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APS/Secretary of State

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USE AND STATUS OF ASCENSION ISLAND

1. You asked for a note about the response to CINCFLEET's signal of 22 April in which he outlined some of the difficulties currently being experienced in Ascension and in paragraphs 5 and 6 made some proposals which he considered might alleviate the problem.
2. The PAOs Committee discussed this signal this afternoon and reached the conclusions set out below.
3. The main logistic and support difficulties mentioned in the signal are well appreciated and remedial action is in hand; meanwhile the problems are not insuperable and the situation is being carefully monitored and contained. One factor has been the rapid build up on the Island and this in turn has led to restricting numbers to an absolute minimum thus squeezing out administrative support personnel. It is anticipated that the position will become more stable during the coming week.
4. The Commander of the British Forces Support Unit (CBFSU), a Naval Captain, who reports to VCDS(P&L), is to be asked for his views with particular regard to the load on US personnel and to try and expose any further aspects not appreciated in London. Further assistance particularly to the Americans will then be offered.
5. As regards the wider issue of the agreement covering our use of Ascension Island, it is accepted that no effort should be made to change the current arrangements while they are apparently working so well. As you know, Mr Eagle burger confirmed only yesterday that there could be no objection to our deploying Vulcan

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aircraft to Ascension, a view which he confirmed after consulting his legal adviser, and he has informed the Pentagon accordingly. We will try to ensure that this message passes through the US Chain of Command to Ascension.

6. Finally, the command arrangements on Ascension Island, mentioned in para 6 of the signal, are being watched but will largely depend on the future role of Ascension in Operation Corporate.

23 Apr 82

*R J Harding*  
R J HARDING  
Head of DS8