

MOD STATEMENT 1530 23 May 1982

Last night a vessel was intercepted on the south east coast of East Falkland by a ship of the task force. The vessel is the MV MONSUNEN belonging to the Falkland Islands Company. The Argentines had commandeered it to ferry troops, stores and ammunition around the islands.

After being illuminated by starshell, the "MV MONSUNEN" was run aground and abandoned by her crew. It is not known whether there were any casualties.

Falkland Islands

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. John Nott):

Seven weeks ago when Argentine forces invaded the Falkland Islands, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stated that the Falkland Islands remained British territory, that no aggression and no invasion could alter that simple fact, and that it was the Government's objective to see that the islanders were freed from occupation.

On the night of Thursday 20 May, Her Majesty's forces re-established a secure base on the Falkland Islands and the Union Flag is today flying over the settlement of San Carlos in East Falkland—where it will remain. The whole House will have been delighted to see the expressions of delight on the faces of the islanders and their children—published widely yesterday.

The amphibious landing was the culmination of a long period of planning by the force commander and of preparation by the Royal Marine commandos, members of the Parachute Regiment and supporting arms during their six weeks voyage into the South Atlantic. Whilst they sailed south, the Government worked unremittingly to persuade Argentina to withdraw peacefully and honourably from the Falkland Islands. But the Government met only with Argentine intransigence.

Last week it became clear that the only possible course left open to us was the repossession of the Falkland Islands by military means. In this the Government have been encouraged—as I think has the country as a whole—that Her Majesty's Opposition and the other main political parties in the House have supported us. Certainly I believe that our Service men have been greatly encouraged by the support that they have received from right hon. and hon. Members of this House.

I will not go over all the details of the amphibious landing; the approach by the task force under the cover of darkness, widespread raids on Argentine military targets, the entry into Falkland Sound and the disembarkment into landing crafts leading to assault in the San Carlos area, but I think I can say that it was an exploit which captured the imagination of our people.

Argentine forces did not interfere to any significant extent with the landing itself. The amphibious ships involved in the first stages of the operation were able to withdraw without incident to safer waters to the east of the Falkland Islands, and I must here pay tribute to the men and women of the merchant marine for their heroism and skill in these dangerous operations; their role is vital.

The landing itself was complemented by attacks in other parts of the Falklands including the airfield at Goose Green and bombardment of military installations south of Port Stanley. Carrier-based RAF Harriers launched attacks against Argentine defences at Port Stanley airfield. These operations were an essential part of the overall plan. I deeply regret, however, that in the course of these operations three Royal Marines were killed when their Gazelle helicopters were shot down and that one RAF Harrier pilot is missing. And as we have announced, 21 men were tragically lost when a Royal Navy Sea King ditched in the sea shortly before the operations began.

To protect the landing operation the Royal Navy maintained a gun-line of destroyers and frigates in the Falkland Sound. Other warships provided close protection for our amphibious forces; overhead, Sea Harriers from

our carriers provided continuous combat air patrols. The waves of Argentine air attacks had to run the gauntlet of these air defences. The Sea Harriers shot down eight of their aircraft, and total Argentine losses that day are estimated at 14 Mirages and Sky Hawks, two Pucaras and four helicopters. These losses represent more than a third of their combat aircraft taking part that day.

During these continuous air attacks the Royal Navy fought with great skill and bravery. Nevertheless, those Argentine aircraft which had penetrated our air defence screen inflicted damage on five of our ships. Of these, the type 21 frigate HMS "Ardent" was severely damaged, but despite the efforts of her crew to control the damage she sank in the course of Friday night. Twenty-two of her crew died and 17 were injured. The injured are now receiving full medical attention in hospital ships of the fleet.

Since that action the task force has been reinforced by the arrival of more, highly capable, warships, more than compensating for those damaged or lost in action so far.

The following day, Saturday, saw a lull in the fighting. Although the weather was good, the Argentine air force launched only one attack by two Skyhawks on our ships, which was not pressed home. Yesterday the Argentine air force resumed its attacks on ships of the task force in San Carlos Water. The aircraft were engaged by missiles from ships, by shore-based Rapier batteries and by the combat air patrols of Sea Harriers. Six Mirage aircraft and one Skyhawk are known to have been shot down—one aircraft more than was first announced—and there have been unconfirmed reports of a further one Mirage and two Skyhawks also shot down. Yesterday's events involved the loss of two-thirds of the Argentine aircraft taking part.

