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**This publication has been produced in memory of 255 British servicemen who lost their lives during the Falklands Conflict 1982. Written by a member of GCHQ with kind assistance from Chris Wreford-Brown, CO HMS Conqueror.**

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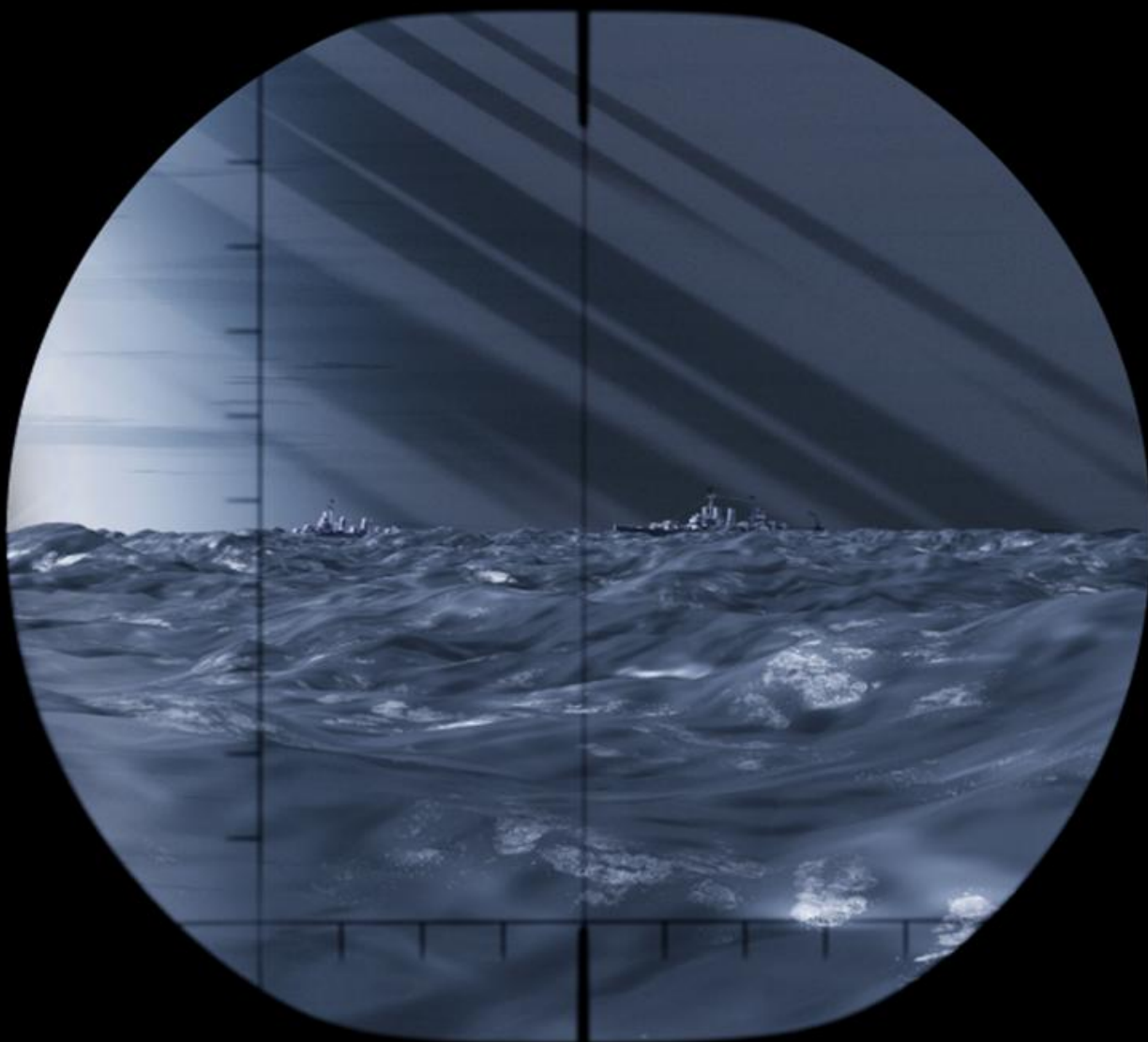
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A GCHQ HISTORICAL SECTION PUBLICATION

# Belgrano

## Sigint behind the headlines



18





**Rear Admiral Sandy Woodward within the planning office of his ship  
HMS Glamorgan prior to transferring his flag to HMS Hermes**

# OFFICIAL

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## FORWARD

The sinking of the Argentinian cruiser General Belgrano was one of the defining and most controversial actions of the Falklands War.

Having read numerous books and articles on the conflict I am not aware of any other publication with so much concentrated 'Primary Source' signals intelligence and post-event diplomatic correspondence. By carefully curating original signal transcripts and diplomatic messages, this book sheds light on the complex interplay between intelligence gathering and command choices, revealing just how pivotal these information flows were in steering the course of events.

Much of this is new material not released before. It enables the reader to understand what our military leaders were basing their decisions on and illustrates the value of the intelligence support to Op CORPORATE.



Admiral the Rt Hon Lord West of Spithead GCB DSC PC

Lord West commanded HMS Ardent in the Falklands crisis where she was sunk in Falkland Sound on 21 May 1982. West was the last to leave the sinking ship and was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his leadership.

In October 1997 he served as Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI), becoming a full admiral in November 2000.

West was appointed as First Sea Lord (1SL) and Chief of the Naval Staff in September 2002 and subsequently First and Principal Naval Aide-de-Camp to the Queen.

## PRELUDE

For Argentina, it seemed that Britain's commitment to the Falklands was weakening. In 1976 the Argentines had established a military base on Southern Thule in the South Sandwich Islands which Britain owned. Operation JOURNEYMAN was ordered by the then Prime Minister James Callaghan which saw the deployment of frigates HMS Phoebe and Alacrity and nuclear powered SSN submarine HMS Dreadnought. Despite the Argentines becoming aware of the taskforce, their forces remained on Thule and Callaghan decided against the use of force to evict. Classified documents relating to Operation JOURNEYMAN were released in 2005.

In June 1981, Sir John Nott (Secretary of State for Defence) presented a defence review to Parliament. He proposed significant cuts to the Royal Navy, including the scrapping of the Antarctic patrol ship HMS Endurance, and the withdrawal of major vessels including two aircraft carriers. The risk of an out-of-area amphibious operation was considered extremely unlikely. Argentina understandably interpreted the British interest in maintaining a presence in the South Atlantic as minimal.

The Falklands invasion by Argentina in 1982 caught almost everyone in the intelligence community by surprise, and GCHQ was not an exception to this. In common with other intelligence agencies, the Department is guided by priorities laid down by Whitehall. There were several Joint Intelligence Committee assessments over the years and, despite tensions rising, the last assessment, dated February 1981, placed the islands on a par with other British dependencies. Intelligence support reflected these priorities.

The arrival of a group of Argentine scrap metal merchants headed by Constantino Davidoff on the island of South Georgia, on 19 March 1982, was the catalyst in provoking the Falklands conflict. Davidoff was the owner of a company contracted to dismantle a whaling station on the British-owned island. A simple business deal that promised to make him a lot of money, and with the raising of the Argentine flag was easily interpreted as an advance party of an invasion of South Georgia. The 39 scrap metal workers were detained. Argentina sent troops to rescue them, and while they were about it, invaded the Falkland Islands, instigating a conflict in which Sigint was to play a vital enabling role to inform decisions leading to an eventual British victory.

The Argentine claim to the Falkland Islands is long standing. The perception created by the impending UK Defence cuts, especially the planned withdrawal of HMS Endurance and sale of HMS Invincible to Australia, was that the UK would not/could not defend the islands. In that sense, the conflict came a year early for Argentina but was instigated as a diversion to public attention due to the unpopularity of the military junta Government. As reflected in the GCHQ classified history of the conflict, there's nothing like a successful foreign adventure to divert attention away from an awkward domestic difficulty. Thus, it was unlikely that an invasion date of the Falkland Islands had been decided when the scrap metal merchants landed on South Georgia and raised the Argentine flag.

The date of the invasion (Operation ROSARIO), on 2 April, may well have been hastened by a series of anti-Government demonstrations which took place in towns throughout Argentina on 30 March.

