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MEETING OF INFORMATION GROUP ON THE FALKLANDS

10 AM THURSDAY 10 JUNE 1982

Present:

B Mower - No 10
N Kelly - COI
R Westbrook - FCO
F E Dodman - MoD
D Colvin - Cabinet Office
S Fuller - Presentation Unit
R Hatfield - Presentation Unit
H Mills - Chancellor of the
Duchy's Office
I Kydd - No 10 (part of meeting).

Diplomatic

There was little activity to report:-

- A press line was agreed last night in respect of the UNSG's proposals which he put forward last weekend (FCO telegram No 520 to UKMIS New York).
- Astiz would be leaving on tonight's British Caledonian flight for Brazil. The line was that " arrangements are being made for his return but we are not prepared to say what these are".
- It was noted that our position was exposed if we were asked why Astiz should be returned while the Argentines continued to hold an RAF Harrier pilot.
- The Brazilians had agreed to release the Vulcan and a press line had been agreed for this once the aircraft had left. The missile would remain in Brazil until hostilities ended.
- President Mitterrand had stated in a speech that he intended to put forward proposals. No further information was available.
- It was noted that Cargolux was mentioned in an FT article today about arms sales.
- In one of yesterday's television interviews the Prime Minister had mentioned US help in connection with prisoners. The Chairman had been unable to find out precisely what she meant but publicly we must presume she was referring to the operational difficulties involved in transporting a large number of prisoners a considerable distance. We should not publicly allude to the possibility of prisoners being held for bargaining purposes.

Military

MoD reported on military developments over the past 48 hours.

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The Secretary of State for Defence was expected to make a statement to the House in the afternoon.

We should knock down any suggestion that the incident had been a setback for our military preparations.

There was a brief discussion on whether reports of the attack and of the poor conditions of British troops should in fact have been held back in the interests of not giving the Argentines propaganda.

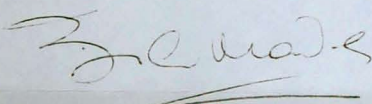
MoD said that the story in today's Times about journalists in the Task Force came out of a briefing by the Permanent Under Secretary for editors. Fred Emery had complained that the Times was not even getting the pooled dispatches but none of the other editors seemed to have a problem. However, there was an undoubted error in not having kit for six journalists and apparently not even having resolved the problem nearly a week after they had been taken from the Island. There had been another mistake in that the local MoD Press Officer's comments upon Max Hastings' dispatch had been released together with the dispatch.

Interviews

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had had three invitations for interview. The first of these was a "World in Action" about information handling during the Falklands crisis. The Group agreed that it would be helpful to have a Ministerial contribution but felt that it would better come from the MoD who promised to take this up with their Secretary of State. The meeting advised that the Chancellor of the Duchy should accept the invitation from BBC World Service but that he should feel no strong compulsion to accept the LBC phone-in on Sunday.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Group would take place on Friday 11 June at 10 am.


BRIAN MOWER
11 June 1982

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