

CONFIDENTIAL

MEETING OF INFORMATION GROUP ON THE FALKLANDS

4 PM SUNDAY 2 MAY 1982

Present:

B. Ingham	-	No. 10
Ned Kelly	-	COI
Miss J. Whiting	-	FCO
D. Colvin	-	Cabinet Office
S. Fuller	-	Presentation Unit
R. Hatfield	-	Presentation Unit
H. Colver	-	No. 10

The absence of an MOD representative was noted with regret.

FCO reported on Mr. Pym's movements in the US. He was to see Mr. Haig during the morning of that day and would have dinner with the UN Secretary General at the UK Representative's residence. Formal talks with the UN Secretary General would be held on Monday. Mr. Pym would be giving a press conference at 3.30 pm US time that day (8.30 pm UK time).

The Chairman felt the problem was to make enough noise on the diplomatic front to ensure that UK action was not seen to be totally military. Not much was expected from the Haig talks but we would see how much US help we were going to get. It was not felt that much more over and above previous help would be forthcoming though it was noted that the press had not yet spelt out the scale of previous US assistance.

In the absence of any further military developments, concern was expressed that there might appear to be a vacuum unless the Argentines moved militarily. There was a considerable amount of dis-information about and we would point out the fundamental differences between the UK and Argentina on this - we have to defend our announcements in Parliament whereas, particularly at present, they dare not tell their own people the truth.

A feeling was developing that the attack on the airfields and the later engagements might be a prelude to something and that the initiative would slip away from the Government if there was not more action. This might be coupled with a suggestion that the United States were leaning on us to sit it out for a while. We should make the point that what we had done illustrated our seriousness and we continued the posture of military strength coupled with diplomatic pressure. This did not mean we were committed to a frontal assault. It had been 18 hours before there had been any action after the announcement of the TEZ and we would emphasise that with every meal that passes the Argentines on the Islands would be reminded that they could not resupply.

/ On the Cuba/

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On the Cuba/Soviet angle and the question of aircraft passing through Brazil it was reported that the evidence was not as strong as at first thought. We should continue to pursue the line that Soviets and Argentines were strange bed-fellows. The Argentines were well known for putting Marxists in prison.

It was felt that the Argentine dis-information on the Port Stanley airport attack could be countered most effectively by publishing pictures of the damage and it would be helpful if MOD could pursue this point. There had also been Argentine statements about casualties and here too a British view would be useful.

On the question of dis-information and credibility it was thought that a note for Ministers which could be copied to posts overseas should be produced making the point that the UK always waited for solid information before making any public statements about what was happening. This line could be fed to the BBC Overseas Service too.

On economic sanctions it was noted that the Japanese had now joined the many countries involved. Obviously sanctions would take some time to bite as the Argentines were well aware. But the isolation of Argentina and the political will expressed in imposing sanctions were the important points.

If Mr. Foot turned down the opportunity of an all Party discussion with the Prime Minister it would raise the question of whether this meeting would still take place.

There were stories around of the inquiry into Foreign Office handling of the affair in the early days, with a High Court Judge being mentioned. It was noted that though not much would be said about it at this stage, it was more likely to take the form of two wise men.

Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place at 4 pm on Monday 3 May.

H. COLVER
2 May 1982