In the meantime, action to make the blockade effective has continued. Sea Harriers from the task force yesterday destroyed two Argentine helicopters and caused serious damage to another. Task force action also resulted in the beaching of a ship used by the Argentines to ferry troops and ammunition around the islands. With the loss of resupply ships and six helicopters, the Argentine commander has lost all but a very limited capability to supply his forces and move them around the islands.

I regret to confirm that in yesterday's action the frigate, HMS "Antelope", suffered severe damage. Our latest information—and this based on preliminary reports—is that one of her ship's company was killed and seven others were wounded. I must also inform the House, with great regret, of the loss of one of our Sea Harriers last night. This aircraft met with an accident shortly after launching from one of our carriers and the pilot was killed. This accident was not as a result of Argentine action, and the cause has yet to be established. Next of kin have been informed.

The intensive fighting of the last few days has produced tragic loss of life on our side, and the House will join with me in conveying the deep sympathy of the whole nation to the relatives and friends of those killed and injured.

We all feel deeply too for the constant concern and worry of the families and friends of our Servicemen. They are showing great patience and understanding in very difficult circumstances.

Names of casualties will not be released until the next of kin have been informed, although to counter the false propaganda coming out of Argentina we have had to give some general information on the progress of military action as soon as it is confirmed.

Rest not
copied – no
annotations

[Mr. Nott]

however, that the Argentine forces will not fight—and fight hard. I emphasise that we may still have a very difficult fight on our hands.

British Rail

4 pm

Mr. Albert Booth (Barrow-in-Furness): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 9, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely, "the crisis in British railways".

On Friday the executive committee of the National Union of Railwaymen decided that it would decide on a form of industrial action unless by 7 June British Rail withdraws its proposals to close a number of railway workshops. The proposal to close the workshops is seen by the unions in the industry and by a large number of other people concerned with the running of the railways as indicative of the fact that a massive rundown of railway services is about to commence.

The significance of the proposal goes far beyond its serious effect upon the communities in which the workshops are situated, and the factors that led to the decision of British Rail Engineering Ltd. cannot be held to be matters merely between the railway unions and British Rail management, because they were factors determined by the Government.

It was the Government's decision to refuse to allow British Rail to begin the investment programme, which is necessary to maintain our rail network as much as to provide work for British Rail workshops, and their proposal to make a public service obligation payment to British Rail for the current year less than that paid in the last year that lay behind the decision by British Rail.

It would be wrong for Parliament to rise for the Whitsun Recess and to return after the date on which a decision is taken that a strike should commence in British Rail resulting from factors which are matters of great importance to the House, on which we would wish to question the Secretary of State for Transport and on which the House should express a view. I therefore submit that this is an appropriate matter for an urgent debate.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member for Barrow-in-Furness (Mr. Booth) gave me notice before 12 o'clock midday that he would seek to make an application under Standing Order No. 9 this afternoon.

The right hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely, "the crisis in British Railways".

The right hon. Gentleman has drawn our attention to a serious issue for the whole country, as the whole House will be aware. The right hon. Gentleman and the House are aware that my powers in this matter are strictly limited to granting an emergency debate of three hours only, either tonight or tomorrow night.

The House has also instructed me to take into account the several factors set out in the order, but to give no reasons for my decision. It would often be easier for me if I could give reasons, but I am instructed not to do so.

I must rule that the right hon. Gentleman's submission does not fall within the provisions of the Standing Order, and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

minor recruits to whom an early appointment could not otherwise be offered. So far, no such request has been received. This arrangement is similar to that for former police cadets.

Coroners' Courts

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his reply, of 14 May, *Official Report*, c. 332, to the hon. Member for Basildon whether he proposes to introduce legislation to require that all deaths of patients detained in secure hospitals under the Mental Health Act 1959 should be reported to the coroner and that inquests should be held with a jury on all such deaths; and if he will make a statement;

(2) pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Basildon of 14 May, *Official Report*, c. 332, when he proposes to introduce legislation concerning the principle that all deaths in custody should be reported to the coroner, that inquests should be held with a jury on all such deaths, and that coroners' juries should be selected by the process used for juries in other courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: My right hon. Friend intends to bring forward proposals to give effect to these changes when a suitable opportunity for legislation occurs, but we are not yet in a position to say when this will be. These proposals would include a requirement that the deaths of all persons in legal custody should be reported to the coroner whatever the place of detention. Meanwhile, the desirability of such deaths being reported, and of inquests with a jury being held on them has already been drawn to the attention of coroners and the police.

Mr. S. P. Teoh

Mr. James Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he will take to expedite the hearing of the appeal of Mr. S. P. Teoh against deportation from the United Kingdom, considering that he has been waiting five months for the appellate hearing, that the delay is causing him considerable financial hardship and distress and that he was born in the British Straits Settlements, but the Malaysian authorities will not return his passport to him.

