



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1

Telephone 01-~~9307022~~ 218 2111/3

PQ 6510

MT

25th January 1983

- 1 Mr Butler
- 2 Prime Minister

Dear Willie,

Content for Mr Heseltine
to write to Mr Dalyell in
these terms?

PQ: MR TAM DALYELL MP

Wh
25/1

We spoke yesterday about Mr Tam Dalyell's PQ "To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why it took his Department until 12th March to reply to the request made by the Prime Minister to his predecessor on 8th March as to how quickly Royal Naval ships could be deployed to the Falkland Islands if required, as mentioned in paragraph 153 of the Franks Report."

In his reply yesterday Mr Heseltine undertook to write to Mr Dalyell. I now attach the draft of a letter to Mr Dalyell which has been approved by Mr Heseltine and Sir John Nott. In view of the references to conversations between the Prime Minister and Sir John you will no doubt wish to ascertain whether the Prime Minister is content with the draft. For convenience I also attach a copy of the letter which was sent on 12th March.

Your ever
rich Evans

(N H R EVANS)

W F S Rickett Esq

DRAFT .

You asked for the reason why no reply was sent until the 12th March in answer to the Prime Minister's request on 8th March for information on the deployment of ships.

The Prime Minister raised the matter with my predecessor at No 10 on the evening of Monday 8th March. The Defence Secretary gave a general indication of the passage time for various ships to the Falklands but suggested that we should examine further whether ships already on missions might be redeployed there. Early next morning the Department was tasked to produce a formal reply. My predecessor approved a draft reply on Thursday, 11th March and a letter was sent to No 10 the next day.

You will appreciate that it is impossible for me to reconstruct in detail events in which I was not involved. But, given the Government's perception of Argentine intentions at the time, it seems to me reasonable that three days should have elapsed in preparing a detailed reply to the Prime Minister, particularly when it was necessary to consider questions of redeployment of ships on operational tasks.

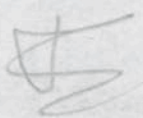
26 January 1983

Tam Dalyell: Parliamentary Question

Thank you for your letter of 25 January. As I told you this morning, the Prime Minister is content for your Secretary of State to write to Mr. Dalyell as in the draft attached to your letter.

WR

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





MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1

Telephone 01-~~532X02X~~ 218 2111/5

MO 5/21

12th March 1982

*Dear John,*FALKLANDS ISLANDS

The Prime Minister indicated to Mr Nott on Monday evening that she would like to know how quickly RN ships could be deployed to the Falkland Islands. Separately you have written to John Holmes suggesting that the paper which Lord Carrington will put to OD in the near future should address the question of contingency planning. This is in hand and my letter deals only with the limited question of ship deployments.

As to frigates the West Indies guardship, HMS LONDONERRY, is up to 3 weeks sailing time from the Falkland islands. She is, however, essentially a trials ship and carries limited close range armaments. Moreover, she has no dedicated tanker support, so that if ports on the South American coast were denied to her she could not reach the Falklands. This consideration would also apply to the frigate ANDROMEDA currently undergoing trials in the Bahamas.

There are, as the Prime Minister observed, RN ships participating in the NATO Exercise SAFE PASS 82, which continues until 18th March in the Gulf of Mexico and off the Eastern Seaboard of the United States. They are the frigate HMS DANAE (part of STANAVFORLANT) and the nuclear-powered submarine HMS COURAGEOUS. Deployment of HMS DANAE to the Falklands would run into the same problems as that of HMS LONDONERRY; although a tanker is in attendance it is servicing STANAVFORLANT as a whole and is in any case not a British vessel.

In short, if a frigate were to be deployed to the Falklands, RFA support would also be necessary. Passage time whether from the Caribbean or the UK would be in the order of 20 days. Maintenance of one frigate on station on a semi-permanent, deterrent basis would, in practice, require the deployment of two, in order to allow for maintenance and serviceability.

To complete the picture the Prime Minister will be aware that the Ice Patrol vessel HMS ENDURANCE is at present operating in the region. She is currently off Adelaide Island, within 3 days sailing

A J Coles Esq



time from Port Stanley. She will remain in the South Atlantic until mid-April before returning to the UK. ENDURANCE carries two Wasp helicopters armed with close range missiles and is herself armed with two 20mm Oerlikon guns. The Prime Minister will also know of the permanent Falklands Garrison comprising 42 Royal Marines; they are equipped with light infantry weapons. The annual roulement of the detachment is scheduled to take place between 24th March and 5th April.

I am copying this letter to John Holmes.

Yours sincerely

Nick Evans

(N H R EVANS)