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ROBERT FOX ALLEGATIONS: COUNTER ATTACK

At both OD(SA) and Cabinet this morning great concern was expressed at the report of Robert Fox and other journalists that the MOD had given information about impending operations. The Secretary of State was asked to ensure that action was taken this afternoon to counter these allegations.

2. The main story was that the Darwin/Goose Green attack had been anticipated by the MOD in its dealings with the media. I understand from CPR that this is not the case but that the newspapers and radio have chosen not to use the denial which accompanied MOD release of the Fox and other stories. One way which has occurred to the Secretary of State of ensuring that this denial gets public attention would be for a message to go to Major General Moore, the existence of which could be made known. The Secretary of State has drafted the attached message and would be grateful for PUS's early comments on it. In the circumstances, the message could, with conviction, best come from CDS.

3. For the record our researches show that as early as 24th May the Press were saying that the battle for Goose Green was under way. All the Press speculation was that Darwin/Goose Green was the first objective. The MOD consistently refused to comment on these reports. The Secretary of State's only statement was in the House of Commons on the 26th May which included the sentence "Our Forces on the ground are now poised to begin their thrust on Port Stanley" and the Prime Minister echoed this on 27th May in the House "Our Forces on the ground are now moving forward ~~at~~ the Bridge Head". We announced officially the capture of Darwin and Goose Green at 21.40 on 28th May.

[Handwritten signature]

9th June 1982

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DRAFT MESSAGE FROM CDS TO MAJOR GENERAL MOORE

We have followed the Reports of Robert Fox and other ^{correspondents} ~~journalists~~ with great interest - and their ^{despatches} / ~~messages~~ have done a great deal to inform us all of the tremendous bravery and dedication shown by the forces under your command. We appreciate the appalling conditions in which you are fighting to recover British territory.

We have, however, heard suggestions from journalists' reports that there is concern that the Ministry of Defence has released sensitive information in London about the movements of forces under your command.

I want to give you our assurance that no information is given here, without the agreement of the Commander-in-Chief, who is in daily contact with you.

No information about a forthcoming assault on Goose Green/ Darwin was given by the MOD, or in Parliament by Ministers. Reports which appeared in the media were based on widespread public speculation, not on official information. It would have been advance speculation that was given on the BBC World Service - at no time has the MOD given advance information about impending operations.

CHIEF OF

- 4 JUN 1982

DEFENCE STAFF

CONFIDENTIAL

PARAPHRASE NOT REQUIRED

~~NOT UNCLASSIFIED BY X OF REFERENCE~~

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TO CTF 317

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EXCLUSIVE FOR CINC FROM CDS.

YOUR AAA/A2G/19F OF 310855Z MAY 82 REFERS.

ONE. I HAVE LOCKED INTO THE ALLEGATION THAT S OF S HIMSELF HAD ANNOUNCED OUR PLANS FOR THE CAPTURE OF DARWIN/GOOSE GREEN.

TWO. AFTER EXHAUSTIVE RESEARCH WITH THE FULL CO-OPERATION OF THE BBC WHO PRODUCED THE RELEVANT TRANSCRIPTS I AM SATISFIED THAT MR NOTTS COMMENTS ON THE TWENTY FOUR HOURS PROGRAMME BROADCAST AT 260709Z MAY WERE OF A GENERAL AND POLITICAL NATURE. JOHN CONNELL OF THE SUNDAY TIMES FOLLOWED S OF S ON THE SAME PROGRAMME AND SPECULATED THAT OUR TROOPS QUOTE HAVE TWO CHOICES, ONE IS TO GO ACROSS THE NORTH OF THE ISLAND WHERE THE TERRAIN IS VERY BAD INDEED. THE SECOND IS TO MOVE SOUTH AND TAKE PORT DARWIN WHERE THERE IS AN ARGENTINIAN GARRISON ON THE WAY, AND THEN MOVE ACROSS THE BETTER PART OF THE ISLAND TOWARDS PORT STANLEY. BUT EITHER WAY IT IS GOING TO TAKE MORE TIME. UNQUOTE.

THREE. S OF S STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE ON 26 MAY WAS ALSO REPEATED ON THE WORLD SERVICE BUT GAVE NO SPECIFIC INTENTIONS.