Mr. Whitelaw: Mr. Teoh has lodged an appeal against the refusal to revoke or vary his leave to remain in the United Kingdom. The Home Office submitted the explanatory statement to the independent appellate authority on 25 March with a request for an early hearing. The appellate authority has arranged for the case to be heard in Bristol on 17 June.

Police Cadets (Hendon Police Training College)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to come to a decision about the future funding of police cadets at Hendon police training college; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitelaw: My officials are shortly to meet representatives of the Brent and Barnet borough councils and the Metropolitan Police to discuss this matter. I shall write to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Miss Joan Lester asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) men and (b) women he has appointed to public bodies in the past year; and what is the total number of men and women appointed by his Department to serve on public bodies.

Mr. Whitelaw: A total of 364 men and 153 women were appointed in the course of 1981 to the public bodies for which the Home Office is responsible. Their total membership on 31 December 1981 was 2,230 men and 970 women.

In certain cases the appointments are made on my advice by Her Majesty the Queen or my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister; or by other Ministers with whom I share responsibility for a particular body.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Produce

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the latest European Economic proposals for agricultural price increases in terms of £ sterling, the amount of the increase, the United Kingdom consumption of each of the products in question, and the total cost to the consumer in each case assuming that the return to the farmer goes up by the whole of the increase and that not less than this amount is passed on to consumers.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made on 19 May. I shall shortly be placing a note giving further details of the settlement in the Library. My right hon. Friend provided information on United Kingdom consumption of various products in a reply which he gave to the hon. Member on 8 December 1981—[Vol. 14, c. 366.]. As regards the cost to the consumer, market conditions and the nature of support arrangements mean that the assumptions proposed by the hon. Member are not realistic. I indicated in my statement that the effect of the settlement on the retail price index over a full year will be a quarter of 1 per cent. and on the food price index over a full year 1¼ per cent., and that the consumer benefit of the beef premium scheme, sheepmeat regime and the continuation of the butter subsidy will be worth some hundreds of millions of pounds, depending on the market situation.

Food Prices

Mr. Craigen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the likely effect on the retail price index of the European Economic Community Council of Ministers voting over the common agricultural policy farm prices.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made on 19 May.

PRIME MINISTER

Falkland Islands

Mr. Arthur Lewis asked the Prime Minister if, in the intended independent investigation into all matters

connected with and leading up to the eventual military activities in the South Atlantic, related events, up to 20 years before the invasion of the Falkland Islands may be included.

The Prime Minister: I told the House on 8 April that we would consult on the form of a review or inquiry. I shall bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

Republic of Ireland (Talks)

Mr. Proctor asked the Prime Minister whether she will ensure that no further talks take place with the Government of the Republic of Ireland concerning any matter, and that, in particular, there will be no further discussions of an all-Ireland nature, while the Irish Government maintain their policy of neutrality during the present conflict with the Republic of Argentina over the Falkland Islands; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I share the disappointment felt by many hon. Members at the attitude adopted by the Irish Government over European Community sanctions against Argentina. Nevertheless, I do not believe it would be to our advantage to discontinue talks on issues of interest to the United Kingdom.

I do not understand my hon. Friend's reference to further discussions of an all-Ireland nature. If by that he means discussions affecting the constitutional position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, I can assure him that there have been and are no such talks.

Luxembourg Convention

Mr. Murphy asked the Prime Minister whether she plans to have consultations with Heads of other European Economic Community Governments regarding the abandoning of the Luxembourg convention and its consequences for the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is meeting the other Foreign Ministers of the European Community in Brussels today and tomorrow. He will take up with them the way in which the Luxembourg compromise was set aside at last week's Agriculture Council, and the very serious implications of that development. The House will have an opportunity to debate the matter on Wednesday.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Proctor asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government will end all payments of public funds to the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

The Prime Minister: No.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Argentina (Commercial Bills)

Mr. Hordern asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table showing the value of commercial bills issued by Argentine entities that are held by British banks and are still outstanding and whether any instructions have been issued.

Mr. Bruce-Gardyne: The Treasury's directions issued on 4 April under the Emergency Laws (Re-enactments and

Repeals) Act 1964 had the effect *inter alia* of preventing the acceptance of new bills of exchange drawn by Argentine residents from that date, and so cut off Argentine entities from this source of credit. This was emphasised in the Bank of England's notice EL1, issued on 13 April. Bills drawn by Argentine residents and accepted before 3 April have, of course, yet to mature and some can still be found in the market. However, banks whose bills are eligible for discount at the Bank of England have withdrawn from the market bills drawn by Argentine residents.

