

ES4/1



LOOSE MINUTE

D/DPR/14/26

PS/PUS~

Copy to: PS/S of S
PS/Minister(AF)
AUS(D Staff)

- 1. I attach a note which maybe of some help for the Chancellor of the Duchy's meeting at 6 pm.

14 June 1982

Neville Taylor
CPR

ES4

HANDLING OF PRESS TRAFFIC FROM THE FALKLANDS

1. There are 28 reporters, cameramen or photographers ashore with the forces in the Falklands, though a few of the correspondents have tended to base themselves in RFAs with MARISAT communication visiting forward units as and when they can by helicopter or other transport.
2. The precise whereabouts of each correspondent or cameraman is not known on a day-to-day basis since press representatives have tended to strike up relationships with individual units and have been moving around as frequently as the forces themselves.
3. When the first phase of operations to take Port Stanley commenced on Thursday/Friday, most of the correspondents were clearly with forward units. Copy and voice-tapes on these initial operations began reaching MOD in the course of Saturday afternoon and evening. Much of the copy gave precise location and detail of units and this was deemed at this end to be prejudicial to operational security at that stage. Accordingly reports emanating from ITN, BBC, Sunday Times, Sunday Telegraph and Observer correspondents were held back with the agreement of Secretary of State and CDS. Editors, or their deputies, and the Heads of TV and radio were informed personally by MOD of the holdup on their copy with a promise to lift the embargo as early as possible on Sunday. The embargo was removed as soon as Secretary of State made his statement on current operations at 1930 on Sunday.
4. Problems of Balance. Throughout the 10 weeks that correspondents have been embarked in ships or, more recently, ashore there has been a constant friction between them, the Public Relations staff accompanying them and the Ministry of Defence in London. It is probably inevitable. Journalists have had a desire to use communications when radio silence was being imposed, they have frequently been frustrated by days on end when copy either could not be cleared or could not be transmitted in the form they wished and they have inevitably voiced their frustrations in the most acrimonious terms to those on the spot and back to their editors in "Service messages". There has, throughout, been the overriding necessity to allow them to file material whenever this would not prejudice the safe outcome of operations which were in progress. There has also been the particular problem of operations in the Falklands that even to name units and operations after they have occurred would in many cases have prejudiced operations which were to follow.
5. Methods of Clearance. Copy is theoretically meant to have been cleared for security aspects before transmission. There have been many occasions, however, when this has clearly not been done. Sometimes this has been because accompanying PROs have been in other locations when correspondents were allowed access to communications. On other occasions it is clear from the way in which copy has been sent back that a less stringent measure of control has been used by units compared with the much tougher view of the operational Commanders at this end. Hard copy transmitted by writing-journalists comes via Telex link in the MOD Press Office and is then passed, after "vetting" at this end, to 18 newspaper, agency, radio or television outlets. Offices are rung individually, told that copy is available at a pick-up point outside the MOD building and, a record is kept of the times which copy is received, when offices are

913-16
A-5/PUSE5
told it awaits their collection, and reminder 'phone calls are made to offices if copy is not picked up within half-an-hour or so.

6. In the case of reports from radio and television reporters, voice-pieces are put over and recorded simultaneously in BBC, ITN, IRN and the copy clearing centre in the MOD. The MOD tape is then played to one of a team of duty officers and discussed, as necessary, with representatives of the appropriate Service (if there is a problem about operational details) and, usually with the Chief of Public Relations. In some cases the tapes are cleared on the spot as soon as they are received. In others, where correspondents have gone into too much operational detail or have mentioned names of units or operational activities which have not been made public, the delay in clearance can take up to an hour or more.

7. Average times of copy clearance. As at 12 noon, on 14 June we had received in the 10 weeks since the task force sailed from UK, 565 signalled despatches and 70 "blocks" of voice-tapes. A "block" is a recording session with a reporter which could consist of one or sometimes three or four individual despatches plus, in some cases, dialogues between a correspondent and a particular programme.

8. It is estimated that something like 1 million words in copy has been transmitted by the correspondents so far. The case of hidden copy average clearance time - in MOD - is between 45 and 90 minutes. This includes security vetting, photocopying, enveloping, telephoning the 18 outlets and placing in the collection point.

9. Latest developments. Because of the particular sensitivity of operations planned over the weekend all press communications on topical copy were withdrawn on the instructions of Secretary of State. This temporary ban was removed by telephone calls to PROs on the spot and by a signal despatched to the Land Force Commander at 5 pm today.

- features were:
- a. Military situation covering the British advance and capture of the 3 mountains mentioned in para 1a.
 - b. Political situation concentrating on the options open to President Galtieri and the Argentine economy.
 - c. Review of the Papal visit.
 - d. Eyewitness account of 4 Skyhawks being shot down.
 - e. Sports report.
 - f. A feature on the more blatant deceit and untruths that have appeared recently in the Argentine media.

Reception/Feedback

4. Monitoring reports from Ascension have now confirmed that Argentine jamming is also being attempted during the morning broadcast. As with their efforts in the evening, the effect of this jamming is very limited and should not unduly interfere with reception in the Falklands.

5. This is another positive indication that RA del 3 broadcasts are proving effective.