

MAIN POINTS FROM CHIEFS OF STAFF MEETING ✓ 18

The Victor reconnaissance mission went well with 5 in-flight refuellings. A number of small radar contacts in the vicinity of South Georgia were made and the assessment is that these were various fishing vessels.

2. Agreement was given for DCPR to brief defence correspondents about adaption of sidewinder missiles for RAF Harriers.

3. CNS said that Rules of Engagement for maritime blockade were being prepared by the Navy Department. They would need to be cleared by OD(SA) on Monday.

4. The possibilities for declaring an Air Exclusion Zone would need to be addressed fairly quickly.

5. There was extensive discussion of the timetable for the sailing of the amphibious force. The issue is whether the force should sail as soon as possible (23rd April) or should delay until the 29th. In favour of moving as soon as possible were 2 points. Firstly, the momentum of the operation would be seen to be being maintained. It would soon become apparent (by the weekend?) if the force was holding at Ascension and some reason for this would need to be given publicly. Secondly, holding the force would have the effect of denying Ministers the option of operations short of a full scale landing on the islands, until it arrived. On the other hand there were strong military reasons in favour of holding the sailing until the 29th. This would allow it to meet up with the 2 Para Group at Ascension and sail as an integrated force which would arrive at the Falklands to meet CINCFLEET's preferred date for a landing of the 16th May. Atlantic Conveyor with the Harriers would also be available then. Ascension was a very suitable air head and provided opportunities for shore training. If the force sailed early and was held off the Falklands these opportunities would not be available. The weather would also be significantly worse, with the problem of icebergs. For these reasons the Committee would recommend that, if a full scale landing on the Falklands was to be considered, it would be desirable to hold the sailing of the amphibious group until the 29th. They recognised however that Ministers would wish to take into account the presentational disadvantages of such a delay and also the limitations on operations short of a full scale landing which would be entailed.

none really, |
I think as long as we have declared a sea & air blockade.

21st April 1982