

CONFIDENTIAL

MEETING OF INFORMATION GROUP ON THE FALKLANDS

10 AM MONDAY 21 JUNE 1982

Present:

| | | |
|-------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| B Mower | - | No 10 |
| J Wright | - | MoD |
| P Brazier | - | CoI |
| R Westbrook | - | FCO |
| D Colvin | - | Cabinet Office |
| R Hatfield | - | Presentation Unit |
| H Mills | - | Chancellor of the Duchy's Office |
| H Colver | - | No 10. |

Military

It was thought that the Defence White Paper would be published on Tuesday, 22 June. MoD would announce this later in the day and it was thought there would be the usual Press Conference in the main building. As to any defence review, MoD had no feel for timing. The White Paper would have a foreword which would say that the lessons learned during the Falkland crisis would be the subject of an intense review, the result of which would be published in due course. MoD were asked to produce a line for the Press on all this during the course of the day.

No shots had been fired during the capture of Thule. Stories of helicopters strafing were not true. No civilian scientists had been found on the Island - but 11 military personnel had been captured.

Stories about the VC for Colonel H were pure speculation, though such an award was a possibility. It had earlier been established that the VC could be awarded to personnel taking part in action on the Falklands. It was expected that, following the South Georgia pattern, awards for Falkland Islands personnel could be expected soon.

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Stories apparently emanating from Argentine prisoners that the Ghurkas had killed their own wounded could not be substantiated either. British forces had suffered no Ghurka dead.

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The Canberra was now on her way back to pick up another 4,000 prisoners and it was thought the Norland was also on its way. San Carlos to Puerto Madryn was 24 hours steaming. The Argentine hospital ship had also taken wounded back to Argentina. All Argentine wounded had now been repatriated.

On the estimates of total numbers of Argentine soldiers in the Islands at the time of the surrender of Port Stanley, it was felt to be important to arrive at a definitive figure - thought now to be of the order of 11,000. It was important to have this line and another one covering the reasoning behind the retention of some prisoners for the Prime Minister's Questions on Tuesday.

On the question of taking a party of journalists to the Falklands it was reported that none could go before 24 June and a flight via Ascension seemed most likely since staging through Santiago was ruled out until a formal cessation of hostilities. MoD reported that there had been a list of 700 applicants at one time, thought this list was fast dwindling as the cost became apparent. The party, consisting mostly of foreign press, would travel by Hercules and would spend no more than a day or two on the ground. It was thought the party would number between 50 and 80. Martin White of the PA and Christopher Wain of the BBC had travelled to Ascension in order to overfly the Falklands in a Hercules during a supply drop but there had been some problem and MoD were not clear on the outcome.

As had been seen on television over the weekend, film was now starting to come back regularly. It was thought that the aircraft taking the party of journalists would bring back a considerable quantity.

Diplomatic

EC countries, at the Foreign Ministers' meeting in Luxembourg, were expected to lift sanctions on Argentina as from today but it was expected that the declaration would include agreement to react immediately if the situation deteriorated. The ban on the sale of arms to Argentina would remain.

We continued to press but had not received a clear statement from Argentina giving an assurance that hostilities were considered by them to be at an end. We did not count the Argentine letter to the UN Secretary General as a response in these terms. FCO would make the point in unattributable briefing that the position was particularly unclear because it was difficult to form a view of the internal situation in Argentina. FCO counselled caution against briefing that the UK expected some sort of document declaring the cessation of hostilities. We might have to settle for "a de facto cessation of hostilities". The status of the Argentine letter was difficult to determine. It did, of course, contain conditions totally unacceptable to the British like withdrawal of forces from the Falklands.

In the light of all this, FCO felt it particularly important

that 900 prisoners were to be retained there must be a decision on what to do with them and how and where to keep them. We would have to watch international opinion too if there was a perception that hostilities were at an end.

It was noted that while the original TEZ remained in force, it was unclear whether the later extension, which had bottled in the Argentine fleet, was still being maintained.

OD(SA) was looking that morning at a draft which Parsons at the UN could use in response to the Argentine letter.

Lord Carrington

There was no truth at all in the story that Lord Carrington was being considered by the Prime Minister for the job of US Ambassador.

Inquiry


Letters would be going out that day to Opposition leaders on the Inquiry. The Prime Minister was not disposed to publish the terms. It was confirmed that the Inquiry would have a thorough look back into history.

OD(SA)/OD(FAF)

It was noted that the new Ministerial Group, OD(Future Arrangements for the Falklands), would meet for the first time the next day. It was agreed that the Information Group should continue to meet through this week.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Group would take place at 10 am on Tuesday 22 June, 1982.


H COLVER
21 June 1982