

CONFIDENTIAL covering SECRET HVCCO

Reference R/0148RP/8608/20/2..

4 May 1982

(Handwritten initials)

DO ✓

EMERGENCY SIGINT BRIEFING - FALKLANDS GOVERNOR

- 49 on Pt II

- References: a. R/0135RP//8608/20/2 of 19 April 1982
b. ZCZ4/11 of 23 April 1982 - *attached*

Reference b. is Robert Flower's response to reference a., and is copied to you herewith. Also attached is a copy of R10's comments on the response, which is quite unsatisfactory. However, I see no advantage in continuing an argumentative correspondence on the matter - reference a. had been intended to put the matter to bed after a mild protest. As we agreed by telephone the best course seems to be for you to have a brief word with Robert Flower next time you see him - except that if I happen to see him before then, I will say my piece and inform you.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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CODE 18-78

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30 April 1982

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EMERGENCY SIGINT BRIEFING

Reference: folio 64

1. I must disagree with Robert Flower's letter; there was no discussion with Z Division, nor with anyone else in GCHQ regarding the rephrasing or deletion of paragraph 1.c of our signal. The first that we or Z Division knew of the omission was when we saw the copy of the FCO signal to the Falklands. When then tackled about it, Haydon Warren-Gash said that he had agreed the omission with Z10B. R10A queried this with Z10B, who denied it. I have since spoken to Z10B myself, and he further denies it. He said that he was telephoned at his home by PUSD and questioned about the inclusion of some names in the signal, which was apparently not in accordance with FCO protocol. Z10B was told that there had also been some "minor amendments" to the text. I have also spoken to Z1, who knows of no-one else in Z Division who spoke to anyone in FCO about the signal. He confirms that the whole affair was handled by Z10B alone. Z10B would in any case have undoubtedly contacted R10 or R10A if he knew of any proposed alteration, as the briefing statement was originally prepared by R10A. I am convinced, therefore, that the paragraph was deleted unilaterally by PUSD, without reference to anyone in GCHQ.
2. There also appears to be some difference of opinion in PUSD over the reason for omitting the paragraph. At the time, Haydon Warren-Gash said that it was because he considered it to be non-essential background. Robert Flower in his letter says that it was because it was thought that the statement would be insufficiently clear to the Governor or other recipients. It would appear to be somewhat less than tactful to suggest that anyone of reasonable intelligence would not fully understand paragraph 1.c. There is also some confusion over the reason for not sending a further message. Robert Flower's reason may well be valid, but R10A was merely presented with a blank refusal by Haydon Warren-Gash on the grounds that the words omitted were non-essential.
3. I think that it should be made perfectly clear to FCO that GCHQ is in a far better position than any other Department to say what should or should not be included in an indoctrination briefing statement, and it is diplomatic, to say the least, for FCO to suggest otherwise, whoever the indoctrinee. In this we are firmly backed by IRSIG and, consequentially, by LSIB and the Prime Minister. The vulnerability aspect is the quintessential element of any Comint briefing, from Limited Sigint Briefing to full Cat III indoctrination; it must be included. It could in fact be said that the reason for the existence of IRSIG is the vulnerability of Comint. The briefing statement in question was prepared carefully by R10A to include the minimum essential requirements, and the deleted paragraph is probably the most essential part of it.


R10



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

8608/20/2 '23 April 1982

Your ref:
R/0135RP/8608/20/2[REDACTED]
R
GCHQ

Dear Harry,

EMERGENCY SIGINT BRIEFING

- b2

1. Thank you for your letter of 19 April on this subject.

2. I am sorry to hear that this incident has caused you concern. However, the facts of the case as portrayed in your letter do not quite correspond with our recollection here. It may therefore be helpful if I recap briefly the sequence of events:

i. the JIC decided on 31 March that, in view of the rising tension over the Falklands, the Governor and the Commander of the Marine Detachment should be sent the relevant JIC Immediate Assessments and SIGINT reports. An emergency SIGINT briefing was therefore required as a first step;

ii. on the evening of 31 March, PUSD received a telegram from Z Division for onward despatch to the Falkland Islands (your reference A). Before sending it on, we thought it right to amend the text for two reasons. First, the introduction needed tidying up (which is not, I think, a point at issue between us). Second, we did not think that paragraph 1(c) would be sufficiently clear to the Governor or other recipients in the terms in which it was phrased. A reference to the "vulnerability of source to COMSEC measures by target country" may be clear enough to you and me, who deal with the underlying issues all the time; but it can hardly be taken for granted that the reference to 'COMSEC' would be understood, still less that the significance of this statement would sink home, unless it were spelled out in rather more detail, and in layman's language. We took this point up with Z Division, as originators of the signal, and suggested that the effective alternatives were to rephrase that sub-paragraph or cut it out;

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In the end, largely because the need to despatch the signal was overriding in the light of mounting fears of an invasion, it was agreed that the sub-paragraph should be dropped:

iii. on the morning of 2 April, [redacted] rang Haydon Warren-Gash to register her concern that this section had been omitted, and to ask that a follow-up signal putting matters right should be sent. The background to the change was then explained to her in some detail as was the impossibility of sending a further message in the light of information then coming in that the Argentine armed forces had already overrun the Falklands. The Governor would not in the circumstances have been well placed to take delivery of the message.

3. I hope this clarifies the situation. I certainly would not wish to leave you with the impression either that we acted unilaterally in altering your signals in what we agree is an important area, or that we would wantonly frustrate any subsequent attempt to put matters right. For the future, should similar circumstances arise elsewhere (absit omen!), we would of course look to you to provide us with a briefing statement appropriate to the situation; we would not make unilateral use of an old brief without prior reference to you. But perhaps one reminder for us both is that explanations need to be drafted in terms likely to be readily understood by the recipient.

Yours sincerely,
R P Flower
R P FLOWER
PUSD

Copied to:

[redacted] GCHQ