## INVASION

Z 221125Z MAR 82  
FM HEGFI

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
AMENDED DISTRIBUTION - 21 MARCH 1982

TO REDWDA/FCO LONDON  
INF O RBDWC/MODUK NAVY  
REDWDA/HMA BUENOS AIRES  
ZEN/CINCFLEET  
ZEN/POF3  
ZEN/HMS ENDURANCE  
BT

CONFIDENTIAL  
SIC

ILLEGAL LANDING ON S. GEORGIA

1. BASE COMMANDER GRYTVIKEN REPORTED LATE 19 MARCH THAT ONE OF HIS FIELD PARTIES OBSERVED ARGENTINE STN (EQUIVALENT OF ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY) VESSEL BAHIA BUEN SUCECO IN LEITH HARBOR AND SIZEABLE PARTY OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY PERSONNEL ASHORE AT LEITH
2. FIELD PARTY REPORTED SHOTS FIRED ARGENTINE FLAG HOISTED NOTICES IN ENGLISH CHANGED TO SPANISH AND RADIO ESTABLISHED LEADER OF FIELD PARTY (BAS EMPLOYEE T EDWARDS) SPOKE TO TWO ARGENTINE CIVILIANS IN SHORE PARTY AND TOLD THEM THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE REPORTED FIRST TO GRYTVIKEN FOR CLEARANCE FORMALITIES THEY SAID THAT BRITISH EMBASSY BUENOS AIRES HAD GIVEN THEM PERMISSION TO LAND AT LEITH AND BASE COMMANDER GRYTVIKEN SHOULD HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED. RELATIONS WERE REASONABLY CORDIAL
3. I PRESUME THAT THESE ARE DAVIDOFFS MEN, IF NOT DAVIDOFF HIMSELF, AND I HAVE INSTRUCTED BASE COMMANDER TO PASS THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO LEADER OF SHORE PARTY VIA EDWARDS, WHO IS STILL AT LEITH
  - A. YOU HAVE LANDED ILLEGALLY AT LEITH WITHOUT OBTAINING PROPER CLEARANCE
  - B. YOU AND YOUR PARTY MUST GO BACK ON BOARD THE BAHIA BUEN SUCECO IMMEDIATELY AND REPORT TO THE BASE COMMANDER AT GRYTVIKEN FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS
  - C. YOU MUST REMOVE THE ARGENTINE FLAG FROM LEITH
  - D. YOU MUST NOT INTERFERE WITH THE BAS DEPOT AT LEITH
  - E. YOU MUST NOT ALTER OR DEFACE ANY OF THE NOTICES AT LEITH
  - F. NO MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE ALLOWED TO LAND IN S GEORGIA
  - G. NO FIREARMS ARE TO BE TAKEN ASHORE
4. BAS FIELD PARTY HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO RETURN TO GRYTVIKEN ONCE THEY HAVE DELIVERED THIS MESSAGE
5. THIS IS THE SECOND TIME THAT DAVIDOFF HAS VIOLATED OUR IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS WITHIN 3

Fig 1

**CONFIDENTIAL**

MONTHS (THE FIRST TIME EMBARKED ON A WARSHIP WITHOUT DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCE) AND I CONSIDER THAT, EVEN IF HE NOW COMPLIES WITH MY INSTRUCTIONS, HE SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED TO LEAVE S GEORGIA FORTHWITH IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT THIS OPERATION (LIKE THE LAST) WAS CARRIED OUT CLANDESTINELY IN THE LATTER STAGES AND I SUSPECT THAT THE ARGENTINE NAVY ARE USING DAVIDOFF AS A FRONT TO ESTABLISH AN ARGENTINE PRESENCE ON S GEORGIA

6. I HAVE DISCUSSED SITUATION WITH CAPT BARKER AND AM SENDING THIS FROM HMS ENDURANCE IN STANLEY HARBOR. PRESENT INTENTIONS ARE THAT ENDURANCE STICKS TO IMMEDIATE PROGRAMME IE ROULEMENT OF NP6901 FROM MONTEVIDEO BUT, IF MY INSTRUCTION TO ARGENTINES ARE NOT COMPLIED WITH, I RECOMMEND THAT ENDURANCE SAILS FOR S GEORGIA WITH MARINES EMBARKED ON 21 MARCH WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO ENSURE THAT ARGENTINES LEAVE S. GEORGIA

BT

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STANDARD

S AM D

CABINET OFFICE

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION

FAULKLAND ISLANDS

Fig 2

Telegram by Governor Rex Hunt to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) reporting the illegal landing at South Georgia



22 March, the Director of Naval Operations summarised the events as a loose minute for the heads of the Navy.

CONFIDENTIAL

LOOSE MINUTE  
TO/2304/343/5/82

NA/1SL  
Sec/VCNS  
→ Sec/ACNS(0)  
→ Head of DS5

Copy to: DPR(N)

Not needed  
2

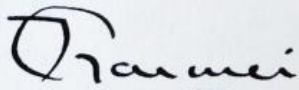
Head of  
DS 5  
624  
LONDON, B.N.

ENCL No.  
21

ILLEGAL LANDING ON SOUTH GEORGIA BY ARGENTINE PARTY 20 MARCH 1982

- At 1318 on 20th March The Governor of The Falkland Islands reported to The FCO that a group of Argentines had landed illegally in LEITH harbour, South Georgia Island, late on 19 March from an Argentine auxiliary ship BAHIA BUEN SUCESO.
- As a contingency measure HMS ENDURANCE has sailed for South Georgia with a platoon of Royal Marines embarked including 9 men from NP 8901. ENDURANCE ETA at LEITH harbour is 0830Z (first light) on Wednesday 24 March. ENDURANCE was due to commence the roulement of NP 8901 this week. Ministerial approval was given to this contingency plan on Saturday evening.
- There has been intense diplomatic activity including a strong protest to The Argentinian Government. They have informed us that BAHIA BUEN SUCESO and the shore party have been ordered to leave South Georgia, and are trying to play the incident down.
- At Annex A is a brief summary of events. A meeting has been arranged at The FCO for 1100 Monday 22 March to discuss the situation. Head of DS5 and DNOT will attend.
- The latest situation report at 211720Z indicated BAHIA may be leaving having landed sufficient fuel for shore party. FCO report that there have been as yet no Press enquiries but will consider issuing a Press statement on 22 March.

22 March 1982

  
 J GARNIER  
 Captain, Royal Navy  
 DIRECTOR OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
 AND TRADE

MB 5355      2866 MB

Enclosure: Annex A Summary of Events

CONFIDENTIAL

Fig 3

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ANNEX A to DNOT's  
TO/2304 /343/5/82  
dated 22 March 1982

ILLEGAL LANDING IN SOUTH GEORGIA  
SUMMARY OF EVENTS

( Letters in bracket refer to the key signals in signal folder)

<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Event</u>
(All times Z)	
<u>Saturday 20 Mar</u> 1330	FLASH message to FCO (A) from HE Governor Falklands(HEGFI) reporting the incident. Base Commander of BAS at GRYTUVIKEN, South Georgia reported:  (a) Party of civilians/military landed from BAHIA BUEN SUCESO (b) They hoisted Argentine Flag. (c) They changed English notices into Spanish. (d) They set up a radio ashore. (e) Shots were fired (later thought to be at game)  HEGFI intentions were to: (1) Order them to leave (2) Have ENDURANCE standby to sail for South Georgia if Argentinians do not comply.
1330-1345	D/Cdr informed Director Resident Clerk etc.  By end of evening the following were informed: PM, CDS, 1SL, ACDS(Ops), US of S(AF), COS to CINCFLEET, Press Desk, DS5, CGRM, ACNS(O), Head of SA Dept FCO.
Afternoon	Deliberations at The FCO.
1630	FCO send reply to HEGFI (B) agreeing with his intentions. FCO tell HMA BUENOS AIRES to protest.
1803	Port Stanley report (C) Defence capability of BAHIA BUEN SUCESO as probably nil.
1835	CINCFLEET himself passes on military judgement i.e. that ENDURANCE should sail ASAP.
1955	Prime Minister and S of S informed. Relaxed view. PM gut feeling is that ENDURANCE should sail, however will leave it to Minister's judgement.
2000 approx	Argentine Charge summoned to FCO
2030 approx	Head of DS5 and Head of South America Div. FCO (Robin Fearne Esq.) meet to consider ENDURANCE plan.
(A) HEGFI A3A 201125Z MAR	
(B) FCO A3A 201630Z MAR	A-1
(C) Port Stanley A3A 201803Z MAR	CONFIDENTIAL

Fig 4



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Annex A to DNOT's  
TO/2304/343/5/82  
dated 22 March 1982

Date/Time

Event

Saturday 20 Mar cont.

2200 US of S(AF) agrees the joint MOD/FCO view that ENDURANCE should sail for S.Georgia at 210930Z with appropriate number of RMs.

2310 This decision passed to HEGFI by FCO (D).

2327 CINCFLEET (E) orders ENDURANCE to sail. Further instructions and ROE to follow.

Sunday 21 Mar

0300 (Not passed until 211410Z) Argentine Government respond to protest(F). They play incident down and say that party plus ship will leave today (Sunday).

1125 HEGFI reports(G) that relief Field Party (BAS) despatched to LEITH Harbour. Argentine Flag now down. Party offered food by Argentines.

a.m. CINCFLEET earmarks 2 FF/DD plus RFA from SPRINGTRAIN group if required. Ships not told.

1500 approx ENDURANCE sails with RM at Platoon strength(H) (estimated as 12 of her own plus 9 from NP8901). Base Commander GRITVIKEN reports 50 ashore. ENDURANCE asks MOD(N) for alternative plans for changeover of NP 8901.

1720 Base Commander reports BAHIA BUEN SUCESO is preparing to leave harbour but leaving party ashore.(J)

1745 FCO gives HEGFI further advice and states we must be clear of the facts of what happened.(K) FCO tell Argentines that UK pleased with their response but need confirmation party are leaving

2012 Fuller report (L) by leader of BAS Field party.

(D) FCO A3A 202310Z Mar  
(E) CINCFLEET EAL/LDQ 202327Z Mar  
(F) BUENOS AIRES A3A 211410Z Mar  
(G) HEGFI A3A 211125Z Mar  
(H) ENDURANCE EAL 211545Z Mar  
(J) ENDURANCE A3A/EAL 211720Z Mar  
(K) FCO A3A 211745Z Mar  
(L) Port Stanley 212012Z Mar

A-2

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Fig 5: Director of Naval Operations Summary of Events

News of the landings had been transmitted back to the UK by HMS Endurance, but the significance was not fully appreciated by the UK, requiring an explanatory signal from the ship to put matters into perspective. HMS Endurance left Port Stanley on 21 March with an initial heading of South Georgia. Unbeknown, the ship was under the observation of the

Argentines who strengthened their presence around the Falklands with two destroyers from the mainland.

