

CONFIDENTIAL

MEETING OF INFORMATION GROUP ON THE FALKLANDS

10 AM MONDAY 4 MAY 1982

Present:

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

Military

No action anticipated today. The MoD will make a consolidated statement about the QE2 and the Fifth Brigade. There is a possibility that Bulwark will be put into operation as a garrison ship. It is clear that a garrison will be needed but Fifth Brigade is only one option. We are not confirming the number of Vulcan aircraft involved in the strike nor are we confirming that Conqueror was the submarine involved with Belgrano. The attack on the Belgrano was made not in relation to the Total Exclusion Zone but in defence of the Task Force under the 23 April statement. We do not know about casualties in Belgrano but it is worth mentioning that the escorting ships were not harmed and could have taken off the men. We cannot publicly deny stories of civilian casualties at Darwin: the MoD have said they cannot confirm or deny. The Prime Minister has been made aware of the difficulty of getting back film but could not agree to any diversion of any vessels for this purpose. The Group expressed its concern that film should be got back to Ascension at the earliest possibility. The Argentine aircraft carrier was still well outside the TEZ and there is no evidence of mechanical trouble. There may be limited use of Port Stanley airport, but only for very small aircraft.

The FCO reported on Mr Pym's visit to the United States. He discussed military matters: it is clear that the door is wide open for help and this will be followed up by the MoD. The Task Force is adequate but logistic support at the margin may well be helpful. Mr Haig was pressed on the question of an imports ban to encourage the Europeans. He was unforthcoming but volunteered to speak to our EC partners to let them know what other things the US were doing. Diplomatically Haig was very anxious that we should be seen to take new initiatives. Proposals had been worked out with the Peruvians (not by Perez de Cuella), had been prematurely released by Belaunde and rejected by the Argentinians. We now had a set of proposals before Ministers which we were likely to respond to with changes to maintain essential British interests.

The Foreign Secretary had a long and useful session with the Secretary General who gave a full explanation of the UN resources available. Mr Pym said that we were wide open to constructive suggestions but could not accept open-ended negotiations: calls for the cessation of hostility now is plainly in favour of the Argentinians and this we cannot accept. Any proposals must include immediate withdrawal of the Argentinians and no preconditions about Argentine sovereignty. The Secretary General presented us with a

UN paper, and we shall be making formal response.

The US are said to be very anxious about the Argentine and Latin American response to the sinking of the Belgrano, not sharing the US press view that the Junta's will is cracking. They do not want us to risk further pressure from military action.

Support from some EC partners, notably Italy, Ireland and West Germany seemed to be faltering. We must maintain the line given by the Foreign Secretary yesterday that EC support is solid.

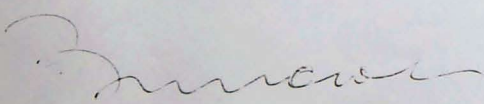
Summing up, our position must be one of not implying hostility towards the UN and being prepared to seek any diplomatic solution judged against the criteria of our known objectives. We are not looking for an alternative mediator to Haig who regards himself as still being in business. The Belaunde seven-year plan is not necessarily the basis for any solution. Our line should be that, following Mr Pym's visit to Washington and New York, the door is still wide open to a diplomatic solution and active talks continue both with the US Administration and the UN Secretary General. Meanwhile we intend to enforce the Zone. We should continue to damp down suggestions of imminent invasion however.

Statements from both Mr Pym and Mr Nott are expected in the House today.

Copies of the Press Statements made over the weekend by both Mr Pym and Mr Nott were requested by other members of the Group.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at 10 am on Wednesday 5 May 1982.


B MOWER
4 May 1982