

MEETING OF INFORMATION GROUP ON THE FALKLANDS

10 AM THURSDAY 29 APRIL 1982

Present:

B Ingham - No 10
J Groves - Director General, COI
N Fenn - FCO
D Colvin - Cabinet Office
S Fuller - Presentation Unit
R Hatfield - Presentation Unit
J Wright - MoD
B Mower - No 10

The Group once again expressed deep concern about the reported remarks of Admiral Woodward, the various interpretations that were being put upon them and the potential damage to public opinion domestically and internationally. It expressed the strong hope that no further messages of this kind would come back from the Task Force.

In connection with the various stories in today's Press about the Haig proposals, the Foreign Office confirmed that their line was unchanged from yesterday. That is: the new proposals are based on the ideas that were discussed exhaustively during the shuttle diplomacy so that we know broadly what the position is and that severe difficulties attach to them. No one is asking us questions at present.

We understand that the present position (not-for use with the Press) is that the Argentinians were not likely either to say "yes" or "no" and, in the absence of a response, Haig was likely to go public later today on the proposals. The FCO were preparing a gap-plugging statement which, subject to Ministerial approval, we would be able to draw upon if and when this happened. FCO would ensure that No 10 was aware of the line before close of play today.

We should also need to be able to refer to a new diplomatic initiative in order to maintain our well published stance.

On stories of our slowing down the Task Force, we should deny firmly that this has happened or indeed that the United States requested us to do so.

No 10 confirmed that it had indicated to the Lobby that the reason for the 48 hour delay in enforcing a TEZ was to enable the fleet to be in position to enforce it.

FCO mentioned that a party of 17 Falklanders were arriving at 14.30 but FCO would not go out of their way to draw attention to this.

MoD said they were still not amplifying on the story of an Argentine dying in South Georgia. The Group felt that it would be impossible to hold the line when there had been very firmly written reports of his being shot.

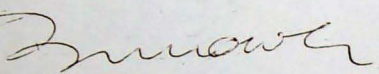
FCO confirmed that the Tidepool had not been handed over to the Chileans and was flying the British flag when it was diverted to assist the Task Force. MOD were asked to make this clear at today's briefing.

There was some discussion on the London Standard article criticising lack of effort by the BIS in New York. It was agreed that we should ask the Paymaster General if he would be prepared to take on opportunities for overseas television and radio broadcasts.

The general view was that the Press reflected the present position reasonably fairly. Presentation would become increasingly difficult over the next couple of days and we should be prepared to move quickly if Haig makes his statement on failure of the diplomatic initiative.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be at 10 am on Friday 30 April 1982.



B MOWER
29 April 1982