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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~930 7022~~ 218 2111/3

MO 5/16

19th April 1982

Dear John,

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Prime Minister
The assessment you requested.

A.S.C. 19/4.

THE SPANISH MILITARY THREAT TO GIBRALTAR

In response to your minute of the 14th April to Sir Robert Armstrong, the Chiefs of Staff have prepared the attached assessment of the UK's defence capability on the Rock.

As you will see, a number of enhancements to our forces have already been made at the request of the Governor. All but two of his requirements - for the despatch of a reserve mobile radar station and Rapier missiles - have been met. Provision of an extra radar station would be unlikely to pass unnoticed and the penalties of attracting attention are considered to be greater than the benefits of having a station in reserve. For similar reasons, we do not want to send Rapier since the Firing Posts could not be deployed covertly and there are no detachments available which are uncommitted to high priority tasks. These conditions do not apply to the man-portable Blowpipe Air Defence system and my Secretary of State has today authorised a deployment of a Blowpipe troop of 32 Guided Weapon Regiment, Royal Artillery, which will arrive in Gibraltar tomorrow evening.

We will, of course, be keeping the security situation under close review.

I am copying this letter to Brian Fall (FCO) and to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely
N H R Evans

(N H R EVANS)

A J Coles Esq

GIBRALTAR - DEFENCE CAPABILITY

1. The JIC assessment - paragraphs 5 and 6 - recognises that Spain has the military capability to attack Gibraltar at short notice, whilst noting the low probability under the present Spanish Government of such an attack. The assessment also addresses the possibility of some unauthorised small-scale action by individual elements of the Spanish Armed Forces. Such unauthorised action is not thought to represent a serious military threat to Gibraltar. The small-scale action could perhaps also include the possibility of some act of bravado by an individual or small group of individuals - (eg placing the Spanish flag in front of public buildings on the Rock, or other demonstrations).
2. Plans have existed for some time against the possible need to repel a military assault from Spain, and against the background of recent events these plans have been reviewed and the Governor has asked for certain precautionary measures to be taken. The permanent military capability on the Rock is described at Annex A, and the additional measures authorised by the Chiefs of Staff in response to the Governor's requests are listed at Annex B. These additional measures have included the return of the Guardship, improvements to our intelligence acquisition capability, and the return of B Company 1 STAFFORDS.
3. In making these enhancements to the defensive capability of Gibraltar, we have done this in a low key, using routine movements of ships and aircraft to avoid attracting undue publicity which could inflame Spanish nationalist sentiment and make it harder to achieve the United Kingdom objective of

getting the frontier re-opened on 25 June. In consequence, two measures requested by the Governor - the provision of an extra radar station and of Rapier Air Defence missiles - have not been authorised at present. However, a Blowpipe troop will be deployed from the United Kingdom to provide additional air defence in an emergency. This troop will arrive in Gibraltar on the evening of 20 April.

4. These precautionary measures relate to the Governor's immediate concern to counter any possible unauthorised action by local Spanish military commanders, bearing in mind the JIC's assessment of this threat. The Governor has also taken local measures to increase security, and he is currently considering further requirements against the possibility of some increase in the threat from Spain in the event of political change. The forces available for Joint Theatre Plan 52 for the emergency reinforcement of Gibraltar have been reviewed. The plan now excludes forces involved in the Falkland Islands Task Force and includes other forces comprising 2½ x infantry battalions, field, anti-tank and air defence artillery and engineers. Six Harriers can be added if required. Most of these forces are at 7 days notice - the Spearhead Battalion Group ~~is available~~ is available at less notice. Despite the major commitment of resources to the Falkland Islands operation, there is enough transport to deploy these forces if necessary. However, if further commitments were to arise, there could then be a conflict of priorities.

5. Given the small size of the Territory, and its defensibility against attack not only from the land, but from the sea as well, the British forces in place could put up effective resistance against the kind of unauthorised action by local Spanish military commanders identified in the JIC assessment. Although the territory could eventually be overwhelmed by vastly superior forces, such an armed assault would be a militarily hazardous undertaking, particularly if UK based forces were to be used in defence. The main burden of defence would fall on the land forces. The presence of HM ships is a valuable asset in deterring a seaborne assault. An airborne or heliborne assault would be a hazardous undertaking, but the airfield is vulnerable and its security is essential to rapid reinforcement. This is recognised in the force levels now maintained in Gibraltar and the plans of the Garrison.

