Defence Dept. Defence Dept.

Mr Weston

Do you wish to take this further?

[illegible] 20/4

Sh'd we take this further? CDS 20/4 PS PS/Mr Onslow PS/PUS Mr Gifford Mr Wright Mr Ure Mr Gillmore S.A.D. [illegible] 20/4

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~930 7022~~ 218 2111/3

SECRETARY OF STATE

MO 5/21

20th April 1982

Mr Holmes

There is plenty of material here. But we have won our main point, and I do not see any need to pursue this particular case to the death. [illegible] 22/4

Mr Weston Thank you [illegible] 23/4

Dear Brian,

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR SSNs

T.S 12/6/84 No trace

Many thanks for your letter of 16th April: I am glad to have this opportunity of clearing up any misunderstandings there may have been about Rules of Engagement.

I think you are aware of the essential distinction between the catalogue of Rules of Engagement which are issued in advance to HM Ships prior to any operation and the selection of some specific set of Rules for implementation. The catalogue is designed to cater for those circumstances which are judged by the Naval Staff as possibly arising during the operations. The language used in the catalogue will be familiar to the Naval officers who have to use it since it is based on long-standing naval instructions which cover the whole range of possible scenarios from fishery protection to nuclear war. By having a catalogue well understood in advance by those concerned it is possible at very short notice to translate Ministerial decisions on the political direction of operations - for example in response to new intelligence - into specific orders immediately understood by those on the spot. The ad hoc meeting of Ministers on 15th April to which you refer was in fact a good example of how the system works. Because the submarine was already conversant with the catalogue of Rules it was possible to implement Ministers wishes on the SSN operation very quickly indeed - a point of equal importance both to Ministers and to the submariners themselves.

The particular catalogue of Rules of Engagement for the SSNs was the subject of discussion in the Chiefs of Staff Committee, at which the FCO is, of course, represented, at an early stage in this emergency, and on 6th April the Chief of the Defence Staff, submitted the Chiefs of Staff view on the catalogue to my Secretary of State - a copy of this minute went to your Defence Department. Following the Defence Secretary's agreement, also copied to Defence Department, the Navy Department signalled the catalogue to the military Commanders concerned and in doing so correctly described it as "a list from which specific rules will be promulgated or may be sought". The first such selection of Rules was made as a result of the OD(SA) 3rd meeting.

B J P Fall Esq

Perhaps I can comment here on what you described as textual variations between OD(SA)(82)5 and the Rules of Engagement. Let me assure you that the problem, if there really is one, was not that the results of Ministerial discussion were not being accurately reflected in instructions given; it was rather that the precise naval instructions had been paraphrased in the Secretaries paper, OD(SA)(82)5 in order to bring out clearly in every day language the issue for consideration by Ministers.

The other point I ought to make is the general one that for complex operations (such as Paraquet) it is essential for the Force Commander to have the specific selection of Rules of Engagement (as approved by Ministers) well in advance. This is to give him time to draw up his plans for the operation and brief his subordinate Commanders - the ROE are a vital input into his planning. But of course Ministerial approval of the specific ROE does not imply approval for the operation itself - which is a separate decision. We therefore have the threefold process:

✓ ministers?

a. existing catalogue of appropriate Rules, which Force Commanders are thoroughly conversant with;

b. Ministerial decision on specific Rules for a planned operation;

c. Ministerial decision on the operation itself.

Please do let me know if there is anything more that we can do to clarify these, admittedly complicated, questions.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours ever,
David

(D B OMAND)