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H. Gilbertson: 27/6/84

Secretary of State (12)

PH

P J Weston
Thames

Private Secretary ✓

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c.c. PS/PUS

Mr Wright

Mr Gillmore

J.H. Jones
22/4

ODSA 22 APRIL

I submit a brief for the Secretary of State's use at ODSA tomorrow, on lines discussed at a meeting held by the PUS this evening, which followed earlier discussion in Sir Robert Armstrong's group attended by Sir A Acland.

P J Weston

P J Weston
Defence Department

21 April, 1982



BRIEF FOR ODSA : 0945 ON 22 APRIL

DECISION ON SAILING OF AMPHIBIOUS GROUP FROM ASCENSION

A decision is needed on whether to order the main part of the amphibious group (3 Commando Brigade, 3 Para) to sail from Ascension on 23 April (arriving Falklands 7 May); or whether to delay its sailing until 29 April. In the latter event it would arrive at the Falklands on 16 May, but would also have been joined by the reinforcement of 2 Para Battalion group. In either event, the decision on the sailing date is without prejudice to a subsequent decision by Ministers on whether Operation Sutton should take place.

Line to take

It is recommended that a sailing from Ascension Island of the first part of the amphibious group on 23 April will be preferable.

Background

There is something to be said for keeping up the steady momentum of the force build-up around the Falklands. Given the increasing uncertainty about the feasibility of Operation Sutton as currently devised, it probably also makes sense to divide up the amphibious group by sailing 3 Commando Brigade plus 3 Para on 23 April, rather than waiting for 2 Para (and the second assault landing ship INTREPID) to catch up. If a full assault with the maximum forces available is subsequently contemplated, the first part of the amphibious group can always hold off for a week at the Falklands for the second part to join it. If on the other hand it is decided to use the first part of the amphibious group for more selective purposes, it may also make sense to hold back 2 Para at Ascension with a view to subsequent rotation if earlier forces need to be relieved after a month or two. Further background is given in CDS' minute of 19 April to Mr Nott (copy attached).

DECISION ON EMPLOYMENT OF PR9 CANBERRAS

As earlier agreed, two Canberra PR9 photo reconnaissance aircraft are on the way to Chile. A decision is needed now on their employment over the Falklands to meet the earliest operational date of 25 April.

Line to Take

The use of the Canberra should be approved.

Background

The background is set out in Mr Nott's letter to the Prime Minister of 18 April, copy attached.