FOUR. IN MY VIEW MR NOTT HAS BEEN UNFAIRLY ATTRIBUTED WITH A BREACH OF SECURITY. MOST ARMCHAIR STRATEGISTS WERE OPENLY SPECULATING THAT DARWIN/GOOSE GREEN SHOULD BE TAKEN FIRST AND IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT THE ARGENTINIANS CAME TO THE SAME CONCLUSION IN TIME TO REINFORCE THE GARRISON.

FIVE. MOST GRATEFUL IF YOU WILL DO WHAT YOU CAN TO EXONERATE S OF S WHO HAS BEEN A TIRELESS AND OUTSTANDING CHAMPION FOR THE TASK FORCE HERE IN WHITEHALL.

ORIGINATOR AIR CDRE D C G BROOK

BRANCH SCDS
EXT 2829
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	<u>PARLIAMENTARY</u>	<u>MOD ANNOUNCEMENTS</u>	<u>PRESS</u>
24th May Monday	<i>Defence</i> Secretary of State Statement to House on events leading to the landing: "forces are now established there can be no question of pressing the force commander to move forward prematurely"	"consolidate positions. bridgehead firmly established..... surrounding area being patrolled"	Speculation that Goose Green and Darwin liable to be prime targets for Task Force Express and Daily Star particularly certain <i>Justus</i>
25th May Tuesday	<u>Top Day</u> Nothing further on land operations <u>PM's Questions</u> Nothing	Nothing on land operations <i>Loss of 7th Coy of the Assault Company v. Defence Secretary appears on ITN news. No mention of impending land operations</i>	Reflect on Parliamentary and MOD statements of 24 May Only New Standard - "The MOD would not confirm reports that the Goose Green military base had been retaken...."
26th May Wednesday	<i>Defence</i> Secretary of State Statement on events 25 May. "..... our forces on the ground are now poised to begin their thrust on Port Stanley....."	<i>Mod</i> Refers to Secretary of State's Statement in House <i>BBC World Service 24 hours programme reports Defence Secretary's speech on ITN on 25 May and in House on 24 May. Also includes Jon Cornwell (Sunday Times) speculating that Darwin is possible next objective for British forces.</i>	FT, Times, D Mail, Sun speculate on intention to take Goose Green and Darwin - FT: "the Defence Ministry was unable to confirm that there had been any action around Darwin yesterday" D Mail cites BA diplomatic sources, "our troops were less than ten miles from vital Port Darwin...expected to capture the airfield at Goose Green"
27th May Thursday	<u>PM's Questions</u> "The House would not expect me to go into details about the operations in progress, but our forces on the ground are now moving from the bridgehead!..."	<i>Mod</i> Refers to PM on ground forces movement /bombing Port Stanley, more news on casualties/	Further speculation - Guardian, D Mail cite unofficial sources about advances on Goose Green. Mirror refers to S of S meeting with Tory backbenchers and boosting their spirits by "indicating that there would be successes to report, even within 24 hours". Express headline - "Goose Green is taken" <i>Times</i> <i>but no mention of Goose Green or Darwin</i>
28th May Friday		21.58 announcement that 2 Para had taken Darwin and Goose Green	More details on supposed moves on Darwin/Goose Green. All papers except Mirror, Sun and New Standard refer specifically to news blackout and MOD's refusal to confirm. D Mirror gives details of 2 and 3 Para heading SE to Darwin and Goose Green "behind helicopter and light tanks!..."

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Goose Green

1. You made a statement on 26 May, (attached) it included the statement:
"Our forces on the ground are now poised to begin their thrust upon Port Stanley."
2. The PM said in the House on 27 May
"Our forces on the ground are now moving forward from the bridgehead."
3. We announced officially the capture of Darwin & Goose Green at 2140 on 28 May.
4. The newspapers had carried speculations about impending attacks on Goose Green for some days beforehand. The Express actually said we had captured it 2 days before we had. No evidence of any major leaks.
The journalists on the spot would have heard the BBC world service, and assumed that the speculation came from leaks from London.
Troops on the ground always distrust HQs!

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