

O 141800Z JUL 82
FM CIVIL COMMISSIONER PORT STANLEY
TO FCO LONDON
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Prime Minister

*This could be discussed at
OJ FAF on Tuesday.*

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mt A.S.C. 16.7

TELEGRAM NO. 073 SEA AND AIR COMMUNICATIONS

1. AS THE RAFS PLANS FOR THE AIRPORT AND THE NAVYS FUTURE SHIPPING PLANS BECOME CLEARER, SO TOO DOES THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEMS WE FACE IN ENSURING ADEQUATE TRANSPORT TO AND FROM THE ISLANDS FOR CIVILIAN PASSENGERS AND FREIGHT.

2. AT THE MOMENT THE RAF CONTINUE TO FLY IN HERCULES FROM ASCENSION ON AN ALMOST DAILY BASIS. WITH ONE OR TWO EXCEPTIONS THEY HAVE NOT BEEN PREPARED TO ACCEPT CIVILIANS ON THIS RISKY (AND PHENOMENALLY EXPENSIVE) ROUTE, AND IN NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL THEY ACCEPT WOMEN OR CHILDREN. THE PLAN IS TO CLOSE THE AIRPORT FOR ABOUT 4 WEEKS (BEGINNING ON LATEST ESTIMATES IN MID-AUGUST) TO LENGTHEN THE STRIP AND PUT DOWN A TEMPORARY ALUMINIUM SURFACE TO ACCOMMODATE PHANTOMS. THEY WILL REOPEN WITH A 6,000 FOOT RUNWAY, 94 FEET WIDE (INSTEAD OF 150 FEET AS AT PRESENT) EQUIPPED WITH ARRESTER GEAR.

THEY DO NOT EXPECT, ONCE THE AIRPORT REOPENS, TO FLY IN TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT OTHER THAN HERCULES (WHICH WILL STILL NEED TO REFUEL INFLIGHT IF A MAINLAND DIVERSION CANNOT BE ESTABLISHED). AIRCRAFT OF THE SIZE OF A 737 COULD LAND ALTHOUGH THE RUNWAY WILL BE NARROWER THAN THE MINIMUM NORMALLY REQUIRED FOR CIVIL AIRLINES, AND THE ARRESTER GEAR WOULD HAVE TO BE MOVED ON EACH OCCASION (NOT A MAJOR PROBLEM). THESE FACTS HAVE ONLY BECOME CLEAR TO ME IN THE LAST FEW DAYS.

3. THE PICTURE ON SHIPPING MOVEMENTS IS CONFUSED. OF THE MAJOR REQUISITIONED SHIPS UGANDA IS LEAVING WITH THE NEXT DAY OR TWO AND WILL NOT RETURN, ST EDMUND WILL LEAVE ON 18 JULY AND NORLAND (DUE IN NEXT WEEK) WILL TURN ROUND WITHIN 3 WEEKS. IT HAS NOT BEEN DECIDED, PENDING FINAL DECISIONS ON FORCE LEVELS, WHETHER THESE TWO WILL GO DIRECTLY HOME OR STOP AT ASCENSION AND MAKE ONE OR MORE RETURN TRIPS HERE. THEY WILL BETWEEN THEM BE ABLE TO TAKE OUT ALL ON MY LIST (CURRENTLY NUMBERING 86) OF ISLANDERS AND EXPATRIATES WHO WISH TO RETURN TO UK (MOST OF THESE ON LEAVE). THE FICO SUPPLY SHIP (AES) HAS JUST LEFT HAVING OFF-LOADED STORES AND PICKED UP ITS USUAL WOOL CARGO. IT IS DUE BACK AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER BUT AFTER THAT TRIP WILL NEED TO REFIT AND WILL NOT RETURN AGAIN UNTIL THE END OF JANUARY.

4. THE OVERALL OUTLOOK IS THEREFORE BLEAK. WE SHALL HAVE NO AIR SERVICE FOR CIVILIANS AND, AS FAR AS I CAN SEE, NO PASSENGER SHIPPING ONCE THE ST EDMUND AND NORLAND HAVE LEFT FOR GOOD. ONCE THESE FACTS HAVE SUNK IN THE EFFECT ON ISLANDERS MORALE WILL BE SERIOUS AND WE MUST BE SEEN TO BE TACKLING THE PROBLEM.

5. IN THE LONG TERM YOU ARE I UNDERSTAND CONSIDERING THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SEPARATE MILITARY AIRFIELD WHICH COULD ACCOMMODATE CIVIL AIRCRAFT. MORE IMMEDIATELY, WE SHALL NEED TO LOOK INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING AN AIR LINK THROUGH THE MAINLAND, PRESUMABLY MONTEVIDEO OR, FAILING THAT, PUNTA ARENAS, AND, SAY, A WEEKLY 737

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SERVICE FROM THERE. THERE IS OF COURSE NO PROSPECT OF SUCH A SERVICE PAYING FOR ITSELF EVEN IF YOU COULD FIND AN AIRLINE TO OPERATE ON THE TEMPORARY RUNWAY. AS AN ALTERNATIVE, WE SHOULD LOOK AT A REGULAR SEA LINK WITH MONTIVIDEO BUT, AGAIN, THIS WILL NEED TO BE SUBSIDIZED - YOU WILL RECALL THAT LOSSES OF A QUARTER OF A MILLION POUNDS PER YEAR LED THE FICO TO DISCONTINUE SUCH A SERVICE IN 1972. FAILING AGREEMENT BY URUGUAY OR CHILE TO PROVIDE SEA OR AIR LINKS, WE SHALL FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE HAVE TO LOOK AT SUBSIDIZING A DIRECT PASSENGER SERVICE (EG THE ST HELENA) FROM BRITAIN, ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT SUCH A SERVICE CANNOT BE PROVIDED BY NAVAL SHIPS OR SHIPS REQUISITIONED BY THE MOD.

6. IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS INCLUDE FINDING A PASSAGE FOR THOSE VITAL FIG STAFF WHO DID NOT GET ONTO THE NORLAND THIS TIME AND ALSO FOR MEMBERS OF MY STAFF AND FAMILIES. YOU WILL WISH TO DISCUSS WITH MOD IN CONTEXT OF DECISIONS ON WHETHER NORLAND AND/OR ST EDMUND RETURN HERE.

7. THERE IS ALSO OF COURSE THE PROBLEM OF SUPPLIES. IT WOULD HELP TO KNOW HOW YOU ARE PLANNING TO SHIP OUR REQUIREMENTS FOR BUILDING MATERIALS, FUEL ETC. - IE ALL THOSE SUPPLIES WHICH WE NEED MORE URGENTLY THAN THE AES CAN MANAGE. AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, THE ARMY WILL REQUIRE A CARGO SHIP AND YOU MIGHT ASK MOD ABOUT SPARE CAPACITY (AND WHETHER A FEW PASSENGERS COULD BE ACCOMMODATED).

8. NO DOUBT YOU HAVE ALREADY BEEN STUDYING THE GENERAL PROBLEM OF FUTURE COMMUNICATIONS. IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL TO HAVE AN EARLY INDICATION OF YOUR INTENTIONS SINCE IT WILL BE IMPORTANT FOR ME TO BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN TO THE ISLANDERS IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS THE GENERAL LINES ON WHICH WE ARE WORKING TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE NOT NOW TO BE ISOLATED FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD. HUNT

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