

28 MAY 1982

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Secretary of State

ARMY OPERATIONS ROOM

Copy to:  
Minister (AF)

CDS

CNS

CGS ✓

CAS

VCDS(P&L)

VCNS

DUS(PL)

ACDS(Ops)

ACNS(O)

AUS(D Staff)

CFR

DCPR

Head of DS 11

CGS DIST

Army Ops 28/5

ARMY OPERATIONS ROOM	
FILE	REG No.
DMO	
✓ BGS (MO)	
✓ COL GEMO	
✓ GS01 CUORD	
✓ MO12	75
✓ MO4	th
✓ ASD2	
WATCHKEEPER	✓
WPO	
CHIEF CLERK	

FALKLANDS: ANNOUNCEMENTS OF SHIP LOSSES AND CASUALTIES

1. We have reviewed with CINCFLEET and CINCPACVHOME and others our policy on releasing information about damage to our ships and other losses in the South Atlantic.

2. There are three main considerations:

a. Operational We would prefer not to release information which will help the enemy, eg if a ship is badly damaged and could be a sitting-duck for further attacks. This would be true whether our capability was reduced either by enemy action or accident. If a ship has sunk the position is different.

b. Families Ideally, we would prefer to inform next of kin before announcing any losses. Being able to say that next of kin have been informed provides the greatest reassurance to all the others.

c. Presentation It is essential to both international and domestic confidence in us that we are seen to release accurate information as soon as we are able to. In the international context, if we announce losses ahead of the Argentines, it is difficult for them to make a subsequent exaggeration stick; if they get out first, it is hard for us to claw back the truth. In the domestic context, it gives the appearance that we are in control of events and are purposeful and determined: conversely, having losses dragged out of us by the Press makes us appear evasive and lacking in confidence.

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13.

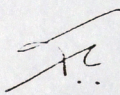


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3. These considerations pull us in opposite directions. It means that we have no choice but to play each case as it comes. Sometimes, we will wish and be able to hold up an announcement for several hours; on other occasions, either because the Press have picked up a buzz, or because the Argentines are making exaggerated claims in which there is an element of truth, we will have to make an announcement sooner than on operational grounds we would like to, and before we have been able to inform next of kin. On these occasions we may have to make a short announcement before we know the full facts and accept the risk that we could be proved wrong later.

4. CNS and CINCFLEET agree with this and have approved the terms of the attached draft instruction on dealing with any such contingencies in the future.

5. If you are content we shall now implement this arrangement and regard it as the model for dealing with any other casualties which may occur in this operation.

  
FRANK COOPER  
28 May 1982

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Added to  
Pw/29/646  
of 25 May 52 (2 pgs)

DRAFT

CASUALTY ANNOUNCEMENTS FOLLOWING LOSSES/DAMAGE TO OUR SHIPS

1. The basic principle remains that from the families' point of view, no announcement is to be made until the NOK have been informed.
2. This will not be possible in certain circumstances when there are overriding requirements for an announcement to be made. The formulation should then be to announce:

"Following [Incident] /HMS [ ] / SS [ ] /  
MV [ ] has been damaged/lost. No additional  
information is yet available either in Whitehall or  
in the Service Information Centres [Or, in the case  
of merchant ships, the appropriate authority]. Please  
do not ring them. As soon as we have any information,  
a further announcement will be made.

3. The follow-on announcement would contain the following:

"Information on casualties (light/heavy etc) is now  
available in the Service Information Centres. The NOK  
of casualties are being informed directly as soon as  
possible."

It will, of course, be very important that the Service Information  
Centres have in advance as much information if not more than  
that which is contained in the Whitehall announcement.

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