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PRESS BRIEFING

Nature of Change Proposed

At present seagoing LOA is paid to RN personnel at rates fixed for a number of regions throughout the world. The rate in payment on any ship is determined by that appropriate to its last port of call. Those sailing from the UK get no LOA, nor do people embarked on troopships. Rather than allow anomalies in allowances to develop between members of a single force it is more equitable to pay a flat rate to all.

Why £1 per day?

Normally LOA is precisely assessed to compensate for the extra costs arising from Service overseas. In present circumstances it is of course impossible to make such an assessment, and the payment proposed is no more than a rough average of what various people in the force would otherwise get.

How long will the arrangement last?

Until the conclusion of the operation or some major change in the situation calls for a reappraisal.

What if a substantial British force remains in the Falklands

There would have to be a proper review to determine an appropriate long term rate of LOA. This would be following the normal practice as applied in, say, Belize.

/Does

Does the proposed arrangement follow any precedent, eg. Suez?

No. The need for some common approach is created by the special nature of this force - largely maritime and drawn together from different ports.

How does the proposed rate compare with the Northern Ireland Allowance?

It is not possible to make any useful comparison. The two allowances are for entirely different purposes and are paid on different bases. For example, the N.I. allowance /£1.45 per day/ is taxable; LOA is not since its intention is to compensate for extra expenses over a period.

Will anyone suffer a pay cut?

LOA is not pay but a compensatory allowance, and the sum proposed is judged to be sufficient to meet any extra expenses likely to be incurred by Servicemen involved in this operation. This may mean reduced LOA for some, but the higher rates are intended for quite different circumstances, eg. good will visits.

When can members of an operational force expect to spend the money?

They will already be incurring extra expenses eg. on postage, and on any visits to overseas ports, eg. Ascension, will need to spend more on relaxation or, if circumstances allow it, telephone calls home.

REFERENCE: LOA

Following a telephone conversation with Colonel Jim Osborne at home (tele no 0303 822474) at 1135 hrs this morning. No breakdown of LOA rates is possible because of the complexity of detail involved.

PR LINE

We cannot give figures for LOA at this stage. It is a fluid situation and at this distance we cannot give firm figures.

STATEMENT BY MOD SPOKESMAN 18.4.82 1200 HRS

SITUATION ON LOA

"This is a difficult, complicated area at the best of times. LOA is an untaxable allowance, not pay, designed to ensure that the Serviceman abroad has approximately the same kind of living standards he would have in the UK. In order to get a little of LOA a great deal of work is done costing up the various items of expenditure in the foreign country and comparing them with this country. A Local Overseas Allowance is calculated to ensure that by living in that country they can keep the same standard allowance. Sea Going Overseas Allowance allows the Navy to get a LOA which is related to the last port they touched at and they hold that until they go home or go to another port. It is designed to help them when they are ashore.

We are in a situation which would be unbearable insofar as different people in the same Task Force would be getting different rates of Sea Going Overseas Allowance and some getting no LOA at all. LOA does not apply to troop carriers. In order to put the situation to rights we decided we would have one rate for LOA which everyone in the Task Force would get and that was £1.00 a day. Some people in the fleet, by estimating the lucky windfall of the next port of call, are getting less than they hoped for. Nevertheless, there are many times that number who are now getting the £1.00 a day who would have had nothing under the previous rules. Now everyone is getting the same. It was done in the interests of avoiding painful anomalies. There are a few who would be getting a little less than they expected, but not many".

"Two more vessels have been requisitioned. The fishing vessel, Pict, owned by British United Trawlers, is currently at sea off Norway. She will go to Rosyth to be fitted out and will be manned by the Royal Navy crew. Today the P & O North Sea ferry, Norland, has been requisitioned. She normally goes between Hull and Rotterdam. There is no further information at the moment on the Norland - just thought I would keep you updated.

