

ALG 650/1
 19 MAY 1982
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CHIEFS OF STAFF: 17 MAY

The following points of interest to the FCO arose at this morning's meeting of the Chiefs of Staff.

(a) Exocet. DCDSI reported the latest assessment that the Argentines have two or three Exocet still operational, but thought that deliveries might raise this total to five or ten within three or four weeks time (including the four Exocet for Peru on which representations are being made to the French). The Chief of Defence Staff asked whether there was any evidence that the Belgrano had had Exocet on board, pointing out that (although the incident was fading from public interest) this could be an important public relations point. DCDSI undertook to look into it. I drew attention to a recent intelligence report, received from a community liaison service, which appeared to state categorically that the Argentines now have 10 Exocet.

(b) Submarines. There was some discussion of current intelligence on Argentine submarines, from which the conclusion is drawn that one is probably within the TEZ. Of the others, the SANTIAGO is thought to be in Belgrano, but not operational (this is the submarine to which Mr. Haig referred in speaking to the Secretary of State); the SAN LUIS is expected in Puerto Belgrano within two days.

(c) The Argentine Carrier. Reference was made to reports (not confirmed) that the Argentine Carrier may be moving south, but still within the 12 mile limit. The Chief of General Staff asked whether the carrier could physically be attacked in this position (leaving aside legal or other limitations). The Chief of Naval Staff said that this depended entirely where it was; in most parts of this zone, the carrier could not in fact be attacked.

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(d) Sinking of merchant ships. DCDSI reported the sinking of the BAHIA BEN SUCESO and the CARCARANIA. The first of these is a 5,000 ton transport (and included on the original list of naval auxiliaries attackable under the ROE); the second is an 8000 ton merchant ship.

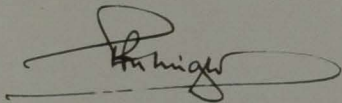
(e) Stanley Airfield. There was considerable discussion about the exact state of Port Stanley airfield. DCDSI reported that the first Vulcan raid had landed one direct hit, which had caused a crater of 50' diameter. The raid on 4 May had scored no hits, but a subsequent raid by Sea Harriers had "scarred" the runway. A further Sea Harrier attack on 16 May had caused

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one further crater. It appears however that the north edge of the runway is unharmed, and that aircraft have a free run of 2000' and 1800' on either side of the main crater. This is adequate to allow a C 130 with 12½ ton load to land and take off. No detailed information was available about the extent of damage to Argentine aircraft near the runway, nor has there been any report of where the other 1000 lb bombs landed. The Chief of Air Staff spoke very strongly about this, saying that he could not understand why photographic reconnaissance was not able to provide better information, and why repeated requests for information had received no reply. The Chief of Defence Staff undertook to take this up with the Commander in Chief. /Comment: I am glad that this discussion has taken place, since the Assessments Staff have had the greatest difficulty in getting any meaningful assessment from the MOD about the state of Port Stanley airfield./

(f) Blindfire/Rapier. The Chief of Defence Staff reported to the meeting that the Defence Secretary had agreed to the despatch of Blindfire/Rapier. There was no further discussion, but I have asked the Emergency Unit to check whether this has implications for NATO, and if so what action is required on the diplomatic net.



(P.R.H. Wright)
17 May, 1982.

cc Private Secretary
Mr. Giffard
Mr. Gillmore
Mr. Weston
Mr. Hulse

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