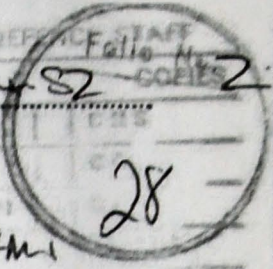


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Secretary-of State

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RAF INVOLVEMENT IN OPERATION CORPORATE

I have already mentioned to you some of the ideas for supporting Operation Corporate which we are pursuing in the RAF, in addition to the extensive Air Transport operations which have all gone to schedule. A great deal of work is now in hand, not only at MOD and Headquarters, but on Stations too, as aircraft are modified, and crews are trained for unaccustomed roles. I believe you will find the following resume of this work of interest. The feasibility of some of the schemes listed below has still to be proved, and some of the times might change, but I am confident that we will be able to enlarge our capabilities very considerably in the next few weeks. Whether any particular plan will in the event be employed will of course have to be examined by the Chiefs of Staff and there are some aspects which will undoubtedly need to be cleared with Ministers at an appropriate time.

Harriers

2. There are 5 RAF Harrier pilots embarked on the Task Group. Further pilots are training for deck operations with the Navy at Yeovilton. British Aerospace are working urgently on the modifications required to allow RAF Harriers to operate from Carriers. To minimise corrosion problems, we plan to fly these aircraft out to Ascension, using in-flight refuelling, for embarkation on the 'Atlantic Conveyor'.

Nimrods

3. Two Nimrod Mk 2s are based at Ascension and are conducting surveillance sorties in support of the Task Group. At present their maximum radius of action is 1,800 miles for supply drops or 1½ hours on task at a range of 1,500 miles for surveillance. However, we are now equipping 2 Nimrods with an air-to-air refuelling capability. This should be complete in 3 weeks, though some crew training will then be required before the system can be used in the South Atlantic. Given the necessary tanker support, Nimrod surveillance in support of the Task Group will then be considerably extended. By the end of this week 2 Nimrods should also have been modified to carry Stingray torpedos.

/Victors

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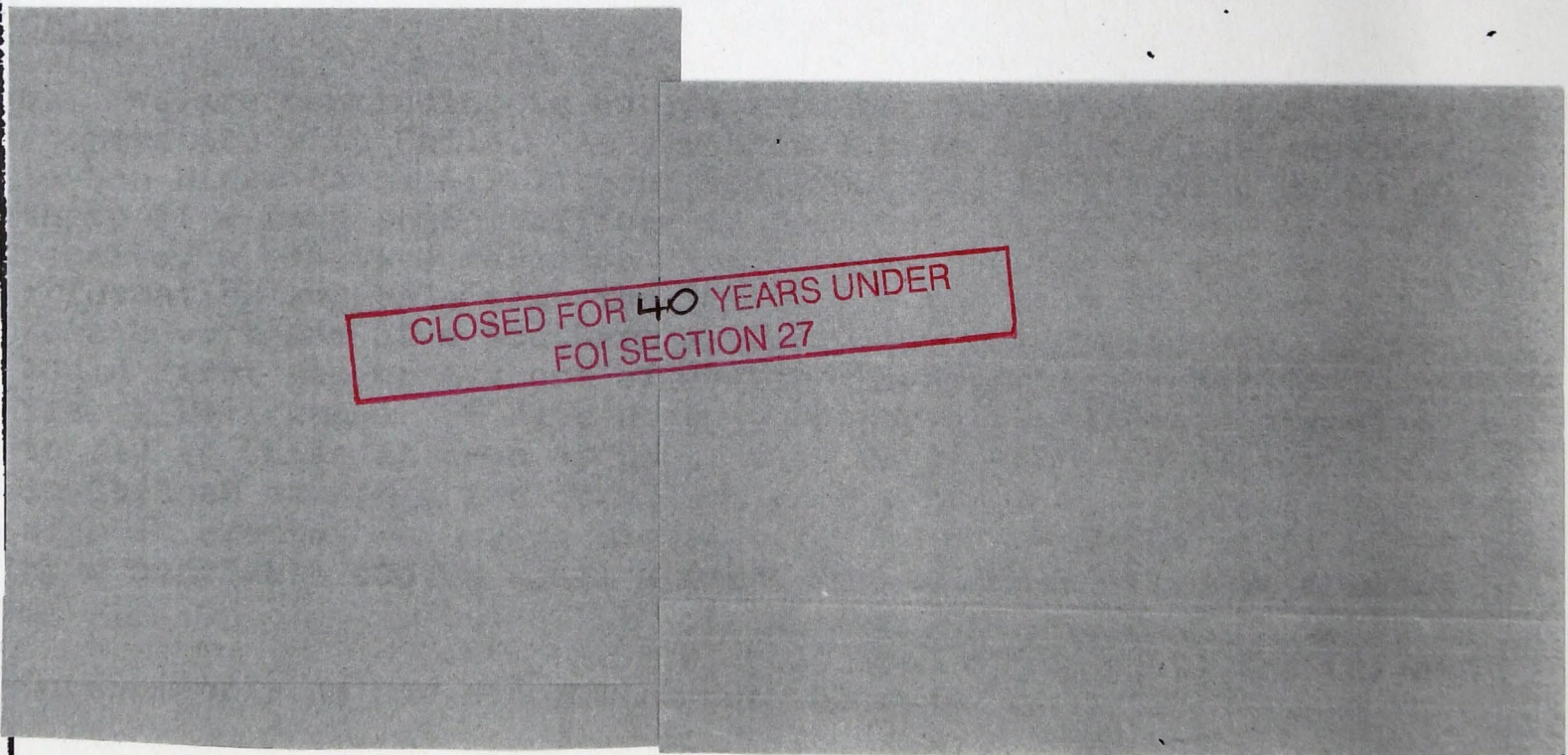


