

FALKLAND ISLANDS (MAP ATTACHED)

Attached is a copy of the latest FCO briefing for PM's Question Time.

Our line continues to be:-

- (a) we are seeking a peaceful and diplomatic resolution;
- (b) we cannot accept that the Argentines should remain on South Georgia illegally;
- (c) we have no doubt over our sovereignty;
- (d) nothing to say on ship or submarine deployment other than that ENDURANCE is being deployed to best effect.

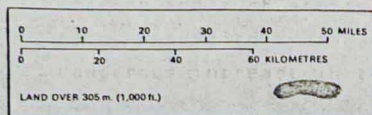
Southern Thule is the southernmost of the South Sandwich Islands.

EMISSARY ? This possibility should not be used until such time as we have a reaction from the Argentines to our latest Diplomatic Note.

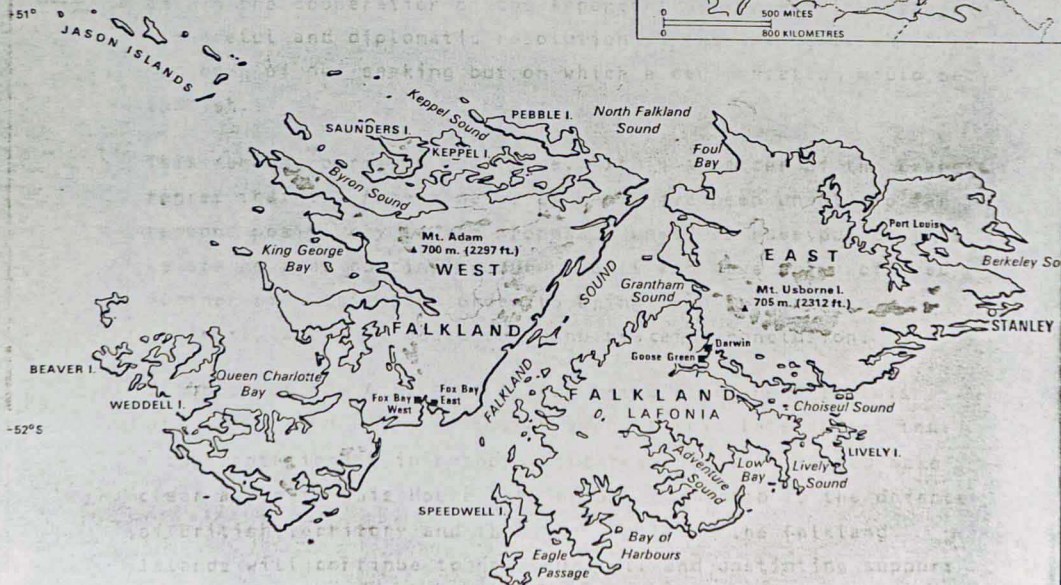
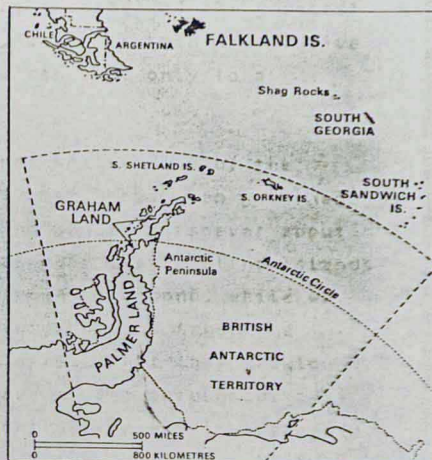
HOW MANY ARGENTINES ARE THERE

About 12. Press reports indicating reinforcements are incorrect. These reports possibly refer to an incident on 25 March when an Argentine naval vessel was sighted delivering supplies.

# The Falkland Islands and Dependencies



SOUTH ATLANTIC  
OCEAN



Mr. Speaker: I wish to refer to the statement on the situation in South Georgia which my hon. friend (the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr. Luce) made in this House on 30 March. Since then there have been disturbing reports of an increasing build-up of Argentine naval forces in the Falklands area. These reports are a matter of the greatest concern and such action by Argentina, which is both provocative and unjustified by the circumstances, can lead only to a dangerous increase in tensions.

The British Government's position since the landing of the Argentine party on South Georgia on 19 March has been governed by three principles. First, we have no doubt whatsoever about our sovereignty over South Georgia, as over the Falkland Islands and the other Falkland Island Dependencies. Second, while we have no wish to exaggerate the importance of the Argentine presence in South Georgia, we cannot accept that they should remain there illegally. Third, we have sought throughout to obtain the cooperation of the Argentine Government in arranging a peaceful and diplomatic resolution of the incident, which has not been of our seeking but on which a confrontation would be foolish.

This remains our firm objective. It is a matter of the deepest regret that the Argentine Government have been unable so far to respond positively to the proposals which we have put to them. We are however continuing our efforts and have again offered further discussions in order to bring this incident to a rational, mutually acceptable and peaceful conclusion.

I hope that the Argentine Government will respond to this initiative and will recognise, even at this late stage, that a confrontation is in nobody's interests. But I should make clear again to this House that we are committed to the defence of British territory and that the people of the Falkland Islands will continue to have our full and unstinting support whatever the circumstances.

WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE THAT ARGENTINES ARE SEEKING CONFRONTATION?

