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cc H. Wedderburn
Dr. A. ...
Sir M. Allison

[Handwritten signature]

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

CABINET OFFICE
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26 APR 1982
FILING INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. 4761

SW/82/612
9/31/F

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HANDLING OF SIGNAL FROM HMS INVINCIBLE ON ATTACK OF ARGENTINE SUBMARINE - SUNDAY 25 APRIL

During the afternoon of 25 April, MOD received a signal from HMS INVINCIBLE containing a collective despatch from a group of UK reporters for onward transmission to their London offices (this is a routine service we provide, although there are direct communications to Fleet Street from other ships in the Task Force taken up from trade - eg Canberra - which correspondents use). The despatch contained details of the RN ships involved in the engagement with the Argentine submarine Santa Fé earlier in the day and of the weapons used (not entirely accurate). This was derived from an on-board briefing given to the crew of INVINCIBLE.

2. This information was assessed to be of substantial potential value to the Argentines who appeared to be badly informed about the composition of the RN group off South Georgia. These details were therefore deleted from the text which was then forwarded to newspaper offices under an explanatory note by PUS (copy attached).

3. As this explains, it is normal for the copy of correspondents in the Task Force to be censored in the ship concerned. Some problems with this were discussed at the meeting with Editors last week (SW/82/602 of 21 April refers), but this was the first occasion when censorship had been carried out in London.

4. So far, there has been no reaction from the newspapers concerned, which have printed versions on the basis of the censored story.

[Handwritten signature]

S WEBB
PS/PUS

26 April 1982

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Distributed to:

Guardian

Times

Sun

Star

Telegraph

Your reference

Our reference

Date

25 April 1982

NOTE FOR EDITORS

The attached copy was sent from HMS INVINCIBLE before that ship was aware of what had been officially released to the press here. It therefore contained details which we have not yet released or confirmed. In the interests of speed however we were asked at this end to delete any details which for operational reasons we were not ourselves releasing. I have therefore had the text amended but I can assure you the amendments cover only those areas which for operational reasons we would not wish to make public. These are:

- a. The names of the RN ships involved.
- b. The types of missiles used.

Normally this kind of guidance would of course have been given in the ship before the copy was transmitted. As I have said we have had to do it this time but only in the interests of getting the copy to you as soon as possible. I hope that you will accept this and also will not use any information on the names of ships or types of weapons used if it arrives with you from other sources. We are as I explained when I met the Editors very anxious indeed to give you the maximum information we can, but the operational requirements of the Task Force must of course come first. As soon as we can release more details of the engagement I can assure you we will do so.

Sir Frank Cooper
Permanent Under Secretary

AN ARGENTINIA SUBMARINE WAS CRIPPLED IN THE FIRST ENGAGEMENT OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS CRISIS YESTERDAY (SUNDAY) IN THE SEA BATTLE THE ARGENTINIAN SUBMARINE, SANTA FE A FORMER AMERICAN WORLD WAR TWO TYPE WAS HIT.

LT COMMANDER JOHN TOPP, ABOARD HMS INVINCIBLE SAID THE BATTLE HAD TAKEN PLACE. WITHIN TWO HOURS DETAILS WERE BEING RELAYED TO THE INVINCIBLE'S 1,000 STRONG SHIPS COMPANY BY COMMANDER TONY PROUEST. THE IMMEDIATE REACTION WAS OVERWHELMING THAT THE TALKING WAS OVER THE BRIEFING OFFICER SAID ABOUT 9.45 ZULU WE HEARD A BATTLE WAS GOING ON IN SOUTH GEORGIA. IT WAS AN ANTI-SUBMARINE BATTLE BETWEEN HELICOPTERS AND THE ARGENTINIAN SUB SANTA FE (HOLY FAITH). THE SUBMARINE WAS DAMAGED WHEN IT WAS FOUND ON THE SURFACE AND IT MADE A RUN FOR GRITVICKEN, ON THE NORTH COAST OF SOUTH GEORGIA. IT MADE IT TO HARBOUR IN CUMBERLAND BAY BUT NOT BEFORE BEING HIT.

THE SUBMARINE IS AT PRESENT LOW IN THE WATER, AND LEAKING OIL EXTENDING 200 TO 300 YARDS ASTERN. THE SUBMARINE IS STILL ON THE SURFACE BUT THERE IS NO ACTIVITY ON THE DECK.

WE HAVE A HELICOPTER KEEPING AN EYE ON THE SITUATION AND REPORTING THE STATE OF THE SUBMARINE. THE HELICOPTER IS LOOKING FOR ENEMY TROOPS ON SOUTH GEORGIA AND ANY ARGENTINIAN PATROL BOATS IN THE AREA.

