

(A)

DRAFT SPEECH FOR SECRETARY OF STATE

With permission, Mr Speaker, I shall make a statement.

My Rt Hon friend, the Prime Minister
I reported to the House on 26 April ^{on} the skilful operation conducted by our forces to re-possess the British sovereign territory of South Georgia. Prior to that action, we gave warning to the Argentines that any approach by their ships or aircraft amounting to a threat to interfere with our forces anywhere in the South Atlantic would encounter the appropriate response. Subsequently, we gave notice of the imposition of a 200 mile radius total exclusion zone around the Falkland Islands from noon on 30 April. Since that time, our Task Force have been enforcing that zone.

The House supported the despatch of the Task Force to the South Atlantic and understood that this Government was prepared to use force if necessary. The use of force has been necessary on two counts: to enforce the

exclusion zone we have established and to defend our forces against hostile Argentine action. It is the first duty of the Task Force Commander to defend his force and the servicemen under his command against Argentine aggression - aggression whose first instance we saw in the invasion of the Falkland Islands and South Georgia.

I will now describe the military sequence of events. Air attacks by Vulcan and Sea Harrier aircraft against Port Stanley air-field were launched early on 1 May. The runway has been severely ^{crated} crated and is now unuseable by anything other than light aircraft. The other main air-field on East Falkland at Goose Green has also effectively been put out of action. An air battle took place during most of the daylight hours of 1 May in the vicinity of the Task Force. Argentine Mirage and Canberra aircrafts operating from the mainland were repulsed by British Sea Harriers. One Canberra and one Mirage were shot down, and others were damaged. We believe another Mirage was brought down by Argentine anti-aircraft fire. One of our frigates suffered splinter damage as a result of these air attacks and there has ^{regrettably} progressively been one British casualty who is now in a serious but not critical condition. All our

aircraft were recovered safely.

On 2 May, at 8 pm London time, one of our submarines attacked ^{the} ~~an~~ Argentine cruiser, Belgrano, which was escorted by two destroyers. This surface attack group was close to the total exclusion zone and closing on elements of the Task Force. The cruiser itself ~~has~~ had substantial fire power provided by six and five inch guns and Seacat anti-aircraft missiles. Together with its escorting ships, the threat to the Task Force was such that the Task Force Commander could ignore it only at his peril. It would not have been possible to continue to enforce the total exclusion zone if the Belgrano group had been allowed to continue unmolested. The House will note that the attack involved the cruiser only. The escorts were not attacked and we believe subsequently went to the assistance of the damaged cruiser. Two torpedoes hit the Belgrano and Argentine reports now indicate that she has sunk.

On 3 May, at about 4 am London time, a Sea King helicopter operating on surface surveillance duties inside the zone was fired on by an Argentine patrol craft. This vessel was then attacked and sunk by a Lynx helicopter, and a second Lynx then

came under attack from another Argentine vessel
which was itself attacked and damaged.

The Argentines must be in no doubt as a result
of our military activities in the South Atlantic
that we are in earnest. They must also recognise
that there is one quick and easy way to avoid
further casualties to their servicemen and further
loss of both ships and aircraft. They should
keep clear of the total exclusion zone around the
Falkland Islands and cease to threaten any of our
forces in the South Atlantic. The best way of
stopping the fighting is for the Argentines to
withdraw their garrison from the Falkland Islands
in compliance with UN Resolution 502. Then
negotiations for a peaceful long-term solution
can be resumed. Until they withdraw their forces
of occupation, we will continue to exercise our
right of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN
Charter.

(B) (file)
Statement to be delivered at 1600 Tuesday
May by the Defence Secretary.

For the urgent attention
of Sir John Graham

With permission, Mr Speaker, I shall make a statement about recent naval engagements in the South Atlantic, following the successful operation conducted by our forces to repossess the British Sovereign territory of South Georgia.

In this House on 7th April, I announced that our first naval action would be to deny the Argentine forces on the Falklands the means of sea reinforcement and resupply from the mainland. British submarines have achieved that objective.

With the arrival of our Task Force on 30th April our next move was to stop reinforcement and resupply from the air, as well as by sea. Since the passing of Resolution 502, the Argentinians instead of withdrawing, had continuously reinforced the islands. We gave two days prior warning to the Argentine Government of the imposition of this Total Exclusion Zone, and our Task Force is now enforcing it.

