

MOD PRESS BRIEFING 19.4.82 1200 HRS HELD IN HISTORIC ROOM 27

- Q. What is the 2 PARA Group?
- A. It includes artillery, engineers, air and logistic personnel.
- Q. Are you talking about a thousand men - a battalion plus a group?
- A. A little less than a thousand men.
- Q. What was the first ship going on today?
- A. MV Norland at Hull.
- Q. Has the requisitioning of that ship already been announced?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Has 2 PARA got anything to do with it?
- A. They happen to be available and are suitable. Beyond that we are not saying anything.
- Q. Is 2 PARA going to be split between 2 ships?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Where is 2 PARA from?
- A. They are part of the 5 Bde.
- Q. Are they stationed at Hull?
- A. They are stationed at Aldershot and are part of the 5 Bde.
- Q. Were they recently in Germany?
- A. That was 3 PARA not 2.
- Q. Were any of the soldiers now on their way to the Falklands taken from Ulster or Germany or anywhere else apart from bases in this country?
- A. They were all taken from UK bases.
- Q. Do you know the total number?
- A. No.
- Q. Were 2 or 3 PARA on stand-by to go to N Ireland?
- A. No.
- Q. Hydrographic ships - are there any more in that category apart from Uganda and Canberra?
- A. No not at present. We have made no decision to increase the larger hospital ship capability.

- Q. What is the total number of ships now being chartered and requisitioned?
- A. I will let you know that one - no precise details at moment.
- Q. Is the Hecla a small hospital ship?
- A. Yes, she has already joined the Task Force.
- Q. Do you know when the Hydra and Herald leaving?
- A. I am afraid I don't know.
- Q. What is the job of the Europic Ferry?
- A. Beyond saying it is going to be used in the Task Force we are not going into precise details of it's use or whether it is carrying anything lese.
- Q. Has anything changed with regard to the MEZ situation?
- A. The position has not changed.
- Q. As far as you know are most of the Argentine fleet still at sea?
- A. The position is as yesterday - most are still at sea. We have no reports suggesting otherwise.
- Q. Can you remind us of the terms of the MEZ - does it exclude all warships or just Argentine warships?
- A. There is nothing I can usefully say at all. (Article 51 of the United Nations Charter quoted). This remains the position.
- Q. Can you tell us the position about the possibility of reservists in some areas having to be reactivated?
- A. The possibility of reservists is one of a number of the things, which in a situation of this kind is automatically kept under review. If it is considered necessary and if a decision is taken an announcement will be made.
- Q. Is there anything else you can say about the air exclusion zone?
- A. There is no more to be said on that except that anyone thinking of flying over that particular area would use their own common sense and think twice!
- Q. Is that an official statement or just something you have said?
- A. It is something I have said but it is obvious that anyone thinking of flying that way would pause for a moment!
- Q. Have you any reports on the 2 Americans?
- A. No information at all.
- Q. Have you any information about the unidentified submarine reported from Hermes?
- A. No information I can share with you.
- Q. Can you say anything about the Soviet surveillance of the Task Force?
- A. Soviets have always taken a great interest in the movement of RN ships and it would be expected that their interest is even greater now.

- Q. Has there been any further review of the possibility of using Illustrious?
- A. We are putting some work force into Illustrious but it has a considerable time to go before it reaches an operational state in accordance with the normal procedures.
- Q. When is it due to join the fleet?
- A. It is always difficult to give a precise date but indications were middle to late next year.
- Q. So it has over a year to go?
- A. It is difficult at the best of times to forecast an exact date especially for a ship of this size but we hope that the measures the British ship builders are putting into effect will advance it by some time, however, there is a limit.
- Q. Is there a time limit?
- A. No.
- Q. Are you thinking of this in the context of the present crisis or in the context of selling to the Australians?
- A. This is long term thinking. There would be some advantage in having Invincible ready a little bit early if possible.
- Q. What have you told the Australians about Invincible?
- A. There has been no movement on our or Australia's part from the position previously agreed between us on the future of Invincible.
- Q. Has all the management of day-to-day financial control virtually gone - has everything been scrapped?
- A. No, the MOD is showing how flexible it can be in meeting a situation. The discipline of cash limits is not, of itself, standing in the way of any measure which we believe will contribute to the success of the Task Force.
- Q. What is the position of the Atlantic Conveyor?
- A. We will have to let you know.
- Q. Can you extend on the financial side - does this mean extra financial discipline has been placed on other parts of the Armed Services not taking part in the crisis?
- A. No. We are keeping a watch on the financial situation without letting it get in the way of what we require.
- Q. Is there anything on the White Paper?
- A. There is nothing on the White Paper.
- Q. What is the latest news on Intrepid?
- A. Still being prepared, we have no further information.
- Q. Is there a forecast date for when it will be ready?
- A. No forecast date.