AT 10.45 HE REPORTED BEING FIRED ON AS HE PASSED SAPPHE POINT ON SOUTH GEORGIA. IT IS ALL HAPPENING THERE. NEWS OF THE ENGAGEMENT RACHED THE SHIPS COMPANY AS THEY WERE DISCUSSING THE LATEST BBC WORLD SERVICE BULLETINS OF BRITAINS WARNING TO THE ARGENTINIANS TO STAY AWAY FROM THE TASK FORCE OR APPROPRIATE ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN.

LT MIKE SOAPY WATSON, 47, A HARRIER PILOT WITH 801 SQUADRON ON INVINCIBLE SAID THIS IS GOOD NEWS. I AM GLAD WE ARE GETTING ON WITH THE JOB. AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED THIS IS THE FIRST OF THEIR NAVY TO GO DOWN AND THE REST WILL FOLLOW VERY QUICKLY.

I AM RELIEVED THAT THE SHOOTING HAS STARTED. LT MICHAEL DUGALL, 26, OF 820 SQUADRON FLYING SEA KING HELICOPTERS WHOSE NUMBER INCLUDES SUB LT PRINCE ANDREW, SAID MY INITIAL IMPRESSION AND THAT OF ALL THE OTHERS IS THAT IT IS GOOD NEWS. IT IS WHAT WE HAVE COME HERE TO DO AND WE ARE ACTUALLY DOING SOMETHING NOW. IT IS ALSO GOOD NEWS THAT WE HAVE CRIPPLED ONE OF THEIRS AND THEY HAVENT GOT ONE OF OURS.

CHIEF PETTY OFFICER ADRIAN FIRTH, 38 WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE SICK BAY, SAID NOW THEY KNOW WE MEAN BUSINESS, THERE IS STILL ROOM FOR DIPLOMATIC MOVES AND MAY BE AS A RESULT OF THIS ACTION THEY WILL START CONCEDED SOME POINTS.

CHIEF PETTY OFFICER NEIL WOOKEY, 32, SQUADRON WATCH CHIEF WITH 801, SAID WE ARE NOW MORE COMMITTED THAN WE WERE. THIS HAS PUT A NEW COMPLEXION ON THE THING AND WHETHER THE ARGENTINIANS WILL CONTINUE TO NEGOTIATE IS OPEN TO SPECULATION.

IN A WAY ITS COME AS A SENSE OF RELIEF. ITS BEEN VERY TENSE FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS NOT KNOWING WHAT WE WERE GOING TO DO. I WAS HOPING FOR A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION, BUT IT HAS STARTED NOW AND WE KNOW WHERE WE ARE HEADING. LEADING MECHANICAL ENGINEER PHILIP STEVENS, 28 FROM DEVIZES, SAID THEY WERE ASKING FOR IT, AND IF THINGS CONTINUED PLACES LIKE GIBRALTAR AND OUR OTHER OUTPOSTS COUD HAVE BEEN SNATCHED. BUT FRANKLY I AM MORE WORRIED ABOUT MY FAMILY LIVING ON TENTERHOOKS THAN I AM FOR MY PERSONAL SAFETY. THEY HAVE BEEN READING ALL THE REPORTS AS THE THINGS HAVE GOT WORSE DAY BY DAY AND I JUST WANT TO SEND A MESSAGE HOME SAYING WE'LL WIN THROUGH.

LEADING STORES ACCOUNTANT STEPHEN THOMAS, 23 FROM GOSPORT, SAID NOW ITS WAR I AM A LITTLE BIT SCARED, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, I SUPPOSE. BUT ITS A RELIEF THAT THE FIRST SHOTS HAVE BEEN FIRED. NOW IT IS UP TO GALTIERI, IF HE HAS GOT ANY SENSE HE WILL GIVE UP NOW BEFORE HE LOSES ANY MORE OF HIS FLEET. FLEET CHIEF PETTY OFFICER DAVID CLEAVER, 40, FROM GOSPORT SAID NOW THE ARGENTINIANS KNOW WE MEAN BUSINESS. WE WARNED THEM AWAY FROM THE TASK FORCE. THEY IGNORED IT AND PAID THE PENALTY. THE BALLS FIRMLY IN THEIR COURT NOW. PERHAPS THEYLL TREAT THE DIPLOMATIC TALKS MORE SERIOUSLY. NAVAL AIR MAN JIM BIGGER 22, FROM WORKSOP, SAID ITS GREAT NEWS. WE HAD TO GET A GOOD BLOW IN FIRST. THE ARGENTINIAN SUB IS LUCKY NOT TO HAVE BEEN BLASTED OUT OF THE WATER.

LT CHRIS BURTON 35 SUPPLY OFFICER FROM PORTSMOUTH WE ARE ALL HOPING STILL THAT THERE WILL NOT BE WAR. BUT IF IT HAS TO BE, WE ARE READY FOR IT. LT DEREK HART 26 A WEAPONS OFFICER FROM FAIRHAM, SAID IT WAS THEY WHO BROKE THE RULES NOT US.

DIPLOMACY FAILED BUT IT NOW MAKES YOU WONDER WHATS GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT.
END.

BT