

MOD PRESS BRIEFING HELD IN HISTORIC 27 ON 18 APRIL 82 1200 HRS

- Q. Has there been any plans made to send out Vulcan bombers?
- A. Certainly, we are doing exercises with Vulcan bombers using conventional bombs.
- Q. Are the exercises with the Vulcan bombers related in any way to the Falkland crisis?
- A. A decision has been made to carry out exercises of the Vulcan with conventional bombs and that decision is giving us a capability which we want. There is a long step between a decision to acquire a capability and a decision to use it.
- Q. A capability in South Atlantic?
- A. A capability of Vulcans dropping conventional bombs.
- Q. Are you talking about NATO or South Atlantic?
- A. We are not thinking of these exercises in relation only to possible capabilities in the NATO context. I am not able to say any more than that.
- Q. Do the exercises include refuelling?
- A. The Vulcans will be able to have flight refuelling in the air.
- Q. Where are the exercises taking place?
- A. Off North Scotland.
- Q. When did they start?
- A. Not yet but very shortly.
- Q. Very shortly today?
- A. Not today.
- Q. What will the target be - is there an existing range?
- A. There is a range.
- Q. With regard to the capability to drop conventional bombs, what targets if used in South Atlantic?
- A. I cannot comment.
- Q. Can you give us any guidance to how many aircraft involved?
- A. No. Exactly how many being modified I am not saying.
- Q. When is the Vulcan due to be phased out?
- A. The Vulcan role was a nuclear role. They were being phased out from that - therefore they will have a new capability.

- Q. Are you reviewing the decision of the Vulcans being phased out at Scampton and Waddington?
- A. Giving them a new capability must mean a consideration of their future. Beyond that I am unable to go.
- Q. Was this something being reconsidered before the present crisis or something which has arisen during the last 2 weeks?
- A. As far as timing is concerned this reflects a recent decision.
- Q. Are they using the same aircrew or are they being retrained?
- A. DPR(RAF) can answer that.
- Q. Do we have many - roughly how many?
- A. In terms of Vulcans unmodified as well as modified we have no full details.
- Q. How many squadrons?
- A. Four.
- Q. How many left at Waddington?
- A. We are not saying that all are being modified.
- Q. Are the ones being retained the newest ones?
- A. I will not go any further into this.
- Q. Mid-air refuelling - what is the present state?
- A. Can I have notice of this question - I have no precise details and don't know how far I can go.
- Q. Are you able to say in which direction the Argentinian fleet are heading?
- A. No. All I can say is that they are off the coast of Argentina.
- Q. Have they been anywhere near the MEZ?
- A. As I said before, no major Argentinian vessel has breached the MEZ.
- Q. What are your comments on the reports from the Ascension Island with regard to elements of the fleet being spotted.
- A. I never comment on dispositions or locations of the Task Force.
- Q. Can you confirm that they have been to Freetown?
- A. The rule I have been given is not to talk about any dispositions or locations of the fleet.
- Q. Have there been any indications of the Argentine troops leaving South Georgia?
- A. We have no authoritative reports on that.
- Q. Is the decision to call up reserves still under review?

- A. This is still the case. In a situation like this there are a number of measures which are automatically under review.
- Q. Is there a likelihood of announcing an air exclusion zone once our aircraft are in a suitable position?
- A. I know of no decision to make such an announcement.