Given that in every case the Argentine drawer has already gained the full benefit from the acceptance of these pre-3 April bills, the United Kingdom authorities permit the use of blocked Argentine funds, where available, to honour these bills on maturity. The United Kingdom acceptor is, of course, bound to pay the bill on maturity if the Argentine drawer does not do so, for whatever reason. The authorities' practice is set out in the Bank of England's notice EL1. Figures for the total value of claims of United Kingdom banks—including the United Kingdom offices of foreign banks—on Argentina, in sterling and foreign currency, in form of bills drawn on promissory notes issued by Argentine residents and acceptances given on behalf of Argentine residents are as follows:

	£ million	
	End December 1981	End March 1982
Sterling claims	97	99
Foreign currency claims	76	77
	173	176

The comparable figures for British banks excluding the United Kingdom offices of foreign banks are:

	£ million	
	End December 1981	End March 1982
Sterling claims	95	88
Foreign currency claims	38	42
	133	130

Departmental Travel Expenses

Mr. Spearing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate, the costs of road, rail, and air travel, respectively, incurred by Departments of Government in the year 1981, excluding subsistence due in each case.

Mr. Hayhoe: Separate records of travel costs are not kept but it is estimated that Civil Service duty travel in the United Kingdom and overseas cost Departments about £115 million in 1981-82. Of this it is estimated that about £80 million was on road travel, about £10 million on rail travel and about £25 million on air travel. Public transport is used wherever practicable.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Joel Barnett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if, pursuant to the answer on 13 May 1982 to the right hon. Member for Heywood and Royton, *Official Report*, c. 936, concerning the public sector borrowing requirement he will now make a statement on

Mr. John MacKay: The information is given in the following table.

Ayrshire and Arran Health Board Area		
	1980	1981*
Terminations	586	595
Still Births	53	22
Perinatal Deaths	96	59

* provisional.

Mr. McKelvey asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of live births to women who were unmarried in the Ayrshire and Arran Health District for the years 1980 and 1981.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is not readily available in precisely the form requested. There were 547 illegitimate live births in the Ayrshire and Arran health board area in 1980. The corresponding figure for 1981, which is provisional, is 600.

Freezer Trawlers

Mr. Grimond asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will reduce the 1982 freezer trawlers' sectoral quota and correspondingly increase the allocation to the rest of the United Kingdom pelagic fleet.

Mr. Younger: The freezer trawlers' sectoral quotas of mackerel and herring for 1982 have been set with the aim of maintaining a fair balance between this and other sectors of the fleet. The quota shares to be allocated to the various sectors of the industry in future will be the subject of a thorough review before the 1983 season.

Herring Fisheries

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has studied the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea recommendations for herring fisheries in the north North Sea, the Shetlands, the south North Sea and the west coast fisheries; and if, in view of the concern which has been expressed by the leaders of the Scottish fishing industry regarding these recommendations, he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The scientific advice of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea is that the herring fisheries in the northern and central areas of the North Sea should remain closed during 1982. While this recommendation has still to be considered in detail, the Government's general policy continues to be that the fisheries should not be re-opened until the scientific advice is that this can be done without further endangering the stocks. The management arrangements for the herring fisheries in the area of the southern North Sea and the west of Scotland will be the subject of consultations with the industry.

Defective Colour Vision

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department collects information on the number of people with the following conditions of defective colour vision: protanopia, deuteranopia, protanomalous, deutanomalous and tritans.

Mr. John MacKay: No.

Unemployment Statistics

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a numerical and percentage breakdown of those unemployed for one year or over in Scotland by age group for (a) males and (b) both sexes.

Mr. Alexander Fletcher: The information is set out in the following table.

Numbers registered as unemployed for over 52 weeks—Scotland

Age Group	Males	Percentage share	Total	
			Males and Females	Percentage share
Under 18	1,114	1.3	1,911	1.7
18	1,692	2.0	2,682	2.5
19	3,740	4.4	5,809	5.3
20-24	14,706	17.5	20,864	19.1
25-29	10,880	12.9	14,217	13.0
30-34	9,185	10.9	11,376	10.4
35-44	14,354	17.0	17,510	16.0
45-49	6,810	8.1	8,716	8.0
50-54	6,869	8.2	9,013	8.2
55-59	7,218	8.6	9,569	8.7
60 and over	7,624	9.1	7,762	7.1
Total	84,192	100.0	109,429	100.0

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Falkland Islands

Mr. Arthur Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in view of the fact that the Government of Argentina have debts of millions of £ sterling for the supply of arms and munitions, whether he will ensure that any settlement of the Falkland Islands dispute will provide for settlement of these debts.

