

MOD PRESS BRIEFING HELD ON 25 APRIL 1982 AT 1200

- Q. Do you have the time of the attack?
- A. We have nothing more.
- Q. Today our time?
- A. All I have are those 2 sentences.
- Q. Was it before or after you talked to the United Nations?
- A. We talked with the United Nations our time early this morning, the note was conveyed to the Argentine Government on Friday. I have no further information.
- Q. Does this mean you don't know personally?
- A. I have given you all the information I have at present.
- Q. When did the news come to the MOD?
- A. I cannot say. It has been brought to you as quickly as possible.
- Q. Has it anything to do with the loss of the Sea King?
- A. I cannot see it would have anything to do with it, but I cannot elaborate.
- Q. The Argentine Government were told on Friday, the United Nations were told yesterday and this took place today?
- A. That is my understanding.
- Q. Can you explain what the statement about the new Defensive Area means?
- A. The position with regard to the defensive area is a position of self-defence, and it is an area in which within his rules of engagement the Commanding Officer would be making decisions about appropriate responses. These would depend on the circumstances of the time and of the threat that was involved in the Argentine presence in the area. It is quite different from a zone, as an area it moves with the Task Force.
- Q. This seems to suggest that Admiral Woodward is able to shoot first?
- A. The Rules of Engagement are constantly being reviewed and would be certainly as the Task Force moved South.
- Q. Does that mean that the decision to engage was taken here?
- A. No it doesn't. Admiral Woodward made his own decision to attack a submarine. The statement we made on Friday to the Argentinian Government through the Swiss Government is very clear that we would think it right within this defensive area to take appropriate response. The Admiral has his rules of engagement which have been progressively reviewed as the Task Force goes further South. The action that has been taken is judged to be an appropriate response.

- Q. The 200 mile zone was around the Falkland Islands, was there another 200 mile zone around South Georgia?
- A. We have set up no zone around South Georgia in the same way as we have around the Falklands.
- Q. The zone is round the fleet rather than the Island?
- A. The last sentence of the statement on the Maritime Exclusion Zone still stands. The only Maritime Exclusion Zone is the one announced by the Secretary of State as the Maritime Exclusion Zone around the Falkland Islands. We now have a Defensive Area which is a self defence area in which to protect ourselves and our interests.
- Q. There is no air blockade of the Falklands?
- A. There is a Maritime Exclusion Zone and there is a statement that we will take any action that we think necessary. That has been the position and remains the position.
- Q. Any aircraft that comes within range of any British force is liable to be shot?
- A. It is liable to get the appropriate response.
- Q. Did the submarine fire at the Task Force?
- A. I have no information beyond the statement.
- Q. It was obviously identified as Argentinian?
- A. That was in the statement.
- Q. Will Secretary of State be available for interview today?
- A. I very much doubt it.
- Q. How do you know the submarine was hostile?
- A. I think this whole incident has to be viewed in the context of this announcement.
- Q. It is the first RN engagement since 1956?
- A. It could well be.
- Q. The Inner Cabinet went to Northolt, was this order to attack involved with the Inner Cabinet?
- A. My understanding is that the meeting of Ministers was arranged some time ago. The decision to attack was taken by the Commander.
- Q. Not guided from this end?
- A. I am not able to say. I do not have the information, I would have expected that in this situation where you have rules of engagement and where you are so far away that something must be left to the Commander on the spot.

- Q. The implication of this is that the first shots were fired without the Prime Minister's say so?
- A. No. The Rules of Engagement lay down the sort of action that can be taken and are always under political control. No Commanding Officer acts outside his Rules of Engagement.
- Q. This first shot being fired, surely he would check it out?
- A. The Rules of Engagement are set by the Government to give the Commanding Officer full guidance on the appropriate action in various different circumstances and he is expected to act within the Rules of Engagement. That is what they are for.
- Q. Were Ministers consulted about this specific incident?
- A. That is what Rules of Engagement are for, to allow action to take place and to make sure that action takes place within the politically approved parameters.
- Q. This is the first MOD statement that confirms that any of the Task Force is in the South Georgia proximity?
- A. It would certainly seem so.
- Q. The weather?
- A. Still very bad indeed.
- Q. Are there any problems to the ships within the South Georgian area because of the weather?
- A. I have no information of that.
- Q. Regarding length of runway, the Argentinians have now said that the runway has now been lengthened?
- A. We had firm information that it had not been lengthened, that is the information we had. Our understanding of the construction work required would involve equipments and time and that, of course, if equipments were there, if manpower was put on then the runway could be lengthened. But I draw your attention to the fact that the weather would not help that situation, and I also draw your attention to the fact that there is a time factor involved in laying cement so that it dries and is hard enough.

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FREIGHTER LYCAON CHARTERED

The freighter Lycaon (11,804 gross registered tons) has been chartered for use in the current operations. Currently at sea, Lycaon is owned by the China Steam Navigation Company.

*S. Reed.*

S Reed

DPO

Source:DS5

0915 25 Apr 82

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NORLAND- Sailing delayed.

The Norland, due to leave Portsmouth at noon today carrying 2 Para Group, has had her sailing delayed.

The delay is due to work on a flight deck taking slightly longer than expected.

*S. Reed*

S Reed

DPO

Source:DS5

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