Mr Speaker - The Task Force was despatched to the South Atlantic with the full support of this House and, I believe, of the country. Since its arrival in these waters our overriding duty has been to protect it against attack by Argentine forces. We made it very clear to the Argentine Government and to the UN more than a week ago, on 23 April, that the Government would exercise its rights of self-defence to the full, including the use of force under Article 51 of the UN Charter, if this was necessary.

I will now describe the military sequence of events. Air attacks by Vulcan and Sea Harrier aircraft against Port Stanley air-field were launched early on 1st May. The runway was cratered and rendered unuseable by transport aircraft from the Argentine mainland. A further sortie was made today to render the airstrip unuseable for light supply, communications and ground support aircraft operating within the Falkland Islands themselves. The other main air-field on East Falkland at Goose Green has also effectively been put out of action.

On 1st May the Argentines launched attacks on our ships, during most of the daylight hours; these attacks by Argentine Mirage and Canberra aircrafts operating from the mainland were repulsed by British Sea Harriers. One Canberra and one Mirage were shot down, and others were damaged. We believe another Mirage was brought down by Argentine anti-aircraft fire. One of our frigates suffered splinter damage as a result of these air attacks and there was one British casualty who is now in a serious but not critical condition. All our aircraft returned safely.

danger facing the British Task Force, we gave authority to our submarines to attack Argentine warships which posed a threat to our ships and men.

The House will know that the attack by our submarine involved the capital ship only and not its escorting destroyers so that they would have been able to go to the assistance of the damaged cruiser.

On the same day our forces located and attacked an Argentine submarine which was clearly in a position to torpedo our ships. It is not known if the submarine was hit.

The prolonged air attack on our ships, the presence of an Argentine submarine closeby, and other information available to us, left us in no doubt of the dangers to our Task Force from hostile action.

The next day on 2 May, at 8 pm London time, one of our submarines detected the Argentine cruiser, ^{/General} Belgrano, escorted by two destroyers. This surface attack group was close to the Total Exclusion Zone and was closing on elements of our Task Force.

We knew that the cruiser itself had substantial fire power provided by six inch guns (with a range of 13 miles) and Seacat anti-aircraft missiles. Together with its escorting destroyers which we believe were equipped with Exocet anti-ship missiles with a range of ^{/over} 20 miles, the threat to the Task Forces was such that the Task Force Commander could ignore it only at his peril. Given the danger facing the British Task Force we gave authority to our submarines to attack Argentine warships which posed a threat to our ships and men.

The House will know that the attack by our submarine involved the capital ship only and not its escorting destroyers so that they would have been able to go to the assistance of the damaged cruiser.

On 3rd May, at about 4 am London time, a Sea King helicopter keeping watch against submarine attack around the Task Force was fired on by an Argentine ocean going patrol craft. This vessel was then attacked and sunk by a Lynx helicopter, and a second Lynx then came under attack from another Argentine vessel which was itself attacked and damaged.

Mr Speaker -

It must be a matter of deep concern to the House at the loss of life from these engagements including the sinking of the General Belgrano. But our first duty must be the protection of our own ships and men. There may be further attacks on our forces - and they must be allowed to act in self-defence. We cannot deny them that right.

Nor must we forget that military action began by an attack on British marines and the forceable seizure of British territory. The way of stopping the fighting forthwith is for the Argentines to withdraw their garrison from the Falkland Islands in compliance with the UN Resolution 502.

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By fax to UK/DE NATO (C) FINAL
Attn Sir John Graham.

Mr Nott's Statement to the House:

With permission, Mr Speaker, ^{should like to} ~~I shall~~ make a statement about recent naval engagements in the South Atlantic, following the ~~successful~~ operation conducted by our forces to repossess the British Sovereign territory of South Georgia.

In this House on 7th April, I announced that our first naval action would be to deny the Argentine forces on the Falklands the means of sea reinforcement and resupply from the mainland. British submarines have achieved that objective.

With the arrival of our Task Force on 30th April our next move was to stop reinforcement and resupply from the air, as well as by sea. Since the passing of Resolution 502, the Argentinians instead of withdrawing, had continuously reinforced the islands. We gave two days prior warning to the Argentine Government of the imposition of this Total Exclusion Zone, and our Task Force is now enforcing it.

