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D/DIS(CS)21/52

Mr Desmond Bowen
c/o PS/S of S
Room 6165

APB/S/S

*See by
S/S*

PORT STANLEY AIRFIELD

1. As requested I attach for S of S a note of the possible extension of Port Stanley airfield.

[Handwritten Signature]
 J S ROYCROFT
 A/Hd DIS(CS)

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PORT STANLEY AIRFIELD

1. The original assessment of the time required to extend Port Stanley airfield was made by the Royal Engineers. It is now clear that their assessment was made on the assumption that the extension was to be built to the same standard as the existing runway. Information from DOE has now revealed that, by laying US AM2 aluminium surfacing matting over a level area, the existing runway could be extended to 6,000' from its present 4,100' length. We believe the Argentinians hold AM2 and Argentinian Air Force engineers have experience of laying it in the Falkland Islands in 1971 (with our agreement while Port Stanley airfield was being rehabilitated). The task could be completed within three weeks of the arrival of all the equipment needed.
2. Fuel storage is a limiting factor. There are inadequate facilities at Port Stanley airfield to sustain air operations. But by bringing fuel in drums or tanks from LSTs, or by other means, a significant reserve of aviation fuel could quickly be set up near the airfield.
3. It is therefore now assessed that the Argentinian Mirage III, MirageV and their A4 Skyhawks could operate from Stanley airfield once it has been extended, with almost full payloads. There is only limited parking area but the Argentinians could extend this. It would then be possible for four of these fighter aircraft to be deployed at Stanley. They would of course be highly vulnerable parked in the open on a ~~highly~~ ^{lightly} defended airfield.
4. Further details are attached

ANNEX D TO
DCI'S (15/26
DATED 5 APRIL 1982

AIRFIELDS IN FALKLAND ISLANDS

MINOR STRIPS

1. There are 32 small landing strips in the Falkland Islands. They are mainly grass and they range from 1000 ft to 3000 ft long. They are designed for use by light civil aircraft up to Britten Norman Islander aircraft. Four of them have been drained and were kept open through last winter.

PORT STANLEY AIRFIELD

2. Construction:

- a. The airfield was constructed by a British Civil Engineering Contractor for ODA and was completed in 1977. The existing runway (08/26) is 4100 ft long, 147 ft wide, and was designed for FOKKER F27/F28 aircraft. Design LCN was 25 but the strip is known to be up to LCN 40 in many places. Construction is 300mm of compacted crushed stone mainly on in-situ white sand. The pavement is surfaced with a minimum of 32mm of Asphalt, but it is up to 100mm thick in places.
- b. Aids. RT, WT and HDB.
- c. Lighting. No fixed lighting.
- d. Usage. The existing airfield has been recently repaired and it should be able to take a large number of C130 sorties without serious deterioration. With regular minor repairs it should stand up to heavy usage for several months.
- e. Fuel. No fuel is stored on the airfield. There is a storage capacity of 50,000 litres in Port Stanley Town belonging to the Argentine Air Force. Until the invasion, aircraft refuelling was by bowser.
- f. Aircraft Parking Apron. There is a small asphalt apron (270 ft x 180 ft) near the terminal building. This would be too small to take more than three C130 Hercules, but there is a car park nearby which could be converted by Argentine engineers in a few days, and which could then take additional aircraft.

3. Airfield Development by Argentine Engineers. Argentine Air Force Engineers constructed a temporary airstrip 4000 ft long 50 ft wide in 1971 near Rookery Bay between Port Stanley and the existing airfield. This airstrip was surfaced with US AM2 aluminium surfacing expedient which was lifted and removed from the Falkland Islands in 1978. With the engineer plant available on East Falkland Island, augmented by extra plant which is known

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(Concluded)

to be intransit from Argentina, the Air Force Engineers could level and surface a completely new airstrip on a suitable site like the one previously used at Fockery Bay. Alternatively in 2 to 3 weeks it is estimated that the existing airfield could be extended to 6000 ft maximum if a surfacing expedient such as the US AM2 was imported. We have no knowledge of Argentine ability to provide bulk refuelling facilities on shore. There are several sites near the airport where an LST could beach, and this could be one way of bringing in a large quantity of fuel in drums or tanks. Even if they have no dracones and pillow tanks they could very quickly set up a significant reserve of aviation fuel near the airfield.

4. Argentine Air Force Air Transport Operations from Stanley.
If pressed, the Argentine Air Force should be able to operate C130 Hercules into Stanley Airport carrying a maximum payload of 17000kg. In addition the FOKKER F27 and F28s could fly in fully laden. All this assumes that the aircraft do not refuel at Stanley and that they arrive from the nearest mainland base. Because there is no perimeter track and the apron is restricted, the number of sorties will be limited. They should have no difficulty however in unloading and clearing a minimum of say 12 aircraft per day, which would give an inward airlift in the order of 200 tons of stores per day.

5. Argentine Offensive/Defensive Air Operations. The Argentine Mirage III, Mirage V and their A4 Skyhawks could operate from Stanley Airfield with almost full payloads to defend the island. The limited parking area would again be a problem. If the Argentine Air Force Engineers choose to improve this, however, there is no reason why, say, 4 of these fighter aircraft could not operate from Stanley. The factor most likely to limit the sortie rate is that of fuel supply. With forward planning and the engineer work described above it must therefore be assumed that the Argentine Air Force could give themselves at least some air defence cover.

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APS/S of S

Copies: PS/VCAS
PS/DUS(Air)
ACAS(Ops)
Head of DS8

FALKLANDS DEBATE - WED 7 APRIL

I attach a line to take and background note on the airfield at Port Stanley.

John Peters

JOHN PETERS
AUS(AS)

7 Apr 82

P.S. I shall be on my MOD extension,
7543, until the end of the debate.

J.P.

PORT STANLEY AIRFIELD

Line to Take

The operational usefulness of the airfield is limited by the shortness and poor surface of its runway, the shortage of fuel storage capacity, the lack of landing aids, and the lack of dispersed parking-spaces for aircraft. The Argentinian forces will no doubt try to make good these deficiencies as far and as fast as possible, but whatever construction work is done and other improvements are made it will be difficult to carry out sustained, effective operations from the airfield. In particular, aircraft on the ground would have to be bunched, and would be vulnerable to attack.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The runway at Port Stanley is 4,100 feet long and 147 feet wide, and heavy engineering equipment will be needed to extend it. The short length and poor surface substantially restrict the loads that can be carried by incoming aircraft. (The Governor's remark to Mr Foot about ~~this~~ lack of runway cratering equipment may be quoted in the debate. It would be best not to comment on this. No elaborate means would have been needed to cause some damage, but equally the Argentinian landing party could probably have mended it: the Governor had many preoccupations and it would be wrong to imply criticism that more steps were not taken to obstruct the landing of Argentinian transport aircraft.)

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2. Fuel Storage capacity at the airfield is less than 10,000 gallons; it will be a considerable task to provide bulk-refuelling facilities.

3. Lack of airfield aids prevents 24-hour operations; this is a significant disadvantage given the changeable weather in the Falklands.

4. Besides Port Stanley airfield, there is a number of small landing strips in the Falkland Islands: these are mainly grass, up to 3,000 feet long, designed for use by light civil aircraft such as the Britten Norman Islander. Four were kept open throughout last winter.