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OPERATION CORPORATE - HMS ILLUSTRIOUS

The attached Note will be tabled by  
CNS for consideration by the Chiefs of Staff  
at their meeting at 5.00 pm on call this  
evening, Friday 30 April 1982.

Attachment:

Operation CORPORATE - HMS ILLUSTRIOUS (2 pages).

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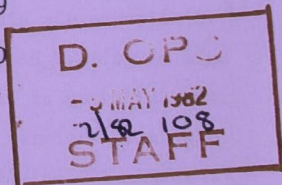
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30 April 1982

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COS RU5(3)



Draft for CDS to Secretary of State

957

OPERATION CORPORATE - HMS ILLUSTRIOUS

You have already agreed (1) that the operational and support planning should be based on 6 months duration of operations in the area; assuming 25% battle attrition.

2. Against this background the Navy Department has been examining the scope for inter alia, bringing forward the completion of ships and submarines under construction to acceptance standards; bringing forward ships in refit; and postponing planned refits and dockings of operational ships.

3. On current plans the Navy Department envisage accepting HMS ILLUSTRIOUS two T42s and one T22 earlier than planned. They are also examining the scope for completing early the refits of nine warships, submarines and RFAs and re-activating five frigates which have already paid off.

4. HMS ILLUSTRIOUS is of particular importance because of the necessity to maintain, at all times, local air superiority within the Total Exclusion Zone. This can only be achieved by the presence of at least one and, if the Argentinian air threat has not been substantially reduced, two carriers. In order to ensure that this air superiority can be sustained over a 6 month period (and bearing in mind the assumed attrition rate) I consider it is essential that CINCFLEET should have three operational carriers available as soon as possible. This will permit INVINCIBLE and/or HERMES to be relieved in case of action damage and for

(1) M05/21 of 27 April 1982

essential maintenance and defect repair. Acceptance of HMS ILLUSTRIOUS is currently planned for September this year. I have ascertained that it is possible to bring this forward to 18 June, which would permit an operational date of 2 August. This entails an additional shipbuilding cost of some £350K., which is within the existing contingency margin for the ship.

5. This matter has become urgent because of a concurrent submission to Minister (DP) to fit HMS ILLUSTRIOUS with an American close-in weapon system - the Vulcan Phalanx. If this system is to be fitted in time to meet the advanced operational date for HMS ILLUSTRIOUS, the USA needs a decision urgently.

6. I should be grateful for your very early endorsement of these preparations and, in particular, of the plan to bring forward the acceptance date of HMS ILLUSTRIOUS to 18 June.