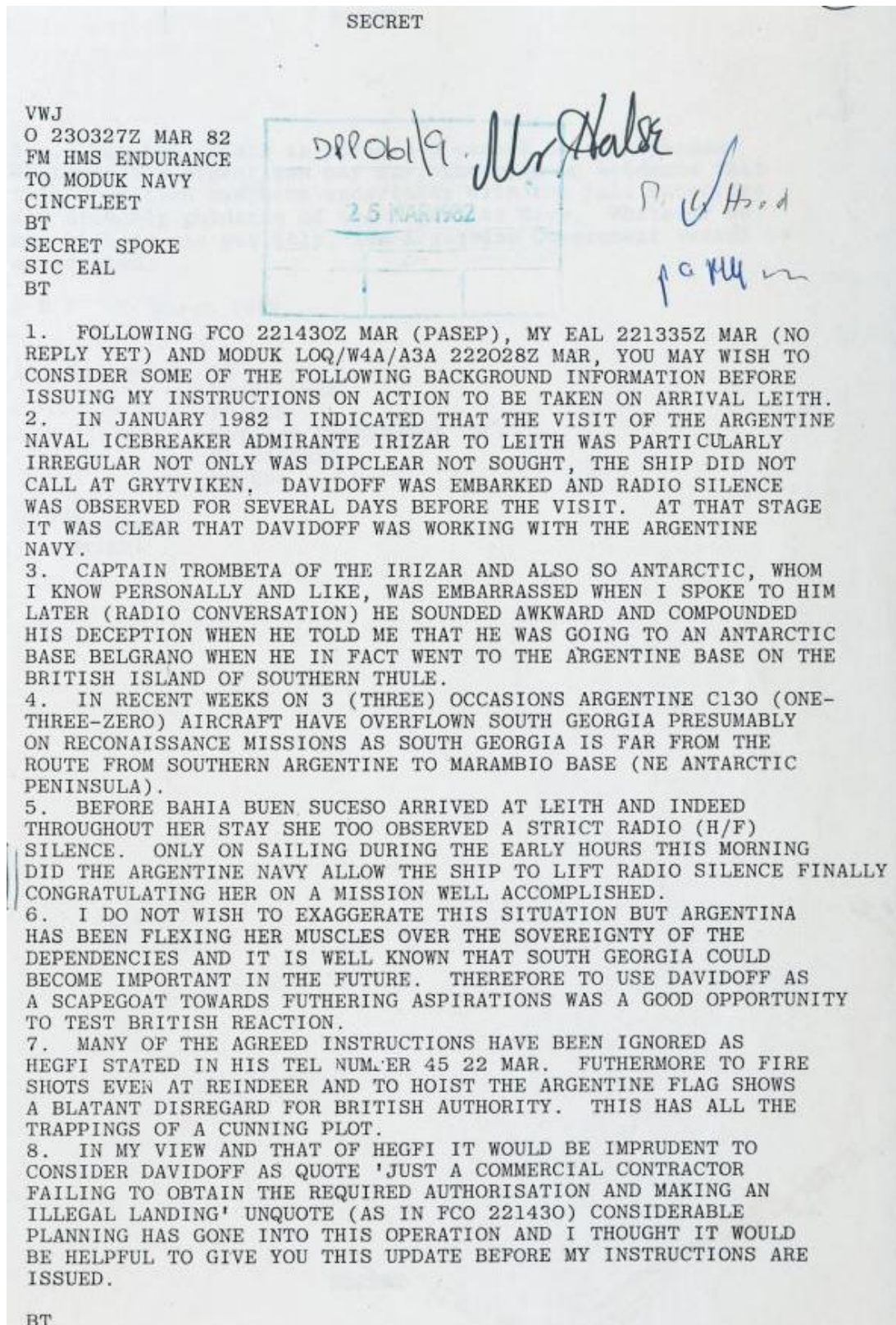


Fig 6: Capt Nick Barker, CO HMS Endurance, explanatory alarm signal to the Ministry of Defence



A decrypted signal dated 28 March was one of the earliest indications that an Argentine invasion was imminent.

<b>TOP SECRET</b>		UMBRA	
To be handled in accordance with RRBG			
ARGENTINE		3/AA/73089-82	
Spanish		K25C/K0413/30/3/82	
		TAG ARN NOPS AR FL GB	
ARGENTINE SUBMARINE FORCE COMMANDER GIVES INSTRUCTIONS RELATING TO POSSIBLE SUBMARINE THREAT, AND ALSO TO RECONNAISSANCE MISSION			
DISTRIBUTION P10 STD 10 copies			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* GCOL</li> <li>* FCO for SAMD</li> <li>* JIC</li> <li>* SIS London</li> <li>* MOD UK</li> <li>* Embassy Buenos Aires</li> <li>251</li> <li>* [REDACTED]</li> <li>* [REDACTED]</li> <li>* [REDACTED]</li> <li>301</li> <li>* [REDACTED]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>501</li> <li>502</li> <li>503</li> <li>504</li> <li>505</li> <li>506</li> <li>507</li> <li>508</li> <li>509</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Z10B2</li> <li>Z10B3</li> <li>G3A</li> <li>E4A</li> <li>K26</li> <li>K25C</li> <li>K11</li> <li>K25C</li> <li>K2X</li> <li>GCU Nwood</li> <li>UKN 292U</li> <li>CINCFLEET</li> </ul>	<p>*Signalled copy, 29/3/82</p>
3/AA/73069-82			
[2 pages]			
JCM/PDC			
<b>TOP SECRET</b>		UMBRA	

Fig 7

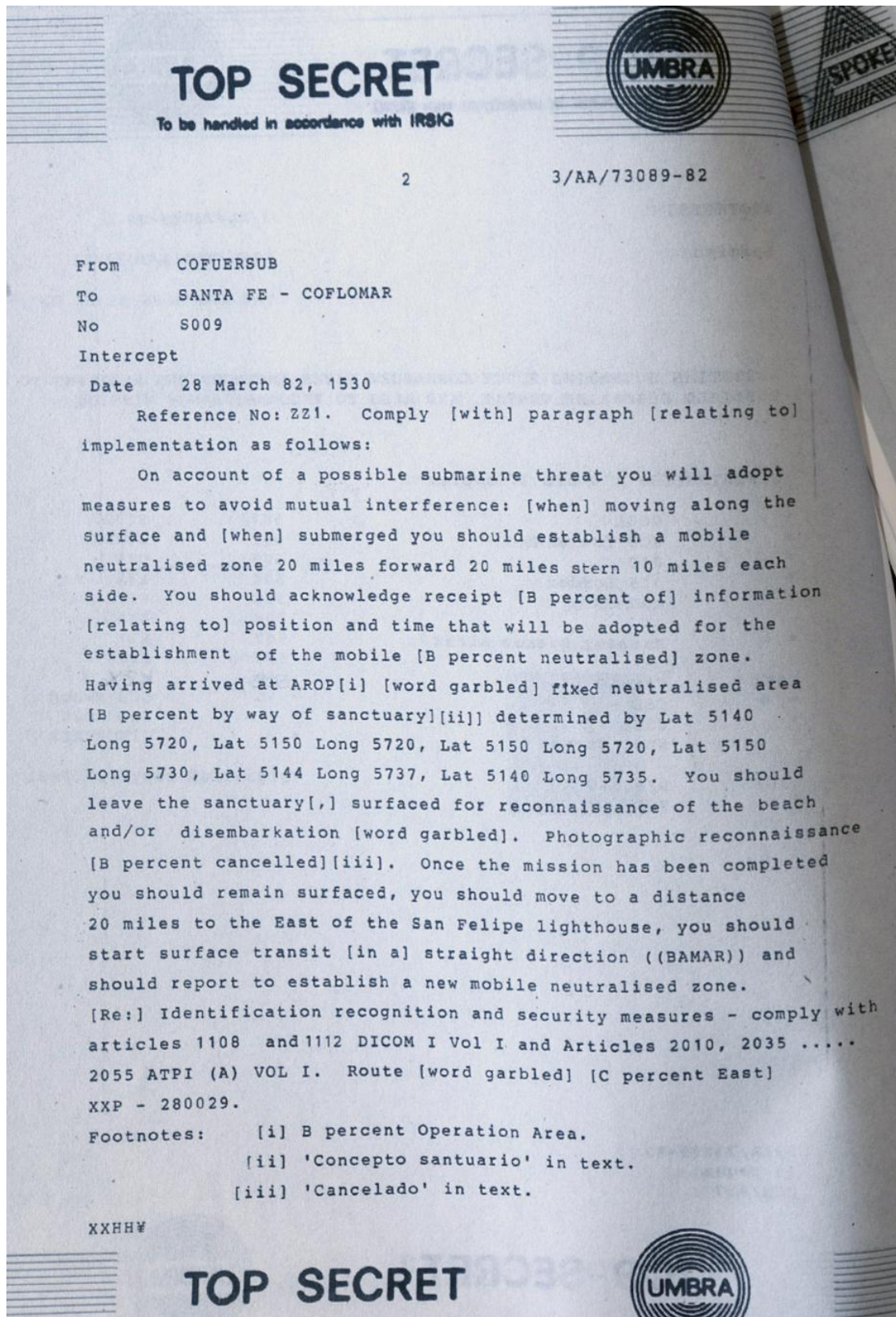


Fig 8

The signal was shown to Margaret Thatcher at 1830 on 31 March in the House of Commons. The San Felipe Lighthouse is located on the northern coast of South Georgia, near the entrance to Cumberland Bay, serving as a navigational aid.

