

2038/1/1

Meeting on
Tuesday with
CNS Cuthbertson
+ CDS

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As expected
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CNS
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SECCOS

SECRETARY OF STATEOPERATION CORPORATE - HMS ILLUSTRIOUS

1. 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 or for essential maintenance and defect repair.
5. Acceptance of HMS ILLUSTRIOUS is currently planned for September this year. It is possible to bring this forward to 18 June. This entails an additional shipbuilding cost of some £350K, which is within the existing contingency margin for the ship. Despite the fact that we shall have to telescope the normal post-build trials for the ship, I am assured that sufficient trials and setting of the ship to work will have been completed to enable us to deploy the ship with confidence

(1) MO5/21 of 27 April 1982

to the South Atlantic in early August albeit with some acceptable operational shortcomings.

6. I have consulted my colleagues and they endorse the plan to bring forward the acceptance date of HMS ILLUSTRIOUS to 18 June.

30th April 1982

CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF

1. The submarine was seen on 25 April in the vicinity of the South Atlantic in early August albeit with some acceptable operational shortcomings.

2. The submarine's charge of course during the attack was obscured, but it was certainly with her arrival in Harbours the British Sea King was the Prime Minister's aircraft carrier on 25 April did not refer to the direction in which the submarine was heading at the moment of attack.

3. A defensive press brief is being prepared in case the matter should arise again in the future.