

For Falklands Islands  
file please

— not to be copied  
or distributed

E36



MINISTER OF STATE FOR  
THE ARMED FORCES

MY PART IN EVENTS LEADING TO THE INVASION OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. Before I left for a visit to Cyprus and Hong Kong on 8 March I do not recall any reports being received in my office of a heightened danger of invasion. Indeed when a report appeared in "The Guardian" of 25 February of an increased danger of military action by Argentine my office asked for enquiries to be made of the FCO whether this report was significant. The reply came back that the FCO did not consider it changed anything.
2. In the preceding months I had on one or two occasions said at Ministerial meetings that I favoured the reprieve of Endurance, but this was rejected on the ground that there were higher priorities. I pointed out that Parliament did not seem to think so, judging by the number of names on an Early Day Motion.
3. The South Georgia incident occurred, I believe, on 19 March, the day after my return from my trip. I do not recall when I first heard of the incident, but it was handled in the Ministry of Defence by Mr Wiggin, who remained in touch with Richard Luce. I remember Mr Wiggin telling me on about 29 March that he had had a disagreement with Mr Luce, who had taken the view that Endurance should not even use her helicopters for reconnaissance for fear of provoking the Argentines.
4. During the period 19-24 March I was very busy with Parliamentary Questions (Top Day 23 March) and the Press Conference on the First Sea Lord's signal to the Fleet (same day) as well as catching up with the backlog accumulated during my ten day absence.
5. The Secretary of State left for the USA on 22 March. He telephoned me on 24 March when I was at the Foreign Office (to talk to Douglas Hurd on another matter) asking for a report on what was happening about Endurance. I said we had moved her to South Georgia at the request of the FCO.
6. When the Secretary of State returned from the USA on the morning of Friday 26 March I telephoned him to put him in the picture about events which had occurred during his absence, especially relating to the First Sea Lord's signal to the Fleet and changes in Local Overseas Allowances in Germany. I mentioned that Endurance was still off

/South Georgia ....

IN CONFIDENCE



South Georgia but that Mr Wiggin was dealing with the question. Mr Wiggin told me he would be giving the Secretary of State a full report himself.

7. Over the weekend of 27-28 March the newspapers reported the despatch of Argentine ships to sea. The Secretary of State called a meeting involving the First Sea Lord on the morning of Monday 29 March and certain discussions were taken involving the movement of ships.

8. On Tuesday 30 and Wednesday 31 March the Secretary of State was on day trips out of London. I attended on 30 March a meeting with Lord Carrington at which further decisions were taken about ship movements.

9. The reports in the newspapers over the weekend of 27-28 March were the first that I recall seeing which suggested that there might be an enhanced danger, compared with the situation which had existed for many years, of an Argentine attack against the Falklands.

*P.B.S.*

5 April 1982

PETER BLAKER

IN CONFIDENCE