

RESTRICTED

Maps (AF)
E51

Minister

spills

SAPU(82)1

SOUTH ATLANTIC PRESENTATION UNIT (SAPU)

Attached is the first of a series of papers suggesting lines for Ministers to take in public on Falkland Islands questions. A particular objective is to provide material for counteracting false or damaging stories in the media about military or diplomatic developments.

The Prime Minister approved the attached notes on the evening of 10 April.

The suggested lines on military questions reflect a decision by the Ministry of Defence to decline, for operational reasons, to comment in detail on the composition, capabilities and objectives of the military units concerned.

This series is being sent to Private Secretaries to all Members of the Cabinet, to the Press Office in No 10, the News Department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and Defence Public Relations. Private Secretaries will wish to consider further distribution within Departments including Ministers and Parliamentary Private Secretaries.

Cabinet Office

11 April 1982

we must watch out about the line taken in para 6, which is inaccurate unless the word operational is inserted as above, in 2 places.

We did tell SAPU ?

*Maps
15/4*

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LINE TO TAKE

(1) THE TASK FORCE

Cannot add to the official statement already made about composition, capabilities, and objectives of the Task Force - these are highly sensitive operational matters and lives are at stake.

Specific Questions

Nuclear depth charges?

- We never comment on such matters.

Numbers/dispositions of submarines?

- You will understand that I cannot comment on that.

Minesweepers in the Task Force?

- We are well prepared for the problems we expect to encounter. } ?

Capability in winter conditions?

- Our forces will be capable of operating in the conditions likely to be encountered.

Ability to resupply?

- The same applies to resupply.

Technical difficulties?

- Bound to be minor problems, but Task Force has a self-maintenance capability.

Reinforcement?

- We are, of course, considering the question of relieving and sustaining the Task Force but I cannot go into detail.

(2) EC EMBARGO ON IMPORTS INTO COMMUNITY FROM ARGENTINA AND ARMS EXPORTS

Greatly welcome these decisions. Discussion in political committee in Brussels on 10 April marked by unusually strong and encouraging expression of European solidarity. No attempt by anyone to quibble about details. Many representatives quoted from statements of condemnation of Argentinian aggression already made by their Governments.

(3) LETTER FROM FALKLAND ISLAND'S PUBLIC SERVANTS REQUESTING EVACUATION OF POPULATION

We have not yet seen the original of this letter and cannot therefore be certain that it is genuine although the Governor thinks that it may well be so. The signators are expatriate administrators and not elected representatives. The Governor yesterday stated his belief that 90 per cent of the Islanders would rather stay despite the risks.

(4) CARLISLE'S ALLEGATION THAT THE MAJORITY OF FALKLANDERS DO NOT WANT BRITAIN TO TAKE MILITARY ACTION

We have only seen press reports of Mr Edmund Carlisle's statement

(made in Argentina). Mr Carlisle has not tried to get in touch with us direct and we do not know whether he intends to do so.

(5) THE SOVEREIGNTY ISSUE (ALLEGED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MINISTERS)

There are no differences between Ministers. We are in no doubt of Britain's sovereign rights. These remain unaltered although the British Administration in the Falkland Islands has temporarily been overthrown. The Government's firm objective is to see that the Falkland Islands are freed from occupation and returned to British Administration at the earliest possible moment. There can be no negotiations with the Argentinians about the future of the Falklands before their troops are withdrawn. In such negotiations as may follow the withdrawal of Argentinian troops it will remain the fundamental and unalterable position of the British Government that the wishes of the Islanders are paramount in any discussion of their future status. It is their right to decide their own future and their own way of life. It is precisely those rights that have been removed by the unwarranted military action, and it is those rights which we shall restore.

[(6) UK MILITARY]

(6) UK MILITARY CAPABILITY: ALLEGED WEAPINESS DUE TO GOVERNMENT CUTS

The review of defence expenditure has not weakened the Royal Navy. Best proof of this is the task force now steaming towards the South Atlantic. Expenditure on the conventional navy has increased by £3 billion in real terms since 1979 and is also greater as a proportion of the Defence budget. We will continue to spend more on the conventional navy even when the Trident programme reaches its peak and there will be more major ships and submarines in 1985 than today.

Specific allegations

HMS Invincible to be sold to Australia immediately?

- HMS Invincible will not be handed over until late 1983, after HMS Illustrious has entered service.

HMS Invincible's avionics removed?

- Quite untrue, HMS Invincible remains fully operational.

Carriers to be scrapped?

- HMS Invincible is to be handed over to Australia in late 1983 when HMS Illustrious enters service and HMS Hermes will be run on until HMS Ark Royal enters service. Two carriers will be kept in service continuously.

Reduced ship numbers?

- By 1985 there will be an increase in the total number of major warships and submarines *operational*.