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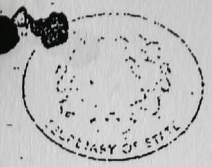

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~XXXXXX~~ 218 2111/5

MO 5/21

12th March 1982

Dear John,

FALKLANDS ISLANDS

The Prime Minister indicated to Mr Nott on Monday evening that she would like to know how quickly RN ships could be deployed to the Falkland Islands. Separately you have written to John Holmes suggesting that the paper which Lord Carrington will put to OD in the near future should address the question of contingency planning. This is in hand and my letter deals only with the limited question of ship deployments.

As to frigates the West Indies guardship, HMS LONDONERRY, is up to 3 weeks sailing time from the Falkland islands. She is, however, essentially a trials ship and carries limited close range armaments. Moreover, she has no dedicated tanker support, so that if ports on the South American coast were denied to her she could not reach the Falklands. This consideration would also apply to the frigate ANDROMEDA currently undergoing trials in the Bahamas.

There are, as the Prime Minister observed, RN ships participating in the NATO Exercise SAFE PASS 82, which continues until 18th March in the Gulf of Mexico and off the Eastern Seaboard of the United States. They are the frigate HMS DANAE (part of STANAVFORLANT) and the nuclear-powered submarine HMS COURAGEOUS. Deployment of HMS DANAE to the Falklands would run into the same problems as that of HMS LONDONDERRY; although a tanker is in attendance it is servicing STANAVFORLANT as a whole and is in any case not a British vessel.

In short, if a frigate were to be deployed to the Falklands, RFA support would also be necessary. Passage time whether from the Caribbean or the UK would be in the order of 20 days. Maintenance of one frigate on station on a semi-permanent, deterrent basis would, in practice, require the deployment of two, in order to allow for maintenance and serviceability.

To complete the picture the Prime Minister will be aware that the Ice Patrol vessel HMS ENDURANCE is at present operating in the region. She is currently off Adelaide Island, within 3 days sailing

A J Coles Esq

time from Port Stanley. She will remain in the South Atlantic until mid-April before returning to the UK. ENDURANCE carries two Wasp helicopters armed with close range missiles and is herself armed with two 20mm Oerlikon guns. The Prime Minister will also know of the permanent Falklands Garrison comprising 42 Royal Marines; they are equipped with light infantry weapons. The annual roulement of the detachment is scheduled to take place between 24th March and 5th April.

I am copying this letter to John Holmes.

Yours sincerely

Nick Evans

(N H R EVANS)

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D/DS5/3/5/71

5/21

APS/S of S

Copy to
PS/Minister(AF)
PS/US of S(AF)
Sec/CNS
Sec/VCNS
PS/DUS(P)
ACDS(Ops)
ACNS(O)
AUS(D Staff)
AUS(NS)
DN Plans
DNOT
Head of DS 11

FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. You asked this morning for a short note for the Secretary of State to send to the Prime Minister indicating how quickly RN ships could be deployed to the Falkland Islands, against the background of the hardening of Argentinian attitudes.

... 2. I attach a factual draft. It does not address the practical difficulties, especially in terms of general RN - and in particular RFA - availability. Nor, of course, does it deal with other possible options, involving the other two Services, for reinforcing the Falklands.

9 March 1982

N H NICHOLLS
Head of DS 5

FALKLAND ISLANDS

The Prime Minister indicated to Mr Mott on Monday evening that she would like to know how quickly RN ships could be deployed to the Falkland Islands. Separately you have written to John Holmes suggesting that the paper which Lord Carrington will put to OD in the near future should address the question of contingency planning. This is in hand and my letter deals only with the limited question of ship deployments.

To complete the picture the PM will be aware that.

2. The Ice Patrol vessel HMS ENDURANCE is at present operating in the region. She is currently off Adelaide Island, within 3 days sailing time from Port Stanley. She will remain in the South Atlantic until mid-April before returning to the UK. ENDURANCE carries two Wasp helicopters armed with close range missiles and is herself armed with two 20mm Oerlikon guns.

3. As to frigates The West Indies guardship, HMS LONDONDERRY, is up to 3 weeks sailing time from the Falkland islands. She is, however, essentially a trials ship and carries limited close range armaments. Moreover, she has no dedicated tanker support, so that if ports on the South American coast were denied to her she could not reach the Falklands. This consideration would also apply to the frigate ANDROMEDA currently undergoing trials in the Bahamas.

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4. In short, if a frigate were to be deployed to the Falklands, RFA support would also be necessary. Passage time whether from the Caribbean or the UK would be in the order of 20 days. Maintenance of one frigate on station on a semi-permanent, deterrent basis would, in practice, require the deployment of

two, in order to allow for maintenance and serviceability.

The Prime Minister will also know of the permanent Falklands Garrison comprising 42 Royal Marines; they are equipped with light infantry weapons. The annual roulement of the detachment is scheduled to take place between 24 March and 5 April.

6. I am copying this letter to /PS/Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary./

Yes

SECRETARY OF STATE

Reference your note on the attached, I spoke to Lord Carrington's office and reminded them of Flag A.

2. This will inevitably become linked with the more immediate concern about Argentinian intentions viz-a-viz the Falklands about which the Prime Minister spoke to you yesterday. You will recall that she asked you whether a frigate could be sent to the islands in order to show a presence. A suggested response is at Flag B and I should be grateful for your agreement to it.

3. As you will see from Flag C the Prime Minister had already asked for some work to be done on contingency planning. The question is whether we should use this suggested report to OD as a peg on which to hang an approach to your colleagues for new money to run on ENDURANCE. The Foreign Office feel that they should wrap all the issues - the political aspects, contingency planning and ENDURANCE - in a paper which they would put to OD in two or three weeks time. There would be some merit in treating ENDURANCE in this way as a purely FCO paper distances us from the argument to some extent (we would, of course, clear the paper in draft). On the other hand the risk would remain that, if your colleagues attention is focused on ENDURANCE at a time when there is some concern about Argentina's intentions we will end up being told to run on the ship wholly or partly at the expense of the defence budget. But this is a risk inherent in an approach at any time and I suggest that we should agree to proceed as the FCO propose.

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9th March 1982

(N H R E)