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MEETING OF INFORMATION GROUP ON THE FALKLANDS

10 AM TUESDAY 18 MAY 1982

Present:

B Ingham	-	No 10
J Groves	-	Director General, COI
N Fenn	-	FCO
J Gee	-	MoD
R Hatfield	-	Presentation Unit
S Fuller	-	Presentation Unit
D Colvin	-	Cabinet Office
K Long	-	Chancellor of the Duchy's Office
B Mower	-	No 10.

Military

The only announcement expected today was in connection with a helicopter which ditched in bad weather. There were no casualties. The MoD are giving two unattributable briefings today. They will give a provincial Press briefing similar to that which the national defence correspondents had last week: they will also be briefing the national defence correspondents about the Argentine army.

Diplomatic

The presentation of Parsons' position in New York is set out in his telegrams in addition to which the Secretary General has indicated that we must come to a decision within the next few days and Ros has said that he has been informed of the British position, will consult his Government, and will bring back an answer before then.

Our position therefore is substantially unchanged. We should continue to avoid suggestions of ultimatum or deadline while stressing the great urgency and expectation of a quick Argentine response. The deadline, which the Secretary General has undertaken not to reveal, will be 5 pm our time tomorrow. We would expect within hours of this to go public though the handling depends to some extent on the way that the Secretary General chooses to handle it. It is essential that the proposals and the British position should become public together. There would be a commentary with the proposals making clear how reasonable we had been and why we could not go further. Our present expectation is for a statement of position with the proposals as an annex to be laid before Parliament to discuss. If this does not go ahead then Mr Pym would probably give a Press Conference.

FCO explained the basis for the renewal of EC sanctions on which Mr Pym would be making a Statement in the House today. Our line should be that we have obtained a broad degree of agreement and got a satisfactory result which is of no comfort to the Argentines. (It is considerably better than nothing.)

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On the question of the Mandate, the Government's position remains that, although favouring a long term solution, it is prepared to consider urgently a proposal for one year based on the 30 May agreement, that is, on the lines of the 1980 and 1981 settlement. We do not recognise the Thorn/Tindemans paper circulated on Sunday as being based on these lines. Mr Pym will respond today to the latest invitation giving our view of what the settlement should be and which will (implicitly) suggest two-thirds of the Commission's estimate of an unadjusted net contribution of 1530mecu with arrangement for risk sharing if this figure changes.

On Commander Astiz, our position remained that we were determined to respect our obligations under the Geneva Convention but we are still considering requests from the Swedish and French Governments. (In fact we are at present consulting Argentina through Brazilian intermediaries on whether they are prepared to allow him to be interrogated.)

The Prime Minister will reply to Mr Foot today turning down his request for a debate.

Our Vatican Ambassador will make clear to the Pope that we should do all we can to facilitate his visit by minimising Government involvement.

The Cabinet are discussing the World Cup today.

Staff of MoD Press Office

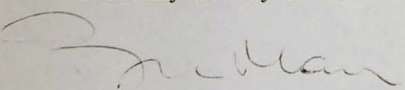
The Chairman reported discussions at last night's meeting of Information Officers concerning the possible need for assistance in the MoD Press Office. He had asked Chief Information Officers to consider earmarking individuals who would be suitable and who would gain from this added experience. In the meanwhile he would arrange a meeting together with John Groves, Nick Fenn, Neville Taylor and Tony Brooks to discuss the matter.

FCO Leaflet on the Falkland Islands

Although Presentation Unit were confident that copies had been distributed to MPs, the Chairman reported that there was some doubt about this and requested FCO Information Department to check that the House of Commons Library had sufficient copies

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Group would take place at 10 am on Wednesday 19 May 1982.

  
BRIAN MOWER  
18 May 1982

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