Mr Speaker - The Task Force was despatched to the South Atlantic with the support of this House and, I believe, of the country. Since its arrival in these waters our overriding duty has been to protect our Task Force against attack by Argentine forces.

We made it very clear to the Argentine Government and to the UN more than a week ago, on 23rd April, that the Government would exercise its rights of self-defence to the full, including the use of force under Article 51 of the UN Charter, if this proved necessary to protect our fleet.

I will now describe the military sequence of events. Air attacks by Vulcan and Sea Harrier aircraft against Port Stanley air-field were launched early on 1st May. The runway was cratered and rendered unuseable by transport aircraft from the Argentine mainland. A further sortie was made today to render the airstrip unuseable for light supply, communications and ground attack aircraft operating within the Falkland Islands themselves. The other main air-field on East Falkland at Goose Green has also effectively been put out of action.

On 1st May the Argentines launched attacks on our ships, during most of the daylight hours; these attacks by Argentine Mirage and Canberra aircraft operating from the mainland were repulsed by British Sea Harriers. Had our Sea Harriers failed to repulse these attacks on the Task Force, our ships could have been severely damaged or sunk. In fact one Argentine Canberra and one Mirage were shot down, and others were damaged. We believe another Mirage was brought down by Argentine anti-aircraft fire. One of our frigates suffered splinter damage as a result of these air attacks and there was one British casualty, ~~who is now~~ whose condition is now satisfactory, in a serious but not critical condition. All our aircraft returned safely.

We knew that the cruiser would have been protected by the escort provided by fifteen six inch guns with a range of 20 miles and SeaCat anti-aircraft missiles. Together with the escorting destroyers which we believe were equipped with short range anti-air missiles with a range of over 10 miles, the threat to the Task Force was such that the Task Force Commander could ignore it only at his peril.

The House will know that the attack by our submarines involved the capital ship only and not its escorting destroyers so that they would have been able to go to the assistance of the damaged cruiser. We do not know whether they did so - but, in so doing, they would not have been engaged.

On the same day our forces located and attacked ^{what is believed to be} an Argentine submarine which was clearly in a position to torpedo our ships. It is not known if the submarine was hit.

The prolonged air attack on our ships, the presence of an Argentine submarine closeby, and all other information available to us, left us in no doubt of the dangers to our Task Force from hostile action.

The next day on 2 May, at 8 pm London time, one of our submarines detected the Argentine cruiser, General Belgrano, escorted by two destroyers. This heavily armed surface attack group was close to the Total Exclusion Zone and was closing on elements of our Task Force which was only hours away.

We knew that the cruiser itself had substantial fire power provided by fifteen six inch guns (with a range of 13 miles) and Seacat anti-aircraft missiles. Together with its escorting destroyers which we believe were equipped with Exocet anti-ship missiles with a range of over 20 miles, the threat to the Task Forces was such that the Task Force Commander could ignore it only at his peril.

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On 3rd May, at about 4 am London time, a Sea King helicopter keeping watch against submarine attack around the Task Force was fired on by an Argentine ocean going patrol craft. This vessel was then attacked and sunk by a Lynx helicopter, and a second Lynx then came under attack from another Argentine vessel which was itself attacked and damaged.

Mr Speaker -

It must be a matter of deep concern to the House at the loss of life from these engagements including the sinking of the General Belgrano. But our first duty must be the protection of our own ships and men. There may be further attacks on our forces - and they must be allowed to act in self-defence. We cannot deny them that right.

Nor must we forget that military action began by an attack on British marines and the forceable seizure of British territory. The way of stopping the fighting forthwith is for the Argentines to withdraw their garrison from the Falkland Islands in compliance with the UN Resolution 502.

Falkland Islands

4.7 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. John Nott): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement about recent naval engagements in the South Atlantic, following the operation conducted by our forces to repossess the British sovereign territory of South Georgia.

In the House on 7 April I announced that our first naval action would be to deny the Argentine forces on the Falklands the means of sea reinforcement and resupply from the mainland. British submarines have achieved that objective. With the arrival of our task force on 30 April our next move was to stop reinforcement and resupply from the air, as well as by sea. Since the passing of resolution 502 the Argentines, instead of withdrawing, had continuously reinforced the islands. We gave two days' prior warning to the Argentine Government of the imposition of this total exclusion zone, and our task force is now enforcing it.