6. The present Gibraltar defence capability, as enhanced by the measures described in this note, is considered as sufficient in relation to the threat described in the current JIC assessment. The JIC have told us that they will continue to watch the situation in the light of developments in, particularly, the Falkland Islands but also elsewhere, including Spain. Further consideration is being given to possible additional precautions that might be required in the event of political change in Spain.

FORCES STATIONED AT GIBRALTAR

1. Royal Navy
 - a. Guardship. HMS AMBUSCADE.
 - b. HMS ROOKE. The Royal Naval shore establishment, administering naval personnel and HM Ships refitting.
 - c. HMS CALPE. The Royal Naval Reserve Headquarters (HQ) Unit.
2. Army
 - a. A surveillance troop Royal Artillery (two radars deployed).
 - b. One Fortress Specialist Team Royal Engineers (STRE):
 - (1) HQ troop.
 - (2) Power station troop.
 - (3) Field troop.
 - c. A line troop Royal Signals.
 - d. One infantry battalion.
 - e. The Gibraltar Regiment (a territorial unit at 12 hours notice for full time employment) consisting of:
 - (1) Infantry company.
 - (2) Artillery troop (four L40/70 Air Defence guns).
 - (3) Artillery troop (two 105 mm Pack Howitzers).
 - f. Fortress HQ Staff and and Postal Courier and Communications Unit.
3. RAF. RAF Gibraltar. A unit of some 420 men provide airfield facilities for aircraft using the airhead and a base for the support of maritime operations. All are armed for ground defence purposes.

ADDITIONAL FORCES AND EQUIPMENT ALLOCATED BY THE CHIEFS OF STAFF TO GIBRALTAR1. Manpower

- (a) A crew has been sent by the Royal Navy to man the Gibraltar guard boat (the local patrol craft).
- (b) 4 men of 172 Intelligence and Security Unit flew on 11 April 1982.
- (c) The Air Force Department have provided a small unit of 14 men to provide a SIGINT capability, and 15 RAF Police.
- (d) One TA infantry company (on roulement) training until June 1982.

2. Equipment

- (a) HMS AMBUSCADE, the Gibraltar Guardship now stationed at Gibraltar, took with her:
 - (1) Six anti-tank gun sights.
 - (2) Two 81 mm mortars and ammunition.
 - (3) 1000 rounds of light gun ammunition.
 - (4) A Laser Range Finder.
 - (5) Six GPMG and ammunition for the RAF with a further two GPMG and their associated mountings for fitting to the two Sea King helicopters.
 - (6) 65 anti-tank mines.
 - (7) 15000 sandbags.

She also has a 4.5 gun and ammunition and a secure communications capability thereby meeting two of the Governor's other requests.

- (b) Two Sea King helicopters fitted with 2 x GMPG.

(c) Four MILAN firing posts with 60 missiles and a Training Simulator.

(d) HE the Governor's requests for additional food, medical stores and explosives are being met as soon as possible.



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Red rectangular postmark containing the text "179 AM 1962".



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JP

Gibraltar

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

30 April 1982

GIBRALTAR: DEFENCE CAPABILITY

The Prime Minister has noted the contents of your letter of 26 April informing her that your Secretary of State has authorised the deployment to Gibraltar of a force of two Jaguars for a period in connection with the amphibious exercise which the Spanish forces will be holding in the period from 26 April to 4 May.

I am copying this letter to Brian Fall (FCO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

ALL COPIES

N.H.R. Evans, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
 MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
 Telephone 01-~~3307822~~ 218 2111/3

MO 5/16

26th April 1982

Dear John,

GIBRALTAR : DEFENCE CAPABILITY

With my letter of 19th April I forwarded an assessment of the UK's defence capability on Gibraltar and I undertook to keep you informed of any developments.

