS geology project with 4 BAS scientists living on board for five days. 3 scientists from the Scott Polar Institute are also embarked for a three week period. The ship's third work

period from 26 February to 19 March is planned to include a hydrographic survey of the approaches to Rothera Base as well as support for BAS life science and geological teams off the NW Antarctic peninsula and at Adelaide Island. Visits will be paid to Faraday and Rothera bases.

6. There are no BAS bases on the Falkland Islands.

HMS ENDURANCE does however carry out hydrographic work in the Falkland Islands, and detaches a boat party to continue this work for the whole period of her deployment.

7. Mr Shersby has been a persistent critic of the decision to withdraw HMS ENDURANCE from service on her return to the UK in the Spring. He visited the Falklands last September with Mr Eric Ogden. Hansard extracts of previous questions by Mr Shersby on ENDURANCE are attached. His latest question is presumably designed to highlight ENDURANCE's hydrographic and material assistance to the (BAS), in order to enable him to argue that the decision to pay off the ship will prejudice British interests in the Antarctic. But the question will obviously provide a vehicle for general criticism of the decision. A House of Commons early day motion criticising the decision has now attracted around 150 signatures. Supplementaries have therefore been included covering all aspects of ENDURANCE's activity as well as the ship's future.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

1. PURPOSE OF VISITS TO  
BAS BASIS?

During her deployment to the  
and  
Antarctic/South Atlantic ENDURANCE  
assists the British Antarctic Survey  
in their scientific research and  
also delivers stores and supplies.

2. EFFECT OF WITHDRAWAL  
ON BAS?

The BAS do, of course, run two ships  
of their own, the Royal Research  
Ships BRANSFIELD and JOHN BISCOE,  
and I understand they will be  
continuing their work in this area.  
[If pressed on details] that is a  
matter for my rt hon Friend the  
Secretary of State for Education  
and Science.

3. BAS CONSULTED BEFORE  
DECISION TAKE?

No.

4. PRESENCE OF ENDURANCE  
NECESSARY FOR BASES'  
SECURITY?

The scientific bases of all countries  
in Antarctica have operated for many  
years in a spirit of friendly  
co-operation and the Antarctic  
Treaty specifically prohibits  
measures of a military nature  
in Antarctica. [If pressed on South  
Georgia Base (outside the Treaty)]  
HMS ENDURANCE's limited military  
capability meant that it was not  
considered that her possible

contribution to the defence of  
our bases - in the unlikely event  
that it was required - could justify  
her retention.

5. NOT  
WILL WITHDRAWAL PREJUDICE  
POSSIBLE BRITISH BENEFIT  
FROM EXPLOITATION SIGNIFY  
A LOSS OF INTEREST IN THE  
ANTARCTIC BY HMG?

No, sir.

6. WHAT ATTEMPTS HAVE BEEN  
MADE TO DISLODGE THE  
ILLEGAL ARGENTINE PRESENCE  
IN SOUTH THULE?

That is a matter for my rt hon  
Friend the Lord Privy Seal.

7. FUTURE OF HMS ENDURANCE?

HMS ENDURANCE is to be paid off  
in the Spring on her return to the  
United Kingdom. There are no plans  
to replace her.

8. REASON FOR DECISION?

During last year's reappraisal of the  
future defence programme we had to  
take some hard decisions, including  
a reduction in the number of  
surface warships. Against this  
background we had reluctantly  
to conclude that the relatively limited  
contribution made by HMS ENDURANCE  
to our defence capability did not  
justify the continued expense of  
running her.

9. SALE OF ENDURANCE?

No agreement has been reached with any country to sell ENDURANCE. [If pressed] It is not our practice to discuss negotiations relating to the possible sale of RN ships.

10. SALE OF ENDURANCE TO ARGENTINA?

So far as we are aware, Argentina have shown no interest in acquiring the ship.

11. SALE TO BAS?

The BAS were asked whether they were interested in acquiring the ship but did not wish to do so.

12. ENDURANCE'S DISPOSAL?

No decision has yet been taken on ENDURANCE's means of disposal.

13. FOLLOWING THE PAYING OFF OF HMS ENDURANCE WHAT MEASURES ARE ENVISAGED FOR DEMONSTRATING HMG'S CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO THE FALKLAND ISLANDS?

The Royal Marines Garrison in the Falkland Islands will be maintained at its present strength as a demonstration of our commitment. In addition it is the Government's intention that HM Ships will continue to deploy to the South Atlantic from time to time. [If pressed on frequency:] obviously less often than HMS ENDURANCE.

14. DEFENCE OF FALKLANDS?

The plan to pay off HMS ENDURANCE does not signify a reduction in HMG's commitment to the defence of the Falkland Islands. We remain determined to ensure that this integrity is preserved. We shall continue to maintain the Royal Marines Garrison at its present strength as a demonstration of our commitment.

15. ENDURANCE NECESSARY TO DEFENCE OF FALKLANDS?

I appreciate that, while in the area, HMS ENDURANCE provides visible reassurance additional to that provided by the permanent Royal Marines garrison. But she is not essential to the maintenance of our defence commitment to the Falkland Islands. She has, in any case, only a limited military capability.

16. FUTURE NAVAL DEPLOYMENTS TO THE AREA?

It is the Government's aim that RN Ships should continue to deploy to South Atlantic waters from time to time, though obviously less frequently than HMS ENDURANCE has been able to do.

17. RELIEF OF ROYAL MARINE GARRISON?

We are currently considering the most cost-effective and convenient method of undertaking the annual roulement. We are confident that it can be achieved smoothly.



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Written / Oral Answers Column No(s) 452-453

ENCL No.  
46

### HMS "Endurance"

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations have taken place with the people of the Falkland Islands concerning his proposal to scrap the ice patrol ship HMS "Endurance" in 1982; and what proposals he has for ensuring an adequate defence capability in the South Atlantic if his proposals are implemented.

Mr. Blaker: No such consultations have taken place. The Royal Marines garrison stationed in the Falkland Islands is being maintained at its present strength as a tangible demonstration of our commitment to the defence of the islands. It is also intended that HM ships will continue to deploy to the South Atlantic from time to time.

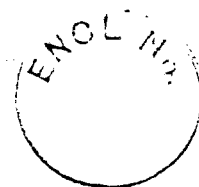
Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Defence what part is played by the ice patrol ship HMS "Endurance" in servicing the requirements of the force of Royal Marines stationed in the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Blaker: HMS "Endurance" is responsible for transporting members of the Royal Marines garrison between the Falkland Islands and the South American mainland, as part of their annual roulement, and also assists in this resupply.

Extracted from: HOUSE OF COMMONS / ~~1991~~ HANSAARD

Dated: 31 JULY 1991 No. 153 pt II Vol. 9

Written / ~~and~~ Answers Column No(s) 453



### British Antarctic Territory

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual cost of maintaining the Royal Marines based in the Falkland Islands; what other personnel for which he has departmental responsibility are stationed in the Falklands and Dependencies, in the British Antarctic Territory or elsewhere in the South Atlantic; and at what cost.

Mr. Blaker: The annual cost of maintaining the Royal Marines garrison in the Falkland Islands is currently estimated at around £600,000. There are also two RAF chief technicians on loan to the Falkland Islands Government, who meet their costs.