The task force was despatched to the South Atlantic with the support of the House and, I believe, of the country. Since its arrival in these waters our overriding duty has been to protect our task force against attack by Argentine forces.

We made it very clear to the Argentine Government and to the United Nations more than a week ago, on 23 April, that the Government would exercise their rights of self-defence to the full, including the use of force under article 51 of the United Nations charter if this proved necessary to protect our fleet.

I shall now describe the military sequence of events. Air attacks by Vulcan and Sea Harrier aircraft against Port Stanley airfield were launched early on 1 May. The runway was cratered and rendered unusable by transport aircraft from the Argentine mainland. A further sortie was made today to render the airstrip unusable for light supply, communications and ground attack aircraft operating within the Falkland Islands themselves. The other main airfield on East Falkland at Goose Green has also effectively been put out of action.

On 1 May the Argentines launched attacks on our ships, during most of the daylight hours. The attacks by Argentine Mirage and Canberra aircraft operating from the mainland were repulsed by British Sea Harriers. Had our Sea Harriers failed to repulse the attacks on the task force, our ships could have been severely damaged or sunk. In fact, one Argentine Canberra and one Mirage were shot down and others were damaged. We believe that another Mirage was brought down by Argentine anti-aircraft fire. One of our frigates suffered splinter damage as a result of the air attacks and there was one British casualty whose condition is now satisfactory. All our aircraft returned safely. On the same day our forces located and attacked what was believed to be an Argentine submarine which was clearly in a position to torpedo our ships. It is not known whether the submarine was hit.

The prolonged air attack on our ships, the presence of an Argentine submarine close by, and all other information available to us, left us in no doubt of the dangers to our task force from hostile action.

The next day, 2 May, at 8 pm London time, one of our submarines detected the Argentine cruiser, "General Belgrano", escorted by two destroyers. This heavily armed surface attack group was close to the total exclusion zone

and was closing on elements of our task force, which was only hours away. We knew that the cruiser itself has substantial fire power, provided by 15 6in guns, with a range of 13 miles, and Seacat anti-aircraft missiles. Together with its escorting destroyers, which we believe were equipped with Exocet anti-ship missiles with a range of more than 20 miles, the threat to the task force was such that the task force commander could ignore it only at his peril.

The House will know that the attack by our submarine involved the capital ship only and not its escorting destroyers, so that they should have been able to go to the assistance of the damaged cruiser. We do not know whether they did so, but, in so doing, they would not have been engaged.

On 3 May, at about 4 am London time, a Sea King helicopter keeping watch against submarine attack around the task force was fired on by an Argentine ocean-going patrol craft. This vessel was then attacked and sunk by a Lynx helicopter. A second Lynx then came under attack from another Argentine vessel, which was itself attacked and damaged.

It must be a matter of deep concern to the House that there has been loss of life from these engagements including the sinking of the "General Belgrano", but our first duty must be the protection of our own ships and men. There may be further attacks on our forces and they must be allowed to act in self-defence. We cannot deny them that right. Nor must we forget that military action began by an attack on British marines and the forcible seizure of British territory. The way of stopping the fighting forthwith is for the Argentines to withdraw their garrison from the Falkland Islands in compliance with the United Nations resolution 502.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): The right hon. Gentleman rightly said in his press conference last night that his policy was and would always be to use minimum force under strict political control to achieve a diplomatic solution. I confess that it is not always easy to achieve that in the stress of battle. Nevertheless, on the evidence that he has just given, it seems that he has successfully achieved that objective, first, in the reoccupation of South Georgia; secondly, in the attacks on the airfields and military facilities on the Falkland Islands; and, thirdly, in the actions that he has just described within the total exclusion zone.

I shall address my questions entirely to the action against the Argentine cruiser "General Belgrano". The right hon. Gentleman said that the Government were concerned about the loss of life that had occurred. I understand that the action took place 36 miles outside the total exclusion zone. Although it appears now that there have not been 1,000 lives lost, as we feared earlier, the number must run into many hundreds. As I said in questions to the Foreign Secretary after his statement, the loss of life is already causing great concern among our friends and allies all over the world.

Almost two days after the event it should be possible for the Secretary of State to give the House more details than were in his statement. It is in both his and the Government's interest to do so if widespread international concern about the incident is to be allayed.

First, will the right hon. Gentleman say how far the Argentine ships were from the task force? He said that they were hours away. I hope that he will forgive me for saying