As captain of HMS Endurance from 1980, Nick Barker launched a relentless campaign against the decision of the then Defence Secretary, John Nott, to scrap Endurance with other vessels in the 1981 defence cuts. Barker jeopardised his own outstanding career by challenging senior admirals, officials, ministers and even Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister. He argued strenuously for retention of Britain's military presence in the Falklands and the Antarctic, emphasising its potential of immense mineral wealth. Furthermore, scrapping Endurance, he warned, would lead Argentina to believe that Britain no longer cared about the Falklands and Antarctic and would give the green light for Argentine aggression.

As one of the youngest captains in the Royal Navy, he could reasonably have been expected to be promoted admiral in normal circumstances, but the South Atlantic in 1982 could in no way be regarded as normal circumstances. Barker's forthright views did not endear him to those in power, all the less as he was proven right by history. Barker was, as he put it, "first in and last out" of the Falklands War. His war began long before anyone else's: he took the Endurance down to the South Atlantic in 1980 to undertake patrol duties. With great prescience and knowledge of the region and close contact with Argentine naval officers, he accurately gauged the military junta's warlike intentions and repeatedly warned Whitehall, only for his warnings to fall on deaf ears until the fateful invasion itself, at dawn on 2 April 1982.

The Argentine fleet sailed for the Falklands on 1 April. Barker wrote in his diary that evening:

*"This is the worst day of my life. Why had the Ministry of Defence not listened to my warnings? Why hadn't the Government repeated the strategy of 1976 and sent a small deterrent force to the South Atlantic that day. It has worked then. Why not now?"*



**33. Intelligence Information Cable From the Central Intelligence Agency to Multiple Recipients<sup>1</sup>**

TDFIR DB-315/06791-82

Washington, April 1, 1982

**SUBJECT**

Argentine Government Determination To Take Military Action, If Necessary, in the Current Conflict With the UK Over Islands in the South Atlantic (DOI: 31 March, 1 April 1982)

**SOURCE**

*[4 lines not declassified]*

1. On the evening of 31 March 1982, Argentine President Leopoldo ((Galtieri)) and the other two members of the ruling military Junta were determined that Argentina will take military action, if necessary, to resolve the current conflict with the United Kingdom over conflicting claims of sovereignty over the South Georgia Islands in the South Atlantic. In meetings late on 31 March, Galtieri and the two other members of the Junta were in firm agreement that Argentina will not back down on this matter.

2. This position was supported by Argentine Foreign Minister Nicanor ((Costa Mendez)). Late on 31 March, Costa Mendez told members of the Junta that the current impasse with the UK is a military problem, not a diplomatic problem; Galtieri forcefully echoed this statement.

3. On the morning of 1 April, there was no change in this position. The Argentine Army and Air Force were ready to provide whatever assistance might be required by the Navy if a decision were made to take military action.

4. On 1 April, the Argentine Navy had information that two Soviet submarines were in the general area of the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands/ South Georgia Islands in the South Atlantic.

5. (Field comment: The source did not state or imply that a decision has been made to take military action in the current dispute. He did not provide any time at which such a decision might be made or such action might be taken.)

Fig 9: CIA reporting the impasse and the prospect of military action.

SECRET

Dear Margaret:

I have your urgent message of March 31 over Argentina's apparent moves against the Falkland Islands. We share your concern over the disturbing military steps which the Argentines are taking and regret that negotiations have not succeeded in defusing the problem.

Accordingly, we are contacting the Argentine Government at the highest levels to urge them not to take military measures which would make a just solution more difficult to achieve. As you requested, we are also asking for assurances from them that they will show restraint and not initiate hostilities.

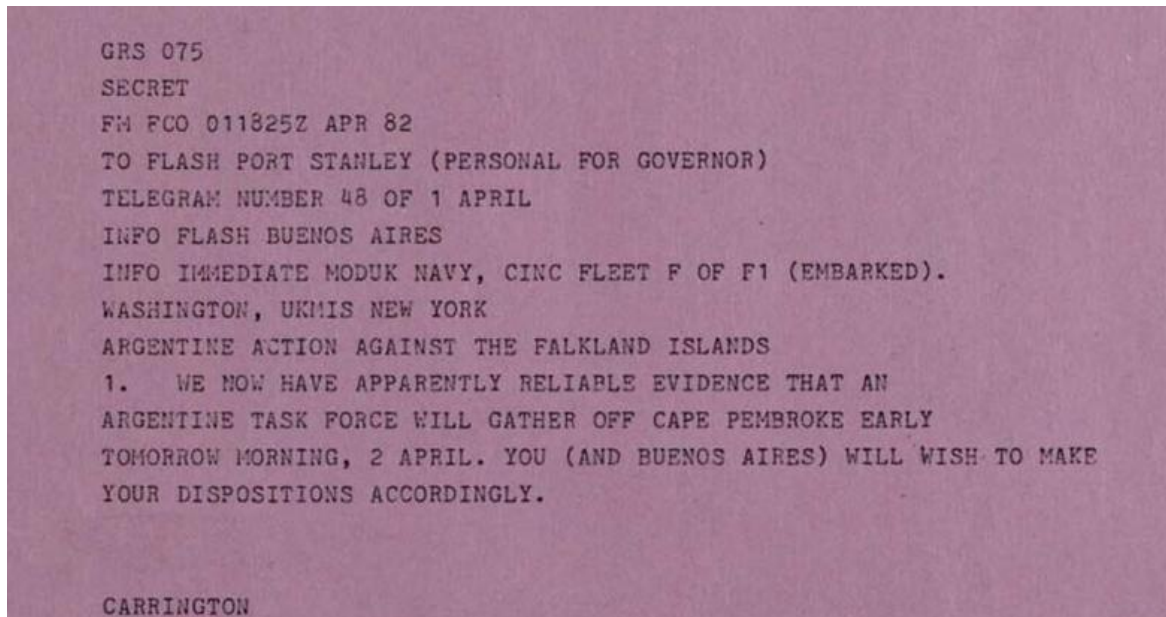
I want you to know how we have valued your cooperation on the challenges we both face in many different parts of the world. We will do what we can to assist you here.

Sincerely,

Ron

Fig 10: Correspondence from the US President Ronald Reagan to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher

London finally woke up and sent the famous Foreign Office message to Rex Hunt.



GRS 075  
 SECRET  
 FM FCO 011825Z APR 82  
 TO FLASH PORT STANLEY (PERSONAL FOR GOVERNOR)  
 TELEGRAM NUMBER 48 OF 1 APRIL  
 INFO FLASH BUENOS AIRES  
 INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK NAVY, CINC FLEET F OF F1 (EMBARKED).  
 WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK  
 ARGENTINE ACTION AGAINST THE FALKLAND ISLANDS  
 1. WE NOW HAVE APPARENTLY RELIABLE EVIDENCE THAT AN  
 ARGENTINE TASK FORCE WILL GATHER OFF CAPE PEMBROKE EARLY  
 TOMORROW MORNING, 2 APRIL. YOU (AND BUENOS AIRES) WILL WISH TO MAKE  
 YOUR DISPOSITIONS ACCORDINGLY.  
 CARRINGTON

Fig 11: FLASH telegram from the Head of the FCO Peter Carrington to Governor Rex Hunt.

Hunt's forewarnings, like Barker's, had been ignored in favour of faulty intelligence and inaccurate misinterpretation of events by the British Embassy in Buenos Aires. In blunt naval language, Barker despaired of what he called

*"Incompetent diplomats, bloody-minded mandarins and lying Argentines. The Ambassador [the late Anthony Williams] and Whitehall making 'tut tut' noises is not impressing the Argentines."*

By contrast, Barker's performance, skill and seamanship in gale-lashed seas in a ship that was not easily manoeuvrable, greatly impressed his own crew, colleagues on the Task Force, and even the enemy, whose ships off South Georgia greatly outnumbered his lightly armed Endurance, painted not battle grey, but bright red, 'the Red Plum', as she was affectionately known.

In light-humoured contrast to his hazardous predicament, Barker described how he hugged the coastline to escape radar detection until the British Task Force arrived in the South Atlantic, pretending to be an iceberg as he played hide-and-seek with the Argentine warships. He later learned that at one point Endurance was targeted through its periscope by the Argentine submarine Santa Fe, whose captain had previously met and who admired Barker.

PS

Mr Bright  
x pa

ALQ 050/5		
RECEIVED IN REGISTRY		
DESK OFFICER		REGISTRY
INDEX	PA	Action Taken

FALKLANDS

1. The Captain of the RRS Bransfield, a British Antarctic survey vessel in the Falkland Islands, has reported that he has intercepted local Falkland Island radio broadcasts which say that 200 Argentinians have landed in armoured troop carriers (presumably, but not confirmed, by sea); that 3 Argentinian ships are anchored in Fort William, the outer harbour of Fort Stanley, and that as far as is known there have not yet been any casualties. The Commander of the Argentine unit is reported to be attempting to contact the Governor, as yet without success.

2. We must accept this as confirmation of an Argentine landing.

C C Bright

2 April 1982

C C Bright  
South America Department

P.S. MOD now confirm this information, adding only that the troop carriers are reported to be surrounding Government House.

cc. PS/LPS  
PS/Mr Luce  
PS/PUS  
Mr Giffard  
Mr Ure  
Cabinet Office  
PS/No 10

RESTRICTED

Fig 12: Confirmation of the invasion within Foreign &amp; Commonwealth channels





Fig 13: HMS Endurance and Wasp helicopter

## REACTION TO INVASION

In keeping with a British tradition, a War Cabinet was established on 6 April.

