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12894 - 1

GRS 554  
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FM FCO 021030Z JUL 82  
TO IMMEDIATE CERTAIN MISSIONS AND DEPENDENT TERRITORIES  
TEL NO GUIDANCE 144 OF 2 JULY 1982

GUIDANCE TEL 138: FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. TWO UNFOUNDED CRITICISMS OF US HAVE ARISEN RECENTLY IN PARTS OF THE WORLD PRESS: FIRSTLY, THAT WE ARE MISTREATING ARGENTINE PRISONERS AND HOLDING THEM AS HOSTAGES, AND SECONDLY THAT NUCLEAR WEAPONS ABOARD HMS SHEFFIELD WILL CAUSE RADIOLOGICAL POLLUTION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC.

LINE TO TAKE

PRISONERS

2. WE ARE KEEN THAT ALLEGATIONS OF ILL-TREATMENT OF PRISONERS SHOULD BE FIRMLY SCOTCHED. WE DO NOT HAVE ANYTHING TO HIDE. ON THE CONTRARY, WE HAVE MUCH TO BE PROUD OF IN OUR TREATMENT OF THE PRISONERS. AS WELL AS DRAWING ON GUIDANCE TEL 138, YOU SHOULD THEREFORE DEPLOY THE FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS TO REBUT ANY ACCUSATIONS.

3. A) OUR TROOPS ON THE FALKLANDS HAVE BEEN HORRIFIED AT CHAOTIC ARGENTINE ARRANGEMENTS FOR LOOKING AFTER THEIR OWN MEN. MOST ARGENTINE OFFICERS AND NCO'S HAVE BEEN SINGULARLY INDIFFERENT TO THEIR WELFARE: MANY OFFICERS ABANDONED THEIR UNITS ON SURRENDER AND LEFT THEIR MEN TO SHIFT FOR THEMSELVES. OFFICERS AND NCOS WERE WELL-FED AND CLOTHED, IN SORRY CONTRAST TO THEIR MEN. THE COMMANDERS HAD NO PROPER IDEA OF HOW MANY TROOPS THEY HAD ON THE ISLANDS. ARGENTINE CONSCRIPTS BEFORE BEING HANDED BACK MADE IT CLEAR THAT WE HAD LOOKED AFTER THEM FAR BETTER IN THE SHORT TIME WE HELD THEM AS PRISONERS THAN HAD

1

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12894 - 1

THEIR OWN LEADERS.

B) ARGENTINE FAMILIES HAVE IN MANY CASES RECEIVED THEIR FIRST NEWS OF THEIR SONS FROM OUR LISTS, AND NOT FROM THEIR OWN AUTHORITIES.

C) WE ARE NATURALLY CONCERNED THAT ARGENTINE COMMANDERS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO GIVE US PROPER FIGURES OF TROOPS UNDER THEIR COMMAND, AND ARE TRYING TO SORT OUT THE REAL SITUATION AS QUICKLY AS WE CAN. WE CAN ACCOUNT FOR ALL THOSE WHO CAME INTO OUR HANDS. ARGENTINE CLAIMS THAT SEVERAL THOUSAND ARE MISSING ARE WILD EXAGGERATIONS, AND CAN ONLY EXACERBATE THE FEAR AND ANGUISH OF NEXT-OF-KIN.

D) THE ICRC RECOGNISE THE DIFFICULTIES WE FACE IN IDENTIFYING ALL THE ARGENTINES KILLED IN ACTION. MANY WERE HASTILY BURIED BEFORE THE CEASEFIRE, WITH NO RECORDS BEING KEPT. SOME BODIES ARE INACCESSIBLE IN MINEFIELDS. OTHERS LACK IDENTIFICATION DISCS. WE SHALL DO OUR BEST TO OBTAIN FULLEST DETAILS POSSIBLE. WE BELIEVE THAT OUR FORCES ACTED WITH EXCEPTIONAL SKILL IN TRYING TO KEEP CASUALTIES TO A MINIMUM. ANY COMPLAINTS ABOUT THEIR BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS PRISONERS WILL BE FULLY INVESTIGATED.

E) THOSE PRISONERS WE HAVE RETAINED SO FAR ARE NOT BEING HELD AS HOSTAGES, THEY ARE BEING RETAINED UNTIL ARGENTINE INTENTIONS ARE CLEARER, UNDER ICRC SUPERVISION AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS. WE CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO RETURN POWS WHO MIGHT THEN PLAY A KEY ROLE IN ANY RENEWED HOSTILITIES AGAINST US.

NUCLEAR POLLUTION

4. WE DO NOT WISH TO BREACH STANDARD BRITISH GOVERNMENT POLICY WHICH IS NEITHER TO CONFIRM NOR DENY THE SPECIFIC LOCATION OF OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. HOWEVER, YOU MAY SAY THAT THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY ACCIDENT INVOLVING DAMAGE TO OR LOSS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS HELD BY BRITISH FORCES, IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC OR ANYWHERE ELSE.

AS LORD TRENCHARD SAID IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS ON 27 APRIL:

'I CAN CATEGORICALLY STATE THAT THERE IS NO QUESTION AT ALL OF OUR USING NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN THIS DISPUTE'. THE UNITED KINGDOM IS WELL AWARE OF ITS OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE TREATY

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12894 - 1

OF TLATELOLCO.

PYM

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3

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