1. There are reports of substantial Argentine naval movements in the area.

WHERE EXACTLY?

2. In the Falklands area.

HOW MANY SHIPS?

3. Reports refer to the deployment of a considerable number of Argentine warships, including an aircraft carrier, destroyers and corvettes.

HMS ENDURANCE'S POSITION: IS SHE STILL STANDING BY OFF SOUTH GEORGIA?

4. I can make no comment on that. (If pressed) But the House may rest assured that HMS Endurance is being deployed to best effect.

OTHER RN DEPLOYMENT? SUBMARINES?

5. I can add nothing to what my hon Friend said on 30 March. But I repeat that we are committed to support and defend the Falklands and their Dependencies to the best of our ability.

WHAT ACTION ARE YOU TAKING TO RESOLVE THE SITUATION?

6. We are pressing ahead firmly with a diplomatic initiative. (If pressed) Our Ambassador is seeing the Argentine Foreign Minister today.

SPECIAL EMISSARY?

7. That is an option under consideration.

MEDIATION BY OTHER COUNTRIES?

8. We are in touch with other Governments and are asking them to use their good offices to ensure a peaceful solution by diplomatic action.

HOW CAN THE MEN'S POSITION BE REGULARISED?

9. By their departure or through their obtaining the proper authority.

WHY MAKE THIS FUSS ABOUT SOUTH GEORGIA AND NOT SOUTHERN THULE?

As soon as we discovered\* the presence of the illegal Argentine base on Southern Thule, we protested vigorously to the Argentines. We have, since then, repeatedly made clear our position to the Argentines through diplomatic channels, most recently in Mr Luce's talks with them in February. But it is our firm view that such disputes should be solved by peaceful negotiation. This is the policy we have followed over Southern Thule and South Georgia. It is not for me to speculate on why the Argentines have reacted in the manner they have over South Georgia.

\* At the end of 1976. We do not know when they arrived there, but we assume that they had been there for some time.

IS IT TRUE THAT THERE ARE MILITARY ARGENTINIAN PERSONNEL ON SOUTHERN THULE?

We understand that it is an Argentinian scientific station but because of the nature of their scientific research we understand that military personnel are involved.

WHY HAVE YOU MADE SUCH A FUSS OVER SOUTH GEORGIA WHEN YOU ARE CONTENT TO TURN A BLIND EYE TO THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN THULE?

As I have said we have repeatedly made clear our position to the Argentinians about the position on Southern Thule.

[IF PRESSED: That is a question for the previous Government as it was in 1976 that their presence was discovered.]

CLR

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SOUTH GEORGIA AFFAIR

IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE UK GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON THE PRESENCE OF ARGENTINE SCRAP DEALERS ON SOUTH GEORGIA WAS AS STATED BY LORD CARRINGTON AND MR LUCE IN THEIR PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENTS ON 30 MARCH. MR LUCE HAD SAID THAT THE MEN COULD REGULARISE THEIR POSITION EITHER BY LEAVING SOUTH GEORGIA OR BY REGISTERING THEIR PRESENCE ACCORDING TO PROPER PROCEDURE. SPOKESMAN DECLINED TO GO INTO THE CONTINUING DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES WITH THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT BUT CONFIRMED THAT THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR, MR ANTHONY WILLIAMS, HAD SEEN THE ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER IN BUENOS AIRES YESTERDAY AND WAS DUE TO SEE HIM AGAIN TODAY. SPOKESMAN WAS ASKED ABOUT REPORTS OF FURTHER ARGENTINE LANDINGS ON SOUTH GEORGIA. HE REPLIED THAT THESE REPORTS APPEARED TO REFER TO THE DELIVERY OF FURTHER SUPPLIES BY AN ARGENTINE SHIP ON 25 MARCH. MR LUCE IN THE COMMONS HAD REFERRED TO THIS OCCURRENCE AND THERE WAS NO INDICATION OF ANY FURTHER ARGENTINE REINFORCEMENT OR SUPPLY SINCE 25 MARCH. SPOKESMAN WAS ASKED ABOUT REPORTS THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WAS BEING ASKED TO MEDIATE. HE REPLIED THAT THE UK GOVERNMENT WAS KEEPING ITS PARTNERS INFORMED AND HOPED THEY WOULD USE THEIR GOOD OFFICES TO URGE RESTRAINT, BUT THERE HAD BEEN NO SPECIFIC REQUESTS FOR MEDIATION. SPOKESMAN CONFIRMED THAT MR LUCE HAD POSTPONED HIS DEPARTURE FOR MEXICO BUT HOPED TO BE ABLE TO REINSTATE THE VISIT. SPOKESMAN WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO ANNOUNCE DATES TODAY.

SPOKESMAN WAS ASKED ABOUT THE ILLEGAL PRESENCE OF ARGENTINES ON ANOTHER FALKLAND ISLAND DEPENDENCY SOUTHERN THULE. HE REPLIED THAT THE UK GOVERNMENT HAD REPEATEDLY PROTESTED TO THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT ABOUT THIS PRESENCE, THE MOST RECENT OCCASION BEING DURING THE TALKS WITH THEM IN NEW YORK IN FEBRUARY THIS YEAR. THE UK GOVERNMENT'S LEGAL POSITION ON THIS MATTER WAS FULLY PROTECTED.