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LOOSE MINUTE

D/DPR/14/26

PS/Secretary of State

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Head of DS11 ✓  
CPO

PR FACILITIES FOR OPERATION PARAQUET

1. I have been thinking about how best we might arrange press and PR facilities in the event of OPERATION PARAQUET. As with news of any naval engagements it will be of cardinal importance for us to get across the announcement of the operation as early as possible and certainly before Argentina makes its own announcement. There will also be immense national as well international press interest and a voracious press appetite for details of the operation as and when they become available.
2. I would suggest the following press and media facilities:
  - a. A short factual announcement of the operation immediately it is possible to make it. This could be confined initially to only a few basic statements. I suggest that the same procedures for releasing of the information are followed as are already set down for news of a naval engagement (PS/Secretary of State's minute MO/5/21 dated 13 Apr 82). I would very much hope that it is not thought necessary to wait until Parliament is informed first since almost inevitably this will cause a delay - perhaps a substantial one - and would allow the Argentinian perspective on the operation to be put first to the world press.
  - b. After the initial announcement and as soon as we have sufficient details and confidence of the outcome, we should, I suggest, lay on a press conference for the world press and media. How we handle the situation will

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depend of course a very great deal on how the operation has developed but certainly in the hope of a complete success I propose that we should lay on a full scale press briefing for the world's press (with TV coverage). At this stage it would I think be preferable to retain the appearance of a military briefing and I would suggest therefore that I should introduce a middle rank officer from the DSC to give a military style briefing and answer questions from the press. I would be in the chair to control the questions. Since the press briefing would be televised I would not propose that the briefers should give separate media interviews but that if thought desirable such interviews could then be given by Ministers.

X  
3. I would be grateful for guidance from the Secretary of State as to whether he agrees with the general lines of the press facilities I propose, accepting of course that these must remain tentative until the timing and outcome of the operation are clear. If these lines of guidance are agreed it would also be useful if DS11 in conjunction with the DSC and appropriate parts of the department would prepare a draft announcement on Operation Paraquet so that when we come in the light of events to put together the final announcement a great deal of the spade work will already have been done.

19 Apr 82

*I S McDonald*

I S McDONALD  
DCPR



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MO 5/21

21 APR 1982  
 MINISTER OF DEFENCE

DCPRPR FACILITIES FOR OPERATION PARAQUET

The Secretary of State was grateful for your minute of 19th April, and he discussed it briefly with you this afternoon. The Secretary of State agrees with the broad conclusions which you set out in your minute for the handling of PR for Operation Paraquet. The Secretary of State does not believe we should go out of our way to try to up the PR stakes for this Operation: it will generate its own interest. If timing permits the Secretary of State believes we should consider trying to arrange a very early statement in Parliament (which need not be at 3.30pm provided that the House is sitting). Otherwise we must be ready with a short factual announcement of the Operation immediately it is possible to make it. The Secretary of State believes that this should be flat in tone and factual in content.

2. The Secretary of State agrees that we should respond thereafter to pressure to have a press conference, and that you should hold this with support from experts (say at 1-Star level) but not elevated further. The Secretary of State would not favour separate media interviews by these experts, although much would depend upon the circumstances at the time.

3. The Secretary of State agrees that material should be worked up urgently to reduce the time needed to react to news of the Operation becoming public. He believes we should be ready with the main lines of the low-key statement, having established in advance such questions as whether the presence of the SAS and SBS are admitted. He also believes we should be ready with a very strong statement on the UK sovereignty of these particular islands where our claim is indisputable. The Secretary of State would be grateful if the Head of DS11 could co-ordinate the preparation of this material.

20th April 1982

*DBO*  
 (D B OMAND);  
 PS/S of S