2. We have been aware for some time that the Spanish forces intend to hold an amphibious exercise in the period from 26th April to 4th May. It is clear that the Spaniards planned this exercise well before the Falklands crisis arose. It has now been established that the exercise will take place at a training area about 35 miles west of the Rock. The Governor accepts that it is unlikely that any attempt, whether authorised or not, would be made on Gibraltar by this force; but he considers it prudent to have operational aircraft capable of dealing with such an amphibious group if the necessity to do so were to arise.
3. In these circumstances, my Secretary of State has authorised, at the Governor's request, the deployment to Gibraltar of a force of two Jaguars. These will stay on the Rock for the duration of the exercise (and for a further two to three days to avoid giving the impression that the deployment was connected with the exercise).
4. Combat aircraft from UK and RAF Germany have been frequent visitors to Gibraltar over recent months; and every effort has been made to minimise the visibility of the measures already approved to reinforce Gibraltar's defence capability. While therefore there must be some chance that Spanish attention would be attracted by the conjunction of events, and that this would increase political tension, the risk is considered small and can be countered if necessary by a suitable cover story which has been prepared.
5. FCO officials were consulted before this decision was taken.
6. I am copying this letter to Brian Fall (FCO) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

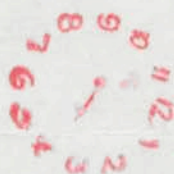
Yours ever
 Mick Evans

(N H R EVANS)

A J Coles Esq

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1

Telephone 01-334 5000



26 APR 1982

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Gibraltar

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FM CINC GIBRALTAR
TO REDWCR/MODUK AIR
RBDWDF/FCO
INFO REDTYI/HQSTC

mf

BT

S E C R E T UK EYES BRAVO

SIC AAA/IAD/IPD/A3A/KAD

MODUK AIR FOR ACAS(GPS), STC FOR SASO,
SECURITY PREPAREDNESS AT GIBRALTAR

1. IN VIEW OF THE FORTHCOMING SPANISH AMPHIBIOUS EXERCISE
DUE TO TAKE PLACE 26 APR TO 4 MAY T SIERRA DE RETIN 35 MILES
WEST OF THE ROCK, I CONSIDER IT PRUDENT TO HAVE SOME
OPERATIONAL AIRCRAFT CAPABLE OF DEALING WITH THIS AMPHIBIOUS GROUP
IN THE EVENT, ADMITTEDLY UNLIKELY, THAT AN UNAUTHORISED ATTEMPT
WERE TO BE MADE ON GIBRALTAR TRIGGERED OFF BY SOME INCIDENT IN
THE FALKLANDS MEZ DURING THE EXERCISE PERIOD.

2. I UNDERSTAND THAT IT MAY BE POSSIBLE FOR BUCCANEERS EQUIPPED
WITH TV MARTEL MISSILES TO BE MADE AVAILABLE AND REQUEST THAT
A FLIGHT OF THESE AIRCRAFT WITH SUPPORTING ELEMENTS BE ATTACHED
TO RAF GIBRALTAR TO COVER THE PERIOD OF THE SPANISH EXERCISE.
THEIR ARRIVAL IS UNLIKELY TO BE COMMENTED UPON BECAUSE STRIKE
AIRCRAFT FROM UK AND RAF GERMANY HAVE BEEN FREQUENT VISITORS
TO GIBRALTAR OVER RECENT MONTHS.

3. THE ONLY WEAPON STOCKS APPROPRIATE TO THE BUCCANEER HELD
LOCALLY ARE QUANTITY 101 ONE THOUSAND POUND HE MK 10 BOMBS
WITH OUT TAIL UNITS OR FUSES.

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LIMITED
SEI
DEFENCE
NEWS
SAm
PUS
EMERGENCY UNIT
PS
PS MR HUR
PS LOR (BEKSTEAD)
PS PUS
MR BULLARD
MR GOODISON
MR SILLMORE

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FILE SW

Gibraltar

20 April, 1982

The Spanish Military Threat to Gibraltar

The Prime Minister was grateful for your letter of 19 April enclosing an assessment by the Chiefs of Staff of the United Kingdom's defence capability on Gibraltar. She has noted its contents.

I am copying this letter to Brian Fall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

A. J. COLES

N. H. R. Evans, Esq.,
Ministry of Defence

CONFIDENTIAL

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