

Date: 4 April 1982

FACTS

Nothing more is being said about the size of the fleet at sea or being prepared than was said yesterday in the House of Commons.

No time of departure on Monday is being given.

The main event of today has been on South Georgia where we have reason to believe a small Royal Marines detachment of 22 men has now been overwhelmed. But in the process our information is that they destroyed an large Argentinian helicopter - probably a Puma - and that a hand-held anti-tank weapon caused considerable damage to an Argentinian frigate/corvette. We believe there have been casualties, if not deaths, among the Argentinians. We believe the Royal Marines did not sustain casualties.

The Argentinian Navy consists of 3 patrol submarines, 2 dating from 1945 and one commissioned in 1974.

One medium-sized attack carrier ex-Royal Navy and Dutch Navy and dating from 1945. This vessel carries out-dated Skyhawk attack aircraft, reconnaissance aircraft and a few Sea King and Allouette helicopters.

It is believed that this vessel carries 18 fixed wing aircraft and 4 helicopters.

One cruiser commissioned in 1939.

Nine destroyers, 2 of the latest type 42 variety built in the UK, the rest ex-US Navy dating from the 1940s.

Two old ex-French frigates.

Seven patrol ships of war-time vintage.

Six landing ships and one tank landing ship.

Twenty-three minor landing craft.

Four fast attack craft, two armed only with guns, two with torpedos.

Four coastal mine sweepers and two mine hunters.

Five transports of various kinds and three fleet support tankers (it is particularly noticeable that the Argentinian Navy has a distinct lack of floating logistical support capability). Total numbers of aircraft available to the Argentinians include 16 Super Etendard and 14 Skyhawk aircraft, 9 Alouette III helicopters, 16 Hughes-500 helicopters probably used in a coastguard role, 4 Sea King helicopters, 2 S-61 helicopters and 3 Pumas, one of which has already been destroyed.

In terms of weaponry the destroyers have Exocet ship-to-ship missiles, the type 42 also has the Sea Dart air defence weapon, and some of the helicopters carry AS11 and AS12 anti-submarine weapons.

On the ground the Argentinians could call on three infantry battalions, one field artillery battery, an amphibious support force including one air defence battalion and one command battalion, while their main marine brigade consists of two battalions with command and service support.

This is a total of some 6,000 troops.

There is already evidence that heavy amphibious armoured vehicles carrying troops have been put ashore. These would appear to be American LVTP-7s and LARC-5s.

In terms of weaponry, the Argentinians could put ashore Tiger Cat surface to air missiles (somewhat out-dated), 105 mm Howitzers, Bantam anti-tank missiles, 88 mm anti-aircraft guns, 106-120 mm mortars, and 75 mm and 105 mm rifles.

INDICATIONS FROM PRESS REPORTS

Simon Winchester for the Sunday Times, apparently moved off the Falklands back to Argentina, has reported the use of tank landing ships and the landing of dozens of vehicles with supplies, radios, tents, hospitals, etc. He also reports the commander of the invading forces, a General Garcia, as saying "they will never get us out". Winchester reported that the Islanders were

/"terrified"

"terrified" and some were trying to get out into the countryside to avoid being involved in what they see as an inevitable battle for Port Stanley.

John Cheek, a Falkland Islands Councillor, at present in the UK, was interviewed on the World This Weekend. He made the point that the Argentinians were not giving any indication of a softening of the UK line during the New York talks. He thought the invasion resulted from what the Argentinians saw as British intransigence.

Also on The World This Weekend, Ted Rowlands repeated his point about intelligence in his experience being good enough from Argentina for the British to have been aware of Argentinian moves.

In reply, Mr. Luce made the point that the sources of intelligence were good but the sort of noises coming out of Argentina had been going on for a very long time and there had been no clear indication that anything different was likely to happen.

Galtieri is perceived by all commentators as a tough military leader who will take a very robust line.

The point has also been made by various commentators, in the context of all the recent fuss about the proposed withdrawal of Endurance, that the ship was there at the time of this invasion and cannot therefore be seen as a decisive factor, either historically or in the future.

MINISTERS

Mr. Nott having completed his Weekend World interview has gone to Portsmouth to visit ships preparing to depart tomorrow.

Lord Carrington is at the Foreign Office and has made a broadcast on the BBC World Service which it is hoped will be received in the Falkland Islands.

GOVERNOR'S PARTY

The Governor and the party of Royal Marines will fly in to the UK tomorrow morning. They will be met by Mr. Luce, Mr. Wiggin and General Pringle, Commandant General, Royal Marines.

A mute photo facility is being arranged at RAF Brize Norton at 0945 a.m.

After de-briefing, a Press Conference with Mr. Hunt and the two Royal Marine officers, Major Noot and Major Normdn will be held.

PRESS ARRANGEMENTS

The MOD is arranging for a press party to join the ships overnight in Portsmouth for sailing with them on Monday. This party of about a dozen will include a television team from the BBC with satellite link equipment and five writing journalists, including the Press Association. Three MOD press officers will be spread around the force.

PRINCE ANDREW

Prince Andrew is serving on board HMS Invincible. It has been confirmed that this ship will form part of the force and it can therefore be assumed that he will go with his ship.

OTHER POINTS

The Falkland Islands are about the size of Wales. The only town of any significance is Port Stanley. It is said that any battle for Port Stanley would virtually destroy the town since it is largely wooden.

If the Straits of Homuz example is looked at it would cost something like £1 million to £1.5 million a month to maintain a warship plus support on station at the Falklands.

It is being stressed that the recent talks in New York concerned only discussion of procedures for further talks. There was no talk of lease-back.

/We would

We would not wish to confirm or deny reports of Royal Marines left behind in the Falklands. It has been confirmed previously that there were 84 Royal Marines in and around the Falklands at the time (this is a double detachment because a change-over was taking place) and also 12 Royal Marines on Endurance

Endurance remains in Falkland Island waters with the Marines still on board.

Argentina's assets have been frozen in the UK.

Our second Resolution in the UN Security Council was agreed by 10 countries. Panama voted against, while the Soviet Union, Poland, China and Spain abstained.

Nothing has yet been said about any moves to ban Argentina from taking part in the World Cup.

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