To save needless questions let me just say that the position insofar as today is concerned is unchanged from yesterday. There is no information to give you on the number, location or direction of the task force except to say that they are on course and on time. I have no authoritative information that I can give you on the Argentinian Navy - whether elements of it have left port or not - there are no reports. I can only say, as previously, that no major vessel or auxiliary has breached the maritime exclusion zone. That remains the position. It also remains the position that if Argentine ships left harbour we can only speculate on their motives for doing so. We do not believe that they intend to breach the maritime exclusion zone because we know that they appreciate our resolve and capability in that area. Having said all that, there is nothing new. I have only said it to assure you that today I can give no further information than that."

FALKLAND ISLANDS - NORLAND

PR LINE:

"The North Sea Ferry MV Norland, owned by P & O, has been requisitioned to assist in the current operations". Norland is a 12,988 ton roll-on/roll-off passenger/car/freight ferry. She normally operates between Hull and Rotterdam.

FALKLAND ISLANDS - FIVE BRIGADE.

PR Line:-

"Five Brigade is the reserve, out of area (NATO area) formation. 1/7 Gurkha Rifles is part of Five Brigade. There is no intention of sending them anywhere at the moment."

ALLEGED AIR EXCLUSION ZONE

Reuters today carries a report from Argentine sources that Britain has announced an air exclusion zone. This is not correct.

Line to take is the last sentence of the MEZ announcement of 7 April which reads:

"This measure is without prejudice to the right of the United Kingdom to take whatever additional measures may be needed in exercise of its right of self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations charter."

UGANDA MERCHANT SEAMEN NEGOTIATIONS
(see Line 17A dated 16 April)

New line to take in event of press queries:

"We are surprised and sorry to hear of any delays in relation to Uganda, particularly as she is to be a hospital ship. But we understand negotiations will continue next week and with this in mind we have nothing further to say".

ADDITIONAL HOSPITAL SHIPS

BACKGROUND (not for use)

Desmond Wettern of the Telegraph has asked us to confirm that the survey ship Hecla is being converted to a hospital ship for inshore work. He assumes she has a shallower draft than Uganda.

LINE TO TAKE

We cannot confirm. If pressed, Ministry of Defence is taking all necessary precautions to provide hospital facilities. No decision about the requirement for any further hospital ships has yet been made.

UNATTRIBUTABLE

LOA

FURTHER TO DEFENSIVE BRIEF AFTER TELEGRAPH PRESS COPY

INVINCIBLE had obviously assumed that the normal rules would apply and having reached the geographical area felt clear to pay the rate. Whereas now they are not getting as much as they thought, other personnel serving on the force who would normally not have qualified will now get more.

The overall balance of the rate for the whole ~~price~~ ^{force} was fully considered at the highest level and the rate was felt to be right and fair in the circumstances.

Comparisons with the MN are not particularly helpful and in any case difficult to equate.

ITN NEWS 17 APR 82

A Royal Marine Major gave details of the bayonet strength aboard the task force.
DO NOT CONFIRM ANY FIGURES. Our line remains we are not discussing operational strengths, units, or movements beyond that already given in Parliament.

FALKLAND ISLANDS - HMS SUPERB.

PR Line: Only to be used responsively.

"HMS Superb returned to Faslane this evening."

Q "Where has she been?"

What has she been doing?

Does this mean there are no submarines in the MEZ?"

A "We do not discuss the operational movements of our submarines."

MERCHANT SEAMEN NEGOTIATIONS

We have been given to understand by Roger Paxton of DS5 at 1130 hrs today that the Department of Trade is conducting negotiations with the NUS and that a meeting has been arranged by them for 1100 hrs Monday 19 April.

PR LINE

Any questions relating to the merchant seamen negotiations should be referred to the Department of Trade. It is not a matter for the MOD to comment on.

MV NORLAND

BACKGROUND

It was suggested that this ship would not prove suitable for all the tasks that were going to be allocated to it and that it was not now going to be used.

PR LINE

The Norland will be used as previously stated.

MISSING MARINES

The 29 missing Marines are safe, well and in Montevideo. They are due to return to UK in the early hours of Tuesday 20 April. SofS is deciding what type of reception will be given. No facility should be announced or the time of arrival given to the Press.

LINE: The 29 Marines are due back on Tuesday. There are no details yet of