Victors

4. The Victor Tanker force is crucial to the success of any air operation in the South Atlantic area launched from Ascension, though the distances involved pose technical difficulties. To overcome these we are fitting improved navigation aids (taken from the ex-British Airways VC10s) and radar equipment into some of the Victors. Four of them are also being fitted with cameras. This will give them a capability to carry out visual surveillance and photo reconnaissance. Intensive crew training is underway and we plan to have this capability ready for use by 20 April with the object of giving reconnaissance cover over South Georgia for Operation Paraquet. I will be minuting you separately on this to seek your approval since if one of the air-to-air refuellings on the return leg should go wrong, the Victor would have to land in Brazil.

Vulcans

5. 10 Vulcans have been equipped so far with air-to-air refuelling systems and adapted for the delivery of conventional weapons. Vulcan pilots are already training in air-to-air refuelling and some bombing practice with live 1,000lb bombs is planned. This capability could be available by 23rd April. This will enable us, operating from Ascension and supported by Victor tankers, to pose a threat to the Argentine mainland and, if badly needed, to bomb Port Stanley airfield. We are also examining the possibility of using Vulcans for mining Argentine ports. The Vulcan force is due to disband on 30 June 1982. In view of its potential use in Operation Corporate I am reviewing our plans and will minute you separately about keeping the Vulcans in service.



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FOI SECTION 27

/Port Stanley



Reference.....

Port Stanley

7. Finally you may be interested to know that I have just seen the two RAF Senior NCOs who came out of the Falkland Islands on 13 April. With good technical minds they have I believe done a splendid job in observing the operations of the Argentinian Forces particularly their Air Force. They have given good information on the armament, equipment and aircraft flown in. Of particular note is that the Argentinians have extended only the parking area of the airfield and have so far made no attempt to extend the runway. Unless they do, they will not be able to operate combat aircraft which could pose a threat to the Task Group.

Rt Hon. Mr. Secretary  
Foreign Office  
Downing Street  
London SW1

16th April 1982

CAS

The Falkland Islands Government has been advised of the legal position on which the Government is based in respect of the Falkland Islands. The Government is aware of your interest in the Falkland Islands and the points on which your legal advice is requested. These are:

- a. Is the position in respect of the Falkland Islands other than as stated above?
- b. Is the current legislation referred to above legally established in the Falkland Islands? (We have not seen the statute, but your confirmation is sufficient?)
- c. Even if the law established is sinking an Argentine (or other) merchant ship, would we need to give a prior warning?