

D/NLC/19/1/2

PS/USofS(AF) -

- Copy to:
- VCDS(P&L) for SCPL1
- Sec/2SL
- DGNFS
- DNOT
- DGST(N)
- CGRM
- DS5
- DNSC
- DS14
- DGST(N)
- PS4Cas(A)
- AR9(PAF)
- CM(GC)
- DPO(N)
- CPO
- AGsec
- S10(Air)

USofS(Air) distribution:

ARs/s of S ←
PS/Minister (AF)

SW 5575

FALKLAND ISLANDS OPERATION - REPATRIATION OF BODIES

1. Your Minister will wish to know that CINCFLEET has been informed, on the advice of the Staff Medical Officer to the Task Force Commander, that in the event of fatal casualties being sustained during the operations it would be impracticable to repatriate bodies because of major logistic problems. MOD has confirmed to CINCFLEET that remains should be buried at sea, as proposed. Army and RAF authorities in MOD have been notified.
2. This is the only practical course of action available should large scale fatalities occur during sea engagements where ships are operating from a remote base. Ships cannot normally be spared to repatriate bodies, which should be buried reasonably quickly to avoid health hazards and morale problems. However, the possibility of limited repatriations by utilising deep freeze facilities onboard HM Ships, RFA's and Merchant Vessels prior to airlifting to the UK is being pursued separately.
3. Should military operations take place on land, and provided that HM Forces are not compelled to retreat and evacuate the Islands, it would be in accordance with the usual practice to recover bodies where possible, after the battle and bury them in single or multiple graves for recovery at a later date. In the event of British Forces landing on the Islands and being forced to retreat and evacuate, bodies would be recovered, where this proved feasible, for either burial at sea or repatriation. Under the terms of the Geneva Conventions to which Argentina is a party, where it is not possible to recover the bodies, the enemy are required to accord proper respect to war dead, providing grave sites which should be maintained and marked. Furthermore, and as soon as circumstances permit, the Argentinians would be required to conclude agreements to facilitate access to the grave sites by relatives of the deceased and by representatives of official graves registration services, to protect and maintain such grave sites

CONFIDENTIAL

permanently; and to facilitate the return of the remains of the deceased upon the request of the next of kin.

4. It is, further, conceivable that some limited repatriation of bodies may also be possible eg by RAF aircraft should deaths occur at Ascension Island either as a result of an accident or after medical evacuation there. The RAF have their own Central Casualty System in the event of large scale aircraft accidents when arrangements are in hand to flyout a team of embalmers from Kenyon's Ltd Undertakers based in London for burial locally or repatriation to the UK. The feasibility of undertaking a similar scheme for the Ascension Islands is being pursued.

5. Enquiries are also being made as to the practicabilities of repatriating bodies from other countries, whether storage/cremation facilities would be available in the Falkland Islands; and whether a team of embalmers could be provided for the Falkland Islands.

6. Finally the local Commander is in the best position to exercise his judgement on whether repatriation is practicable and these decisions must be left to his discretion having regard to guidance from MOD. The options of limited repatriation by either sea or air are, as stated in earlier paragraphs, under active consideration.

Mitchell

NLC2
NA 216 7621 MB

27 Apr 82

J. Ridley

21st April 1982

(J RIDLEY) (NLC2)
APC/S of S

CONFIDENTIAL