- Q Did Uganda leave on time?
- A. Yes it left on time for Gibraltar.
- Q. Can you tell us what was done to Uganda?
- A. Can I have notice of this question, I apologise.
- Q. Do you have any idea when the Marines return from Uruguay?
- A. Early tomorrow morning. They will be coming to Brize Norton.
- Q. What time exactly?
- A. About 3 or 4 in the morning.
- Q. What has happened with the Argentinian fleet - at sea or port?
- A. As far as we are concerned, latest reports suggest that most of the ships are at sea including the aircraft carrier and the cruiser. However, reports are not always accurate and we are not dealing in certainty with locations or times.
- Q. Has this operation got a name?
- A. I am not at liberty to say. I will tell you tomorrow if I can.
- Q. Is the conversion of the Vulcan bombers intended for hitting bases on the Argentine mainland?
- A. No. This is an extra capability which we have, and I cannot go on to say how or if it will be used.
- Q. If we attack the Argentine mainland would it be covered by the United Nations article?
- A. This is a legal question.
- Q. Are the 4 or 5 strategic reconnaissance Vulcans being scrapped or are they going to be used?
- A. Cannot say.

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STATEMENT BY MOD SPOKESMAN 19.4.82 1200 HRS

"Can I say first of all that I have no further information to give you on the location dispositions of the Task Force and no further information beyond that I gave you yesterday on the Argentine fleet but I do have three pieces of information. Three hydrographic vessels are being used as hospital ships with the Falkland Islands' Task Force. HMS Hydra and HMS Herald are at Portsmouth preparing for their basic role as casualty ferries between any area of operation and the larger hospital ships. The third hydrographic vessel, HMS Hecla, has already left Gibraltar and is on her way to join the Task Force.

Also some more news of requisitioning and chartering. The Europic Ferry has been requisitioned. This ship is a North Sea roll-on roll-off ferry owned by Townsend Thorosen. She is 4,190 gross registered tons and is currently at Southampton undergoing minor modifications for her role. We have also chartered a tanker named Anco Charger. The Anco Charger is a tanker of 15,974 gross registered tons currently at Portsmouth. She is jointly owned by Ocean Transport & Trading and the PO Line. Going on, the 2 PARA Group are to embark on board the MV Norland at Hull starting from mid-day today and on the Europic Ferry at Southampton on Wednesday. This will, of course, enlarge and extend the military capability of the Task Force".

*Sheffield*

DPO (W)

1300 19.4.82

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THE SHARELGA INCIDENT - DEFENSIVE PRESS BRIEF

BRITISH SUBMARINE  
INVOLVED?

Cannot say at the moment whether  
a British submarine was involved.  
For obvious reasons, not our  
practice to comment on the  
whereabouts of submarines.

COMPENSATION?

As I have said cannot say at the  
moment whether a British submarine  
was involved. If pressed  
hypothetical question.

FAILURE TO PICK UP  
SURVIVORS?

Cannot say at the moment whether  
a British submarine was involved.

BRITISH SUBMARINE IN  
AREA?

For obvious reasons, not our  
practice to comment on the  
whereabouts of our submarines.

SOVIET SUBMARINE?

Possibly.

WHEN WILL YOU KNOW  
IF BRITISH SUBMARINE  
INVOLVED?

For obvious reasons, can't say.

IRISH GOVERNMENT  
INVESTIGATION?

That is a matter for them.  
As I have said cannot say  
at the moment whether a British  
submarine was involved.