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PORT STANLEY AIRFIELD

1. Further to the discussion on Port Stanley Airfield at your meeting this morning. I am sure you will wish to have the background to my report that the runway has been extended, at the western end, by some 50-75 yards.

2. The report was based on the debriefing of a Mr Selwood who was the pilot of the Islander which is based at Port Stanley. Selwood left Stanley at 1800 hours local on Friday 23 April having spent 5 hours virtually unhindered at the airport whilst waiting for his departing flight. He is, of course, very familiar with the airfield and all its facilities. Selwood gave the dimensions of the extension, confirming that the surface was Tarmac. He was aboard the Boeing 737 which taxied over the extension. He further commented that the aircraft captain had some difficulty in completing the 180° turn to line-up for take-off because of the narrow width of the extension.

3. Selwood went on to report that no further work beyond the extension was visible and that there had been no grading of the runway overrun. He said that a number of Pucaracs and helicopters were parked on the grass surfaces. The Pucaracs were, surprisingly and unnecessarily, parked extremely close to the northern edge of the runway indicating a disregard for the normal precepts of flight safety. Once the expected wet weather materialises the Argentines would be unable to use the grass since the ground becomes extremely soft.

4. In our view the Selwood report is reliable. Furthermore, a member of the AFD was present and did not voice any concern over the details of the debrief or doubts about its veracity. I am, of course, making arrangements to see the TV film to which you referred. We will draw what we can from it.

5. Meanwhile, I should, perhaps, reiterate our assessment; namely, that the extension of the Stanley runway does not have any great operational significance. But it does confirm that the Argentines have some runway repair capability.

Jmg
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