- Margaret Thatcher: Prime Minister
- Willie Whitelaw: Deputy Prime Minister and Home Secretary
- Francis Pym: Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
- John Nott: Secretary of State for Defence
- Cecil Parkinson: Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
- Admiral Terence Lewin: Chief of the Defence Staff
- Michael Havers: Attorney General

The War Cabinet played a significant role in the administration of the war. In the three months from April to July, the Cabinet would go on to meet 67 times, sometimes with numerous meetings the same day. The exclusion of Geoffrey Howe, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was unique for this Cabinet as Thatcher believed that the war effort should not be subject to fiscal constraints.

The Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral Lewin, had an amicable relationship with Thatcher, even before the Falklands conflict began. At the first meeting of the War Cabinet, Lewin presented the military's policy proposal and obtained the full support of the War Cabinet. Furthermore, Lewin had personal ties with Caspar Weinberger, the U.S. Secretary of Defence, and David Jones, U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Considering the array of



military cooperation America extended to Britain during the conflict, the role played by the relationships between the American and British militaries was not insignificant. Following Argentina's invasion, Lewin's first act was to approach the U.S. Department of Defence about the use of the American military base and fuel on Ascension Island in the Atlantic Ocean. Admiral Lewin and the Chiefs of the Army, Navy, and Air Force essentially acted as military advisors to the War Cabinet. They stuck to their stance of responding to any questions Cabinet members may have had, rather than proactively providing their opinions. Lewin briefed Thatcher daily regarding the military situation, stayed abreast of the intentions of the War Cabinet, and relayed these intentions to Commander in Chief (C-in-C) of the Fleet, Admiral John Fieldhouse, at the Northwood command centre. As old acquaintances, the two Admirals were able to frequently discuss with each other the intentions and the operation plans of the War Cabinet. It can be said that with Lewin single-handedly taking upon himself to do the communicating with politicians, Northwood was able to focus on operational planning.

The three most crucial political decisions made by Thatcher's War Cabinet were the decision of 30 April to impose a complete blockade of the sea and airspace around the Falkland Islands, the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ), on 2 May to approve the order to attack Belgrano, and on 20 May to execute a landing operation in the Falkland Islands.

In retrospect, since we know the outcome of the conflict, its decision to impose a complete blockade may not seem all that remarkable. At the time, however, this was a decision fraught with great risk. The longer the War Cabinet waited to impose the blockade, the more Argentina would increase its troop strength in the Falklands with the addition of forces from the mainland. Furthermore, it was clear that the onset of winter in the Falklands would increase the difficulty of military operations. Hence, the decision to impose the blockade was barely made in time. According to the minutes of the War Cabinet, Thatcher herself made the decision during the meeting on 25 April to impose a complete blockade of the sea and airspace up to 200 nautical miles from the Falkland Islands, and to attack any Argentine military aircraft and vessels entering that area. Moreover, Thatcher personally explained to President Reagan that the military option was the only remaining option, and on 30 April, Britain proceeded to impose the complete blockade of the area surrounding the Falklands, the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ).

On 1 April the Foreign and Commonwealth Office stepped-up its domestic crisis posture in Whitehall and two nuclear powered conventionally armed submarines (SSNs) HMS Spartan from Gibraltar, and HMS Splendid from Faslane were deployed to the South Atlantic. The first elements of the British Naval Task Force also departed Gibraltar, the frigates Arrow, Brilliant and Plymouth, destroyers Antrim, Glamorgan, Coventry, Glasgow and Sheffield, and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Tidespring.

On 31 March, Sigint picked up unmistakable signs of the Falklands invasion, with just two days' notice. A sudden increase in signals traffic leading intelligence analysts to the only possible explanation. The invasion of the Falklands was imminent.

The distance between Britain and the Falklands (some 6,800 miles) ensured that nothing could be done to stop the Argentine invasion, which took place in the early hours of 2 April.

When Argentinian Marines occupied Stanley, the news of the invasion was met with celebrations in Buenos Aires with a 250,000 strong crowd, at the heart of the capital, chanting their approval.

In the ensuing week, Britain stepped up her diplomatic efforts. At the UN Security Council, Resolution 502 was passed, condemning the Argentine invasion. President Reagan agreed that U.S Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, should embark on some shuttle diplomacy. The European Economic Community Ministers (becoming the European Union in 1992) agreed to adopt military and economic sanctions against Argentina.

On the military front, the Rules Of Engagement (ROE) were issued to the Surface Force under Operation PARAQUET, the codename given to the re-taking of South Georgia, as a prelude to Operation CORPORATE to secure the Falkland Islands. Instructions were received by HMS Antrim, Plymouth, Endurance and Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Tidespring, to undertake operations around South Georgia.

## UK GOVERNMENT COMES UNDER PRESSURE

The UK Government came under great pressure by the Press to explain the lack of foresight. The Press claimed that the UK knew weeks in advance that invasion was imminent.

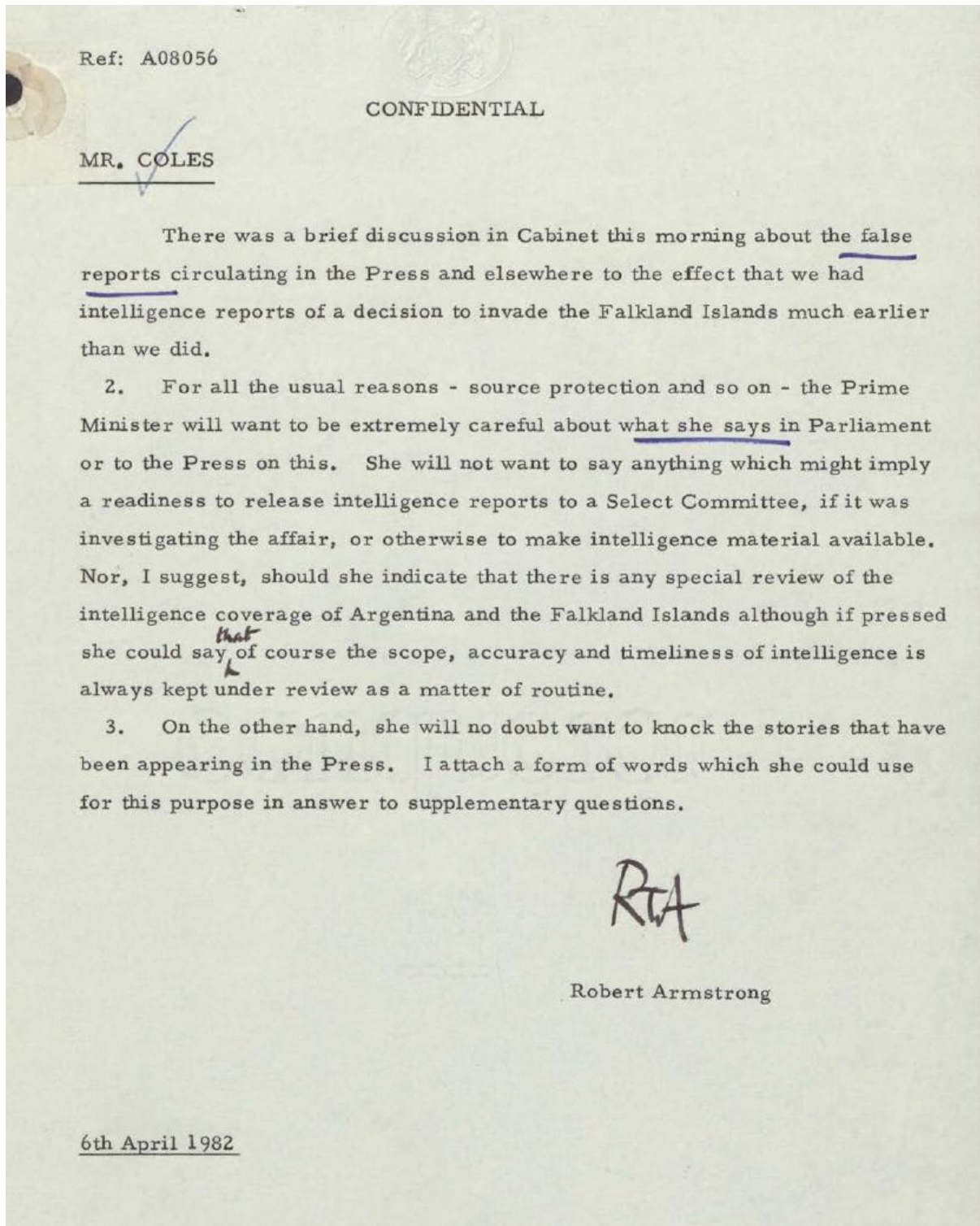


Fig 14: Cabinet Secretary Robert Armstrong memo to John Coles, Private Secretary to Margaret Thatcher proposing a defensive brief for the Prime Minister

