

*But as supplied
 let Bill to Fed in response
 to No. 10's request for extent
 of US assistance.*

General

Mid 87 855



The US operate Wideawake airfield on Ascension under the terms of a US/UK Government agreement. The Americans have no form of sovereignty in Ascension and accordingly the UK Government is entitled to exercise all rights as a sovereign including the right to operate its military aircraft. The agreement gives the Americans no right to veto any operation in which the UK wishes to use the airfield.

US Assistance in Ascension

The US provides normal aircraft handling, refuelling, and base facilities during the airfield's operating hours (8 hours a day, weekdays only). In the normal way the RAF use Ascension infrequently - about one flight per month.

Since Operation Corporate began we have used some 296,300 UK gallons of fuel. Currently there are 829,400 UK galls still available to us. This will sustain projected Hercules, VC 10 and Nimrod sorties until 16 May (at the current level of operations). Resupply of 1,570,000 UK galls is due on 24 April.

If the use of US refuelling facilities was withdrawn RAF operations in Ascension would have to cease as it would be impractical to bring bulk storage tanks from the UK. It might be argued that to withhold supplies would constitute a veto which would be against the spirit of the agreement, although it is not

specific about fuel.

Since the start of Operation Corporate the airfield opening hours have been extended to fit in with military needs. If normal operating hours were enforced this would severely restrict operations.

Forecast Assistance required from US

Fuel There will be a continuing need for sufficient fuel and other facilities at Ascension to meet the needs of the operation including extended airfield opening hours. The likely scale of operations cannot, of course, be forecast at present.

RETAINED UNDER
SECTION 3(4)

SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS

1. SHF COMMUNICATIONS FOR SURFACE SHIPS.

Under the terms of a MOU with the US, we are provided with access to their Defence Satellite Communication System (DSCS). In return the MOD provides :

- a. full use of the Satellite Telemetry and Command Station, Oakhanger,
- b. manning for US Satellite Ground Terminals in the UK at Croughton and Thurso and,
- c. Radio relay facilities in Germany. ^{NP} Access to the US DSCS provides our only means of communicating with surface ships through SHF. There are no other Military SHF Satellites providing cover in the Operation CORPORATE area.

2. Were the DSCS facility withdrawn there would be a marked reduction in the communications effectiveness of Operation CORPORATE.

3. UHF COMMUNICATIONS FOR SUBMARINES

The SSIIXS Agreement. In 1978 negotiations to purchase the US Submarine Satellite Information Exchange System (SSIIXS) for use in RN submarines were successfully undertaken. To date, equipment for the majority of UK submarines and the Northwood Communications terminal, has been purchased and installed. The system, providing rapid access high speed communications with submarines, depends entirely on allocation of access on the US 'FleetSatCom' UHF satellite. This access has been negotiated through the renting of one satellite channel from the Comsat General Corporation of the USA. This is a standard annual rental agreement and has nothing to do with the current operation.

4. Under the terms of the SSIIXS Agreement the UK has an option to rent a further channel and negotiations are continuing to this end. Again, this is a planned expansion of the facility and is not tied to Operation Corporate.

5. Satellite failure or the withdrawal of SSIIXS would pose considerable difficulty in maintaining communications with SSNs. The effects cannot be quantified without more experience of the effectiveness of transmitters at Bilbao (Panama) and Waiown (New Zealand), and at Halifax and Ascension.

6. Additional Communications Facilities. The following additional facilities have been negotiated with the USN during Operation Corporate. They provide for enhancements to submarine communications and, although in this instance have been called up for the operation in progress, are within the normal range of facilities provided by the US from time to time:-

- a. Satellite Communications - Routeing on a USN Fleet Satellite Communications channel. (An arrangement established under an MOU for SNCP Operations).
- b. Terrestrial Communications - Re-radiation/retransmission of super-encrypted messages for submarines on LF and HF from Balboa, Panama and Driver, Connecticut.

MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM US

There is no military assistance to the British Army provided by the US which affects Operation CORPORATE. So far no special assistance has been provided as a result of the Falklands crisis.

The Army have one proposal for special assistance from the US. This is the purchase of STINGER missiles. STINGER is an anti-aircraft weapon similar to BLOWPIPE but with better operating characteristics. There is no alternative source from which a similar weapon could be procured, and it cannot be substituted from British stocks.

CONFIDENTIAL

WEATHER

In the normal course of events the US provide Satellite pictures to CINCFLEET which include the South Atlantic and Falklands area. No special assistance has been provided for Operation CORPORATE nor do we intend to ask for any.

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St. Helena
St. Vincent
& the Grenadines (DE 11)

AMERICAN BASE ON ASCENSION

1. The United States forces constructed Wideawake airfield on Ascension in 1942 under an informal agreement between the British and American Governments. On 25 June 1956 an Agreement was signed to give the United States the right to establish certain installations on Ascension in connection with the extension of the Bahamas Long Range Missile Proving Ground. The Agreement ran until 20 July 1975 but remains in force thereafter on a year by year basis until either Government gives one year's notice of its intention to terminate the Agreement.

2. The Americans do not have any form of sovereignty on Ascension which remains under British rule. Accordingly, the United Kingdom Government is entitled to exercise all rights as a sovereign in Ascension, including the right to operate its military aircraft, except in so far as this exercise would derogate from the rights specifically granted to the United States under the Agreement. There is nothing in the Agreement which gives the United States any exclusive rights over the areas, which we assume includes the airfield, which are the subject of the Agreement. Access to the sites is permitted to unauthorised persons only by consent of the British Administrator and the American Base Commander, but this provision, which is intended to deal with security, is not considered relevant to the use of the airfield by United Kingdom forces.

3. Article XXI requires the United Kingdom Administrator to liaise with the United States Base Commander on the execution of the Agreement in its application to specific situations, but this would not give the Americans the right to veto any operation where we wished to use the airfield.