

CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister

To note.

ABR 14/4.

~~Mr~~ Cotes (No to Downing Street)

MS

You may wish to have this note. It provides further background on the subject of the note which we sent to you earlier today

Mr Fearn  
Emergency Unit

RECOVERY OF BRITISH ANTARCTIC SURVEY MEMBERS (BAS)  
FROM SOUTH GEORGIA : SITREP 1030 14 APRIL

FCO Emergency Unit  
14/4

1. At the time of the occupation of Grytviken, South Georgia, on 3 April, when 22 Royal Marines were removed by Argentine forces, BAS personnel were dispersed as follows:

13 at Grytviken

and, in separate  
field parties

4 at Lyell Glacier Hut in  
Cumberland West Bay

4 at Bird Island

2 at Schlieper Bay and

3, together with Misses Buxton and  
Price, at St Andrews Bay

2. BAS HQ at Cambridge have regular radio contact via Bransfield with the four field parties and, as of 2200 hours on 12 April, all personnel were reported well and in good health. We have had no further information however on the whereabouts of the 22 marines or the 13 BAS personnel from Grytviken.

3. On 5 April, a telegram was sent to Buenos Aires requesting the Swiss to inform the Argentines of the disposition of all the above BAS personnel, suggesting that with winter closing in, three of the field parties would soon be at risk (although BAS HQ at Cambridge have in fact confirmed that they are quite safe for at least another month or two). They were asked to find out the Argentines' intentions and whether they had plans for taking them off the island and repatriating them. In the absence of any reply, and following the shut-down of communications at the Buenos Aires Embassy, a further telegram was sent

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7 April to Berne to ask the Swiss to follow up enquiries urgently in Buenos Aires. International Red Cross assistance had also been sought.

4. At 10.15 <sup>today</sup> Swiss Government confirmed to us that their Ambassador in Buenos Aires had again asked Argentines about whereabouts of BAS personnel. Argentines had replied that the BAS personnel <sup>from Signy Island</sup> (and the Royal Marines) were on board an Argentine warship. Argentines would not disclose her position. It is highly unlikely that the 13 BAS men <sup>in the 4 field parties</sup> and Misses Buxton and Price are, in fact, on the Argentine warship.

5. Ministry of Defence had concluded previously that there would be too great a risk in using Endurance for any evacuation operation and the owners of the BAS ship Bransfield (the Natural Environment Research Council) considered that she should not be used for fear of being taken hostage.

6. Communications with the separate field parties is being maintained through the British Antarctic Survey station at Signy Island in the South Orkney Islands and RRS Bransfield. Bransfield is due to make contact with BAS headquarters in Cambridge this evening after maintaining 48 hours of radio silence as she moves eastwards out of the Antarctic Treaty Area en route for the UK.

John Heap

Polar Regions Section  
South America Department

14 April 1982