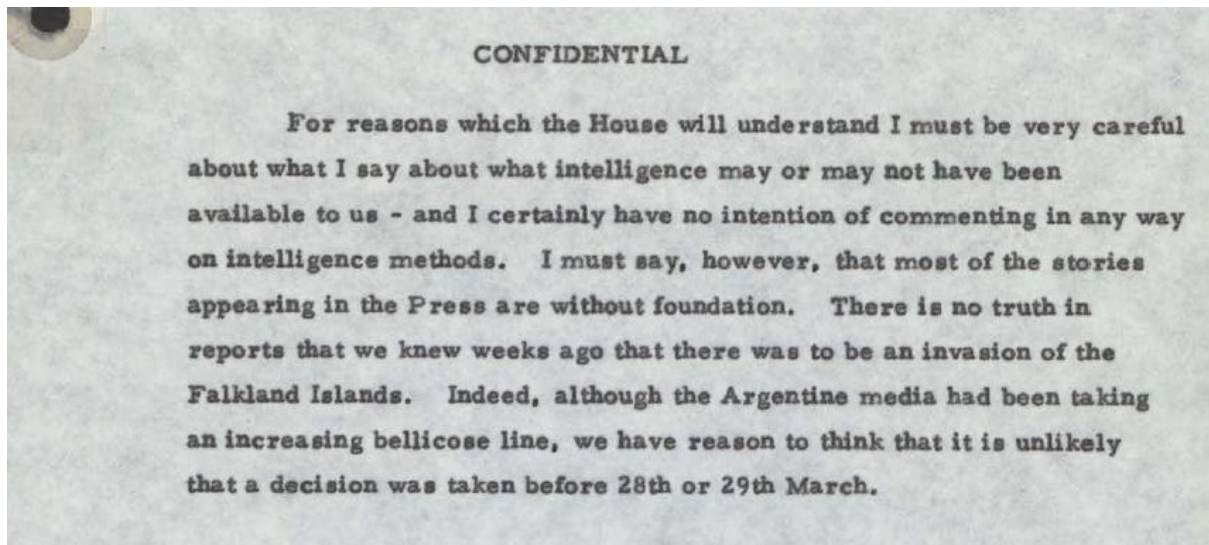


Fig 15: The proposed form of words



## SIGINT SUPPORT TO THE TASK FORCE

**TOP SECRET** **UK EYES A** (31)

Reference D/3147DQ/DTF54

**HANDLE VIA COMINT CHANNELS ONLY** 7 April 1982

DP P7 H74 J J27 K K42 ASO S1)  
 V V2 W Z RNSO ~~W~~ I ) copy to each )

The following decisions were taken at a meeting chaired by DP yesterday.

**SIGINT SUPPORT TO THE TASK FORCE**

**SIGINT Equipment/Personnel Embarked**

1. There are 5 CHANDOS fits available, ie 10 HF and 10 VHF receivers. There are also 3 printer equipments. There are 14-16 operators, including 4 Spanish linguists. It is not yet known on which ships the fits will be installed. The deployment of the fits and personnel will take place at ASCENSION. CT ratings are currently on ASCENSION waiting to be picked up by HMS ANTRIM.

**Communications in GCHQ**

2. a. Two additional CCOs will depart for ASCENSION on Thursday. Requirements at ASCENSION for General Service traffic are already increasing.

b. A BT scrutiny of the GCHQ telephone exchange is to be carried out.

c. There may be a requirement for extra manning of the GCHQ telephone exchange over Easter.

d. The level of manning over Easter in W is adequate; requirements are being kept under review.

e. There is a requirement for additional typist support out of usual hours in K to ease the OCR load, especially during the early evening when the end-product output is at its heaviest. There is also a need for additional typist support out of hours in C Pool to deal with S and Z requirements.

Action: DP to speak to G/G2, thereafter for Divisions to sort out.

f. There is a requirement for access out of hours between W and the processing group in C Annex. K are arranging for clerical/messenger support.

**Identification of Crisis-related Traffic**

3. Pending the declaration of a SIGINT alert, it was suggested that a codeword could be used to identify crisis-related SIGINT traffic to speed up handling. The codeword BREITON had been cleared with R, for such a purpose.

Action: S1

**Secure Voice Communications with MOD, Northwood etc**

4. The present situation was causing problems. The possibility of using BRAHMS was raised.

**TOP SECRET** **UK EYES A**

**HANDLE VIA COMINT CHANNELS ONLY**

89252 Dd 582998 5m 1/79 SLS

Fig 16



**TOP SECRET**

HANDLE VIA COMINT CHANNELS ONLY

**UK EYES**

2

D/3147DQ/DTF54

## External Communications

5. a. At present the communications with ships of the Fleet engaged in SIGINT consist of a 50 baud circuit from the vessel to Whitehall, which is a General Service link with SIGINT traffic interleaved with operations traffic. From Whitehall the traffic goes on a 75 baud circuit to the switching centre at Fort Southwick and from there to GCHQ. If the traffic goes by satellite rather than HF, an extra leg is involved. The result is that SIGINT traffic is liable to delay caused by queuing with General Service traffic.
- b. W is in the process of strengthening the service with the task force by taking a machine usually used as a spare on the link with [REDACTED]. M37 needs printers for service to covert sites; equipment usually used on the [REDACTED] link is to be used.
- c. There is already a backlog of routine traffic from GCHQ to MOD. It is hoped to open a second circuit today.
- d. There is a possibility of establishing a dedicated end-to-end protected channel from the ship direct to GCHQ within the RN multiplexing system. This would be a 75 baud offline-enciphered dedicated link. GCHQ are talking to Northwood about this.

Action: to be co-ordinated via S1.

- e. AWP3 is discussing communications requirements with elements within GCHQ.

## Maintenance

6. a. A site power maintenance exercise has been postponed from last week. The exercise would result in both W and X using standby power, with no further reserve supply. It was felt that it may be advisable to carry out the exercise in the near future to get it out of the way.

Action: W, X, F6 to discuss.

- b. H has asked X to carry out routine maintenance on the main computers in the near future.

## Service of SIGINT to the Task Force

7. a. End-product. This is already addressed to MOD and Northwood. The task force could be added directly as an addressee, or material could be forwarded from Northwood. The main requirement would be for K reports based on ARN. There may also be a requirement for a service of sanitised reports to the Fleet.
  - b. Northwood are receiving kleiglight-derived information on a daily basis, giving the position of Soviet merchant shipping in the South Atlantic. NSA are prepared to provide a service giving positions of naval ships as well, in areas to be specified by Northwood.
8. The quantity of end-product being received by Northwood at present is small, but may well increase.

