

CONFIDENTIAL

MEETING OF INFORMATION GROUP ON THE FALKLANDS

10 AM TUESDAY 11 MAY 1982

Present:

B Ingham - No 10
P Brazier - COI
N Penn - FCO
I McDonald - MoD
D Colvin - Cabinet Office
R Hatfield - Presentation Unit
S Fuller - Presentation Unit
B Mower - No 10.

Diplomatic

FCO reported that it had been a difficult day in New York and that Parsons' report of his meeting with the Secretary General was discouraging. They foresaw presentational difficulties arising from present Argentine tactics. Their seven-point paper, if published, may appear to be reasonable on most points, including the question of not pre-judging the outcome of sovereignty talks. Our tactic on this must be to continue to stress the lack of unambiguous and unequivocal Argentine assurances and point to the continuing Argentine affirmations about sovereignty outside the United Nations negotiations. The FCO suggested that our present line today should be based on telegram number 706 basically giving the impression of our pressing on hard with negotiations in New York. Parsons was on the record as saying that we are now moving into the substantive area but it was not possible to predict the outcome. The FCO were still refusing to acknowledge any kind of deadline or ultimatum while reminding people what has been said about the sense of urgency and it is not going on indefinitely. The Group foresaw difficulties with Peter Jenkins' authoritative account in the Guardian. Clearly one cannot comment on this in detail. The UK have not accepted a year's settlement on the Budget, as reported in the Financial Times. FCO suggested that this might be a misunderstanding of Butler's not turning down flat President and Commission suggestions for activating the third year of the present agreement.

The Chairman felt that we should be in difficulties with the Press if there were no obvious developments by Thursday. FCO repeated that we should do all we could do to keep options open.

Military

MoD confirmed that there was no bombardment of Port Stanley yesterday and they were trying to check whether this meant there was no bombardment of the Falklands at all. Radio reports from the Task Force suggested there had been some sort of action yesterday. Mod were trying to obtain further information about the engagement with a vessel, possibly an oil tanker, early this morning.

MoD reported on agreement for new arrangements first in ensuring fast, flash messages of new incidents which they could use immediately and, second, control by the Task Force of the content and timing of news reports so that they did not appear ahead of MoD statements on new incidents.

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MoD were giving their second background briefing to defence correspondents today covering the capabilities of the Harriers and, possibly, going into more operational details. They were considering further meetings for the American, Scottish and regional Press respectively.

With ships arriving from South Georgia in Ascension today, a number of points arose. First, we should be getting back some of the film from South Georgia and the Chairman emphasised the importance of trying to get this out tonight if possible. Second, MoD were pressing hard for photographs of the prisoners arriving in good shape before any misinformation about them could be put out from elsewhere. Third, the MoD were anxious to get ahead of any other stories emerging with a report both on the Board of Inquiry into the death of an Argentine prisoner and in respect of a further (so far unreported) story.

Mr Colvin reported that the BBC had hooked up a line to Ascension and will be getting immediate stories from there. MoD confirmed that some light planes were possibly getting through to the Falklands but this would not make a significant difference to their supply. The Chairman reported the Prime Minister's unhappiness with the Panorama broadcast last night and stressed how important it was in this respect to get some good film out quickly about our success in South Georgia.

It was understood that policy regarding participation in the World Cup was under active consideration.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Group will take place on Wednesday, 12 May 1982 at 10 am.

Brian Mower

BRIAN MOWER
11 May 1982