

291. Telegram From the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Command (Train) to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Jones)¹

Norfolk, May 24, 1982, 2300Z

0047. Eyes Only Personal for Gen Jones info Gen Rogers from Train. Subj: Impact on NATO Forces Due Falklands Crisis (S).

A. JCS Washington DC 221502Z May 82.²

1. (TS) The Falklands crisis has caused perturbations to NATO capabilities as discussed Ref A and references thereto. Further comment/assessment follows:

A. (U) Readiness impact:

(1) (S) Ground: The principal loss is the availability of a forward deployed NATO landing force, comprised largely of the Third Royal Marine Commando Brigade deployed to the Falklands, which totals approx 5700 pers with 42 helos. One RNLMC amphibious combat group remains available, provided shipping can be provided by a NATO nation. (None of 8 UK committed amphibious bottoms are avail.) The critical feature is not numbers but the lack of a forward deployed amphib force in Northern Europe.

(2) (TS) Air:

—Impact on UK strategic bombing/air refueling capability, and potential loss of Northern European Command tactical air support of maritime operations capability upon commitment of land-based tacair to Falklands is deferred to CINCEUR.

—The commitment of a majority number of MPA, offensive air and Sea King ASW assets reduces numbers available to SACLANT with totals fluctuating downward daily. Currently 20 MPA, 29 offensive, 30 air defense and 6 Sea King aircraft are committed to SACLANT.

(3) (TS) Navy:

—The commitment of all UK CV-based ASW air reduces available forward deployed protection for STRIKFLTANT. Currently, 2 CVS/21 ASW escorts are committed to SACLANT w/in 48 hours; however, only 5 ASW escorts are now available, and they may soon be deployed to replace losses.

—The majority of surface ship ASW protection would also be eliminated. Of the 10 ASW escorts committed to SACLANT w/in 48 hours, only 1 escort is available.

¹ Source: National Archives, RG 218, CJCS Files, FRC 218-92-0030, Message Traffic May 82—CINCLANT May 82. Top Secret; Eyes Only. Sent for information to USEUCOM.

² Not found.

—A major reduction is sustained in SSN task group protection. Of 7 SSN's committed to SACLANT w/in 48 hours, only 2 SSN's are available.

—Of the majority of the 20 various MLSF ships assigned to NATO support only 7 are available. That MLSF shipping remains under national OPCON is acknowledged.

B. (TS) Other UK forces to support Falklands crisis: It is estimated that 4 to 5 DD/FF types, RAF F-4 and Harrier, and additional ground forces could be withdrawn for further contingency support. The DD/FF types would be replacements for losses, while the F-4 and Harrier A/C would be land based to allow CV sea room. Ground forces would be employed for expanded Island occupation.

C. (TS) US/Allied compensating forces: Barring NOREUR crisis declaration or specific NCA direction, no NATO peacetime compensation is recommended. Current Northern flank force gap is a temporary reduction similar to that on Southern flank when a US CVBG redeployed to I.O. in January 1980. In NOREUR crisis all NATO forces avail are committed; estimate UK forces would rejoin under this scenario, leaving Falklands crisis as is.

D. (TS) Sources of US/Allied force compensation: In the event of general war or directed peacetime compensation, UK A-1 NATO sea commitment could be partially covered by early availability of earmarked US and other NATO A-3/A-4 Navy forces, ground forces compensation should be air mobile to the maximum extent.

E. (U) Replacement of UK forces by US: Paragraphs C and D above are germane.

F. (C) US fulfillment of other UK/NATO commitments/NATO related support ops:

(1) (TS) Navy/Air:

- Caribbean station ship—fill by COMNAVFORCARIB duty ship.
- STANAVFORLANT ship—fill from I.O. commitment.
- GIUK MPA—fill by forward deployment of P-3 to UK vice I.O.
- UK air defense—fill by forward deploy USAF F-15/F-4 to UK.
- Aerial refueling—fill by forward deploying strategic tanker assets.

(2) (S) Ground: While US ground forces could backfill for their UK counterparts in the Northern European Command, protection of the Atlantic Islands would be left in doubtful status.

2. (TS) It is worthy of note that the UK is planning significant naval force reductions in 1983, and that the Falklands crisis merely surfaces the NATO impact issue early. Similar involvement of another major NATO member would severely degrade NATO's ability to respond in a crisis of any magnitude.