**TOP SECRET**

HANDLE VIA COMINT CHANNELS ONLY

**UK EYES A**

Fig 17

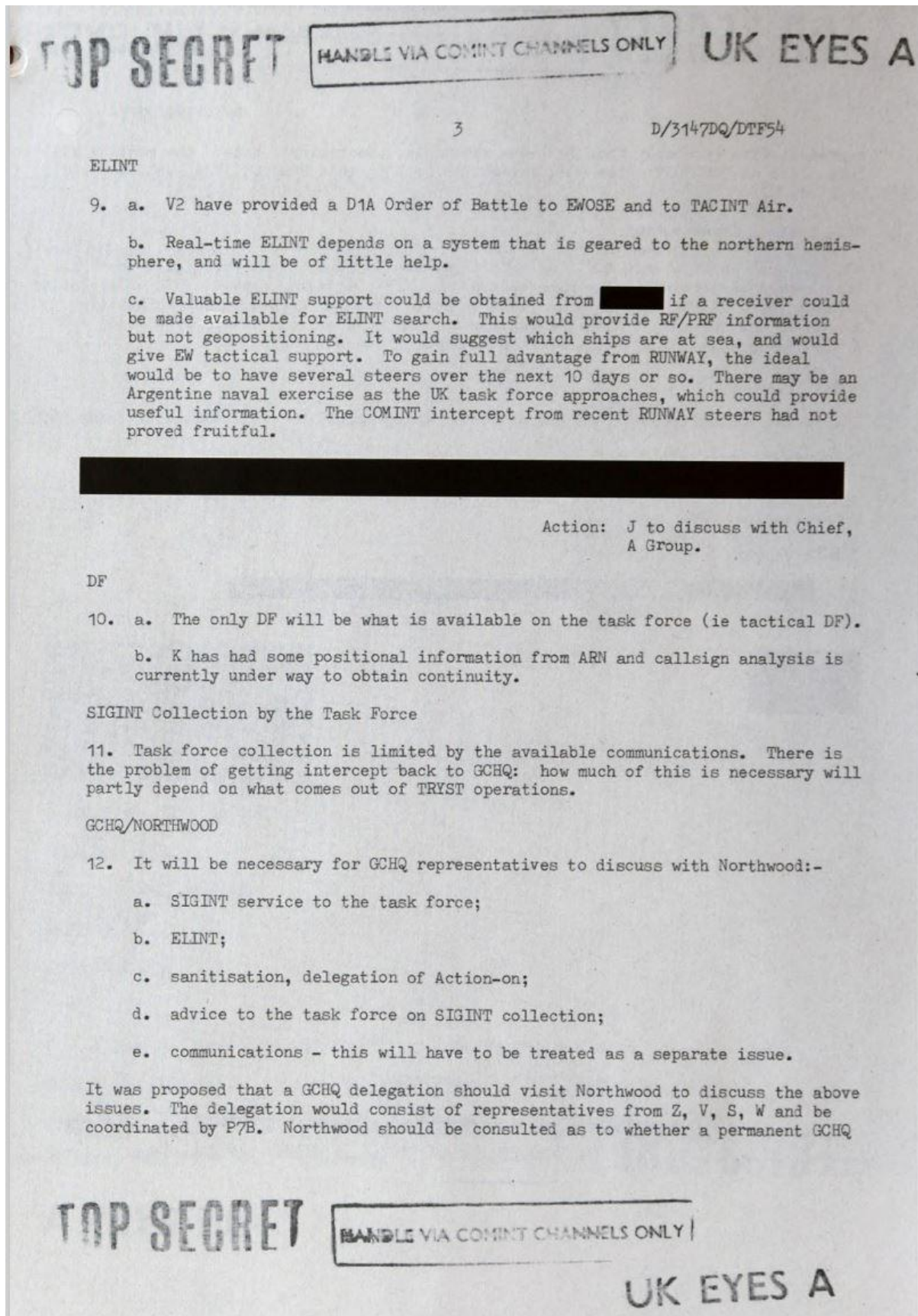


Fig 18



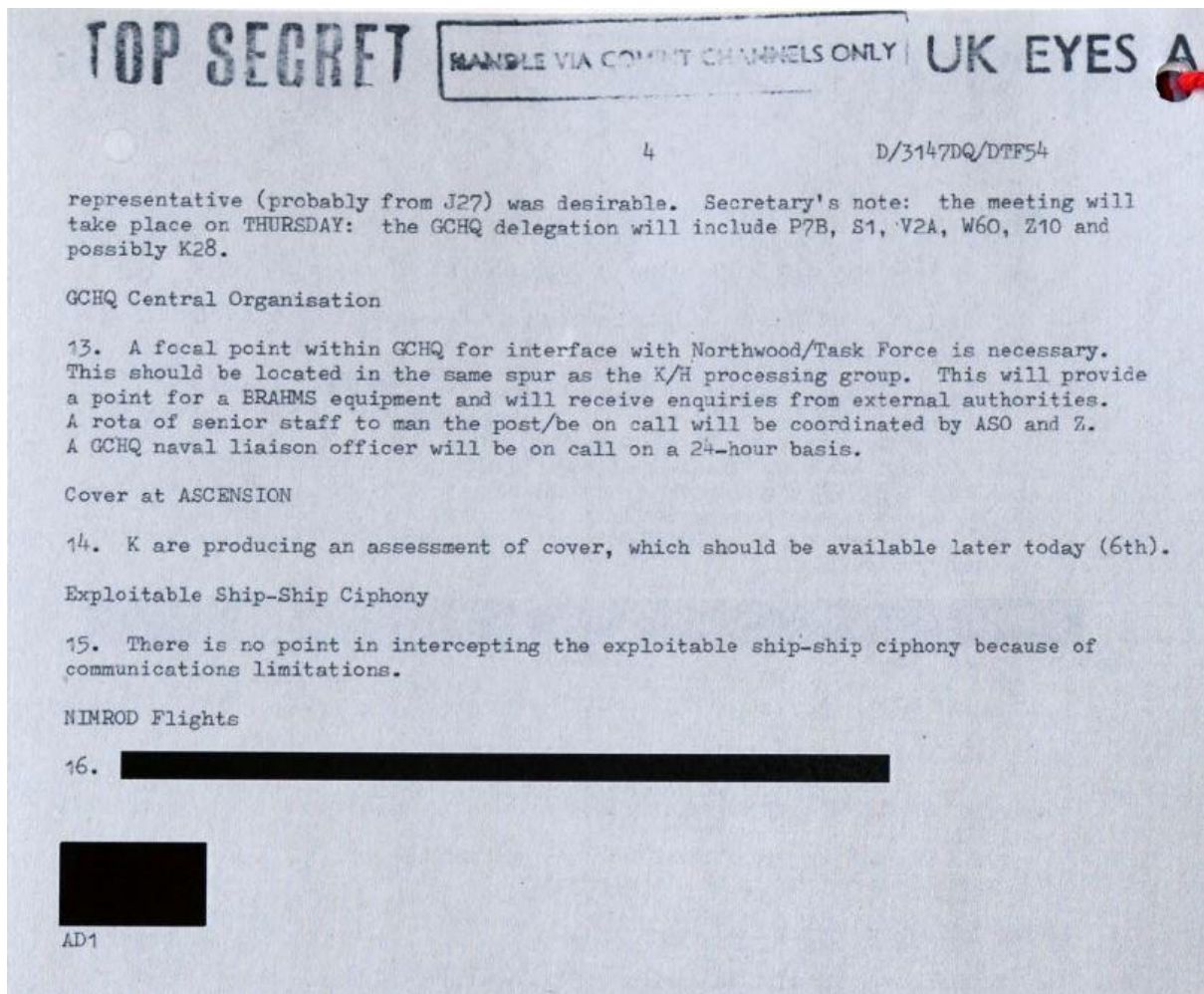


Fig 19

Figs 16, 17, 18, 19: Minutes from GCHQ crisis response meeting. The expansion below provides explanation and insight into the technical challenges and limitations

Para 1: CHANDOS enabling two channels each of HF and VHF, enough to provide local situational awareness if in plain language (Spanish would obviously require a linguist operator).

2.a: CCOs = W Division Communications and Cipher Officers. Communication (Comcen) staff to prepare and process signal messages (otherwise referred to as 'traffic').

2.e: OCR = Optical Character Reader. Pre-prepared typed signals on formatted paper, prepared by K Division and ingested by the OCR within the W Division Comcen. Text was displayed on a screen, QC'd, routing indicators added and transmitted.

4: Secure speech between GCHQ and Northwood was achieved by a BID/470 BRAHMS. A single channel analogue telephone which digitised and compressed the voice signal (users tended to sound like Mickey Mouse).

5: Off-line encipherment of Sigint 'Y' messages into five figure groups were transmitted via the General Service (Genser) 'R' comms channel. Ships engaged in Sigint were supported by circuits of 50 bauds (50 bits/s).



7: A direct Sigint service from GCHQ to RN Ships was considered for the first time. The normal practice was a manual re-file by Northwood of selected items rather than direct from GCHQ. 'Kleights' were short unevaluated Sigint messages.

9.c: The use of a single overhead platform was considered to identify Argentine Navy ships by their radar emissions (Elint), but could not provide locations.

10: Direction Finding (D/F) capabilities will be limited to what the Fleet could conduct with their own assets against believed hostile HF or VHF communications.

12: This request is probably the first deployment of a Government Communications Officer (GCO).

13. Probably the first standing up of a Senior Watch Officer (now SOO), but initially on an on-call basis. Prior to the conflict, out of hour referrals for Action-On were managed by the Duty Signals Officer (DSO), the senior officer of W Division, who phoned Z10B (to return to the office) who acted as duty Policy advisor and release authority.

The relationship between GCHQ and CINC Fleet Northwood was to be particularly important with additional equipment for Indicators and Warnings being installed on some of the ships heading South. The arrival of the carriers HMS Hermes and Invincible and the assault ship HMS Fearless at Ascension on 16 and 17 April was the last realistic opportunity to equip the Command ships with any specialist staff and equipment prior to their last leg South.

## CINCFLEET INTELLIGENCE REQUIREMENTS LEVIED ON GCHQ

Printed on fanfold paper, this message has been re-typed below this copy for clarity.

O P 081646Z APR 82  
FM CINCFLEET  
TO GCHQ  
INFO ADDUK  
CTF 311  
HOSTC  
HGT8GP  
CTG 317.8  
CTU 317.8.3  
HMS HERMES

---

HMS FEARLESS  
ZEM  
S E C R E T COMINT CHANNELS  
OPERATION CORPORATE. BRETTON.  
REF GCHQ 071032Z APR 82 (HOTAL) -41  
MODUK FOR DI 24(N) CORE INT DD OPS(N) AIR CORE INT  
DI 24 AIR DD OPS REM AND R3.  
GCHQ SUPPORT FOR CORPORATE.  
1. REQUIREMENTS FOR PRODUCT.  
A. BACKGROUND.  
(1) TO BE PASSED TO GCU NORTHWOOD (IE JN1C) FOR  
CINCFLEET/HQ 1R GP AND INCLUSION IN CINCFLEET INT SUMMARIES  
TO CTG AND CTU 317.8.3.  
(A) ARG REACTION TO POLITICAL MOVES. EXCLUSION ZONE ETC.  
(B) EVIDENCE OF SUPPLY OF INT TO ARG FROM OTHER COUNTRIES  
(C) ARG DIRECTIVES TO NAVAL AND OTHER MILITARY FORCE  
COMMANDERS  
(D) DEPLOYMENT PLANS FOR ARG NAVAL AND AIR FORCES.  
(E) TACTICS AND ROE  
(F) TASK ORGANISATION  
(G) UNIT AND WEAPON CAPABILITIES  
(H) RELEVANT WP INFORMATION  
(I) PLANNED ARG AIR MOVEMENTS/TASKING  
(K) SIGINT CAPABILITY OF ARG NAVY/AIR FORCE

---

(2) TO BE PASSED DIRECT TO CINCFLEET, CTG 317.8 CTU 317.8.3  
HERMES FEARLESS HOSTC  
(A) FALKLANDS AND SOUTH GEORGIA BUILD-UP, DEFENSIVE MEASURES,  
FORCE DISPOSITION AND ORDERS, USE OF MINES, RADAR, COMMS  
AND AIRFIELD.

Fig 20

(13) INTENTIONS FOR USE OF ISLANDERS

(13) TO BE PASSED TO GCU NORTHWOOD FOR CINCFLT/18GP EW DATA SUPPORT CELL (INFO ENOSE) AND ONWARD TO AFLOAT UNITS AS NECESSARY.

A. SIGINT PERTAINING TO ARG ACTIVE AND PASSIVE EQUIPMENT: THE PARAMETERS FROM ELINT, AND COMINT GIVING ARGENTINE COMMS AND RADAR OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

B. POSITIONAL INFO. WHAT WHERE WHETHER WHEN OF ARG NAVAL FORCES TO GCU NORTHWOOD FOR GENTEL BROADCAST IF POSSIBLE OR IF NOT TO CTG VIA COMINT CHANNELS.

