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Prime Minister

Hoy et al

See paragraphs 2 and 9.

4 A.F.C. 15/11

WSG 13th Meeting

FALKLAND ISLANDS REVIEW:

MEETING OF WHITEHALL SUPPORT GROUP (WSG)
TUESDAY 16 NOVEMBER 1982 AT 4.30 pm

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MS

PRESENT:

Mr D H Colvin - Cabinet Office (In the Chair)
Mr A R Rawsthorne - Secretary, Falkland Islands Review Committee
Mr Fearn - Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Mr Jackling - Ministry of Defence
Cdr York - JIC

GOVERNMENT SCRUTINY OF THE FINAL REPORT OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS
REVIEW COMMITTEE

1. The Group discussed the difficulties which might arise when the Committee's Report was examined by the Government before publication in the light of the following passage in the Prime Minister's letter of 12 July to Lord Franks.

"The Government must retain the right in the last resort to delete from the Committee's report before publication any material whose disclosure would be prejudicial to national security or damaging to the international relations of the United Kingdom. I very much hope that the arrangements I have proposed in the foregoing paragraph will make it unnecessary for the Government to do that. Should it be necessary, I have assured the House of Commons that:

- (i) the government will make no deletions save strictly on the grounds of protecting national security or international relations;
- (ii) the Government will consider any proposals for deletions individually and critically, and will accept such proposals only on the grounds I have specified;
- (iii) you will be consulted if any deletions have to be proposed."

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2. Mr Rawsthorne said that the Committee had concluded that its final report would have to include a detailed, definitive and comprehensive narrative of events leading up the Argentine invasion of 2 April 1982. It would start in 1965 and deal with periods of crisis, such as 1976-77 but above all from the second half of 1981 to April 1982, in particular detail. The Committee recognised the need to avoid reproducing or quoting verbatim extracts from official telegrams, letters, Cabinet minutes etc and to seek to convey its meaning by paraphraseology and indirect speech. He thought it would help the Committee to have some indication from Departments where difficulties might lie under the two rubrics, national security and damage to the United Kingdom's international relations; and he had therefore, with Lord Franks' approval, taken up the Chairman's offer of a meeting to discuss the matter.

3. In reply to the Chairman, he thought that the Committee would have no difficulty in accepting that the second rubric applied to the secret talks in Geneva in September 1980. *Passage deleted and closed, 40 yrs, under FOI Exemption. @Wayland, 7/2/13*

4. Mr Jackling thought that references to SSN deployments would be difficult under the national security rubric. This included any reference to their deployment in 1977, the "other priority tasks" of SSNs and details of their passage time which might reveal their cruising speeds. (The Chairman suggested that this point could be finessed by omitting reference to where the SSNs had been deployed from).

Passage deleted and retained under Section 3(4). @Wayland, 7/2/13

5. Mr Fearn wondered whether a blow by blow account of diplomatic exchanges with the Argentine Government might be damaging to the United Kingdom's international relations with Argentina itself and possibly the United States. It was generally thought that possible embarrassment to the Argentine Government would not be sufficient to justify deleting material. The American point would need to be watched. As to the status of personal and confidential letters, problems might be avoidable by judicious paraphrasing.

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6. Under the national security rubric, it was agreed that DI7 material would need careful handling. But Mr Rawsthorne was clear that the Committee would wish to say something on this subject.

7. Problems were also foreseen over the way that the Report described the Whitehall intelligence structure and those parts of it which were not avowed. Circumlocutions might be available to get round such difficulties. For example, the output of "the intelligence agencies" might be described generically as "secret reports" or "secret intelligence", provided there was no risk of sources being identifiable.

8. On the use of material based on Cabinet minutes, the Chairman stressed that there was a constitutional point at issue; under no circumstances could verbatim extracts be used. Mr Rawsthorne thought that the Committee would be bound to wish to reveal the composition of OD; the Chairman undertook to check whether this would be in order.

9. In conclusion, the Chairman noted that it appeared to be the Committee's intention to draft its Report and for Committee members to sign it before the Government would have the chance to scrutinise it. The report as a whole would not be seen in draft beforehand. However, he noted that Mr Rawsthorne would nevertheless recommend that certain sensitive passages should be submitted in advance, using the mechanism of the WSG. The Group would therefore wait to receive these drafts and would arrange for them to be scrutinised. That said, the Government's position on the deletions would necessarily remain reserved; although in his opinion the Government would prefer it if the Committee's report could be so drafted that no deletions were necessary.

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