Mr. Onslow: The Government will give consideration at the appropriate time to the best means of recovering any outstanding debts.

Council of Europe

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will participate in the conference, to be organised in 1983 by the Council of Europe, on Europe's contribution towards improvement of North-South relations and better preservation of the earth's resources.

Mr. Hurd: Her Majesty's Government have not yet decided whether to participate in the conference.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards the conference of Ministers of Labour of Council of Europe member States due to be held in Paris in 1983; and what his Department is doing in relation to the British contribution.

Mr. Hurd: The exact timing of the conference has yet to be decided. An ad hoc committee of senior officials has been entrusted with the preparation of the conference, and will meet for the first time in Strasbourg from 26 to 28 May. The meeting will be attended by a senior official from the Department of Employment who will be assisted by the United Kingdom permanent delegation to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on progress of the initiatives taken by the Council of Europe in the defence of democracy against terrorism in Europe.

Mr. Hurd: The United Kingdom takes a firm stand against terrorism. We welcome the work undertaken by the Council of Europe. The United Kingdom has ratified the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism and the Suppression of Terrorism Act 1978 gives effect to it. We continue to regard the convention as one of the essential elements in judicial co-operation in the fight against terrorism. The Government therefore support in large measure Assembly recommendation 941, which is shortly to be considered by Ministers' Deputies in Strasbourg.

Arab League (Trade Boycott)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Southend East of 17 May, *Official Report*, c. 56, when the Foreign and Commonwealth Office commenced the practice of authenticating signatures on negative certificates of origin; and if the decision to extend the practice of authenticating signatures on export documents to negative certificates of origin was communicated to chambers of commerce and other commercial bodies.

Mr. Hurd: During the period of the Arab boycott the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have continued their already existing practice of authenticating without exception, at the request of British exporters, the signatures of chamber of commerce officials and notaries public appended to all classes of export document. Chambers of commerce and other commercial bodies have always been aware that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office provide a comprehensive service in the processing of all export documents, including negative certificates of origin.

Inefficiency

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many persons in his Department have been downgraded or disciplined for inefficiency in the years 1980 and 1981 and in the latest period available for 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: In the period January 1980 to April 1982 one officer has been downgraded and 22 others have left the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on grounds of inefficiency. Suitable action, of which we do not have a collective record, has been taken in less serious cases.

Gibraltar

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there have been any further discussions with the Spanish Government on the re-opening of the gates between the Spanish frontier and Gibraltar on 25 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: British and Spanish officials met in Madrid on 19 March to discuss practical aspects of the re-opening of the frontier. Since then further questions of a practical nature have continued to be dealt with through normal diplomatic contacts.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet the Chief Minister of Gibraltar to discuss the implementation of the Lisbon agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: If his other commitments permit, my right hon. Friend hopes to see Sir Joshua Hassan in London on 26 May.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there are plans for any Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister to visit Gibraltar in the near future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: There are at present no plans for a visit.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Laws and Liabilities

Sir Derek Walker-Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will identify any documents signed by the United Kingdom authorities in common with other member States on accession to the European Economic Community pledging adherence to the laws of the Community; and if he will specify any other laws or liability referred to in addition to the European Economic Community Treaty.

Mr. Hurd: Under articles 1 to 4 of the Act annexed to the Treaty of Accession, the United Kingdom accepted the provisions of the original treaties, the acts adopted by the institutions of the Communities and all other decisions and agreements concluded by the original member States relating to the functioning of the Communities or connected with their activities.

DEFENCE

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what effect the United Kingdom task force in the South Atlantic will have on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's ability to ensure collective security at sea in the event of an attack on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Blaker: Ships and aircraft of the task force remain committed to NATO during their deployment in the South Atlantic but are generally at a lower level of availability. The NATO authorities have been informed of these changes. Our Alliance partners fully understand the reasons and there is a great deal of support for our cause.

Departmental Staff (Pay)

Mr. Arthur Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of persons within the Ministry of Defence who are in receipt of incomes in excess of those paid to hon. Members.

Mr. Pattie: Following the 1982 arbitration award, the number of civil servants in the Ministry of Defence on salaries in excess of the salary of a Member of Parliament (£13,950) is 4,083. The Armed Forces are not included in these figures. The 4,083 comprise less than 2 per cent. of the civil servants in MOD.