C. SHIPBORNE COLLECTION. EXPECTED CT DEPLOYMENT OF CT TEAMS AND EQUIPMENT TO BE IN HERMES FEARLESS AND SHIP TO BE NOMINATED BY CTG. ROLE WILL BE DIRECT SUPPORT AND INTERCEPT CAPABILITY WILL BE COMINT. FLEET HFDF ASSETS (INCLUDING ONE SSN) WILL BE EMPLOYED ON TACTICAL HF INTERCEPT AND DF

D. STEERAGE REQUIREMENTS. SHIPS WITH CT TEAMS WILL REQUIRE SIGNALLING UPDATES AT CAT 2 OF COMINT BRIEF ALREADY SUPPLIED BY GCHO. BRIEFS IN CSOS ASCENSION BEING DELIVERED TO SHIPS BY CT TEAMS). NON-CODENORD BRIEFS AND UPDATES OF CALL TYPE OF EMISSION, FREQ AND UNIT IDENTIFIER REQUIRED TO GCU NORTHWOOD FOR EW DATA SUPPORT CELL TO ACTION BY SIGNAL TO APPROPRIATE SHIPS.

4. SIGNALLING BACK. EXPECT HERMES TO HAVE SI ON-LINE COMMS (RM INTEL) WHICH WILL ENABLE TELETYPE TRAFFIC TO BE SIGNALLING BACK TO GCHO. OTHER SHIPS WILL HAVE TO RELY ON BLUEKEY.

5. GCHO SUPPORT. REQUEST GCHO ADVISER FROM MON 12 APR TO COINCIDE WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF EXCLUSION ZONE. MAIN DUTIES TO BE ON-SPOT ADVICE ON COMINT SANITISATION AND >ACTION ON>. FROM FIRST WEEK MAY THIS REQUIREMENT EXPECTED TO BECOME CONTINUOUS AVAILABILITY. REGRET ACCOMMODATION AT NORTHWOOD CAMP BED ONLY.

6. SUPPORT TO ASCENSION. THERE ARE NO NAVAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SERVICE OF COMINT ON ASCENSION BUT THERE MAY BE A REQUIREMENT FOR SUPPORT TO NINROD MR AND POSSIBLY NINROD R TO BE ADVISED BY APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES. EXISTING 24 HOUR COMMS UK-CSOS ASCENSION NOTED.

7. COMMUNICATIONS.

A. BRAHMS NOW FITTED IN JNIC ON NORTHWOOD EXT 634. DIAL 761 257 PLUS EXTN FROM GCHO.

B. FOLLOWING BEING INVESTIGATED:

(1) SECOND GCU NORTHWOOD - GCHO SI LINK

(2) ABILITY OF GCHO TO RECEIVE/ORIGINATE TRAFFIC TO HERMES ON INTEL LINK DIRECT

(3) MEANS OF AVOIDING DELAY AT WHITEHALL ON THE LINE

Fig 21

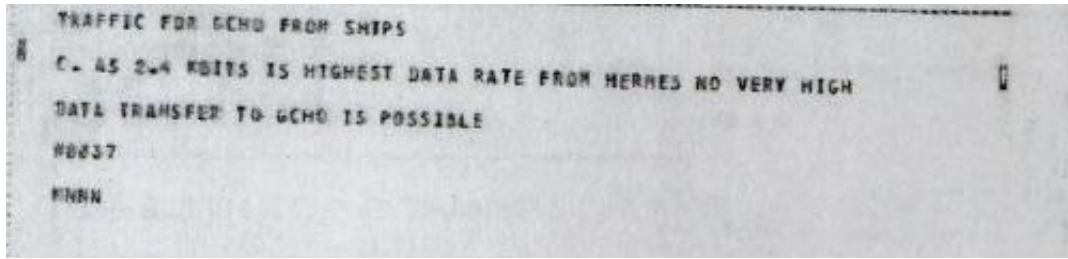


Fig 22

Figs 20, 21 & 22: CINCFLEET intelligence requirements levied on GCHQ. Printed on a line printer within W Division Comcen on fanfold paper and ink ribbon, reproduced below.

O P 081646Z APR 82  
 FM CINCFLEET  
 TO GCHQ  
 INFO MODUK  
 CTF 311  
 HQ STC  
 HQ 1BGP  
 CTG 317.8  
 CTU 317.8.3  
 HMS HERMES  
 HMS FEARLESS  
 ZEM  
 S E C R E T COMINT CHANNELS  
 OPERATION CORPORATE. BRETTON.  
 MODUK FOR DI 24 (N) CDRE INT DD OPS (M) AIR CDRE INT  
 DI 24 AIR DD OPS (EW AND R)  
 GCHQ SUPPORT FOR CORPORATE.

1. REQUIREMENTS OF PRODUCT.
  - A. BACKGROUND.
    - (1) TO BE PASSED TO GCU NORTHWOOD (IF JMIC) FOR CINCFLEET/HQ 18 GP AND INCLUSION IN CINCFLEET INT SUMMARIES TO CTG AND CRU 317.8.3
      - (A) ARG REACTION TO POLITICAL MOVES. EXCLUSION ZONE ETC.
      - (B) EVIDENCE OF SUPPLY OF INT TO ARG FROM OTHER COUNTRIES
      - (C) ARG DIRECTIVES TO NAVAL AND OTHER MILITARY FORCE COMMANDERS
      - (D) DEPLOYMENT PLANS FOR ARG NAVAL AND AIR FORCES.
      - (E) TACTICS AND ROE
      - (F) TASK ORGANISATION
      - (G) UNIT AND WEAPON CAPABILITIES
      - (H) RELEVANT WP INFORMATION
      - (I) PLANNED ARG AIR MOVEMENT / TASKING
      - (J) SIGINT CAPABILITY OF ARG NAV/AIR FORCE
    - (2) TO BE PASSED DIRECT TO CINCFLEET. CTG 317.8 CTU 317.8.3 HERMES FEARLESS HQSTC
      - (A) FALKLANDS AND SOUTH GEORGIA BUILD-UP. DEFENSIVE MEASURES. FORCE DISPOSITION AND ORDERS, USE OF MINES, RADAR, COMMS AND AIRFIELD.
      - (B) INTENTION FOR USE OF ISLANDERS
    - (3) TO BE PASSED TO GCU NORTHWOOD FOR CINCFLEET / 18GP EW DATA SUPPORT CELL (INFO EWOSE) AND ONWARD TO AFLOAT UNITS AS NECESSARY.
      - A. SIGINT PERTAINING TO ARG ACTIVE AND PASSIVE EQUIPMENT: IE PARAMETERS FROM ELINT, AND COMINT GIVING ARGENTINE COMMS AND RADAR OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS.

## OFFICIAL

B. POSITIONAL INFO. WHAT WHERE WHITHER WHEN OF ARG NAVAL FORCES TO GCU NORTHWOOD FOR GENTEL BROADCAST IF POSSIBLE OR IF NOT TO CTG VIA COMINT CHANNELS.

2. SHIPBORNE COLLECTION. EXPECTED CT DEPLOYMENT OF CT TEAMS AND EQUIPMENT TO BE IN HERMES AND FEARLESS AND SHIP TO BE NOMINATED BY CTG. ROLE WILL BE DIRECT SUPPORT AND INTERCEPT CAPABILITY WILL BE COMINT. FLEET HFDF ASSETS (INCLUDING ONE SSN) WILL BE EMPLOYED ON TACTICAL HF INTERCEPT AND DF.

3. STEERAGE REQUIREMENTS. SHIPS WITH CT TEAMS WILL REQUIRE SIGNALLED UPDATES AT CAT 2 OF COMINT BRIEF ALREADY SUPPLIED BY GCHQ. (BRIEFS IN CSOS ASCENSION BIENG DELIVERED TO SHIPS BY CT TEAMS), NON-CODEWORD BRIEFS AND UPDATES OF CALL. TYPE OF EMISSION. FREQ AND UNIT IDENTIFIER REQUIRED TO GCU NORTHWOOD FOR EW DATA SUPPORT CELL TO ACTION BY SIGNAL TO APPROPRIATE SHIPS.

4. SIGNALLING BACK. EXPECT HERMES TO HAVE SI ON-LINE COMMS (RN INTEL) WHICH WILL ENABLE TELECYPHER TRAFFIC TO VE SIGNALLED BACK TO GCHQ. OTHER SHIPS WILL HAVE TO RELY ON BLUEKEY.

5. GCHQ SUPPORT. REQUEST GCHQ ADVISOR FROM 12 APR TO COINCIDE WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF EXCLUSION ZONE. MAIN DUTIES TO BE ON-SPOT ADVICE ON COMINT SANITISATION AND 'ACTION ON'. FROM FIRST WEEK MAY THIS REQUIREMENT EXPECEED TO BECOME CONTINUOUS AVAILABILITY. REGRET ACCOMMODATION AT NORTHWOOD CAMP BED ONLY.

6. SUPPORT TO ASCENSION. THERE ARE NO NAVAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SERVICE OF COMINT ON ASCENSION BUT THERE MAY BE A REQUIREMENT FOR SUPPORT TO NIMROD MR AND POSSIBLY NIMROD R TO BE ADVISED BY APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES. EXISTING 24 HOUR COMMS UK-CSOS ASCENSION NOTED.

7. COMMUNICATIONS.

A. BRHAMS NOW FITTED IN JMIC ON NORTHWOOD EXT 643. DIAL 761 257 PLUS EXTN FROM GCHQ.

B. FOLLOWING BEING INVESTIGATED.

(1) SECOND GCU NORTHWOOD – GCHQ SI LINK

(2) ABILITY OF GCHQ TO RECEIVE/ORIGINATE TRAFFIC TO HERMES RN INTEL DIRECT

(3) MEANS OF AVOIDING DELAY AT WHITEHALL OF OFF-LINE ENCRYPTED TRAFFIC FOR GCHQ FROM SHIPS.

C. AS 2.4 KBITS IS HIGHEST DATA RATE FROM HERMES NO VERY HIGHT DATA TRANSFER TO GCHQ IS POSSIBLE.

#0037

NNNN





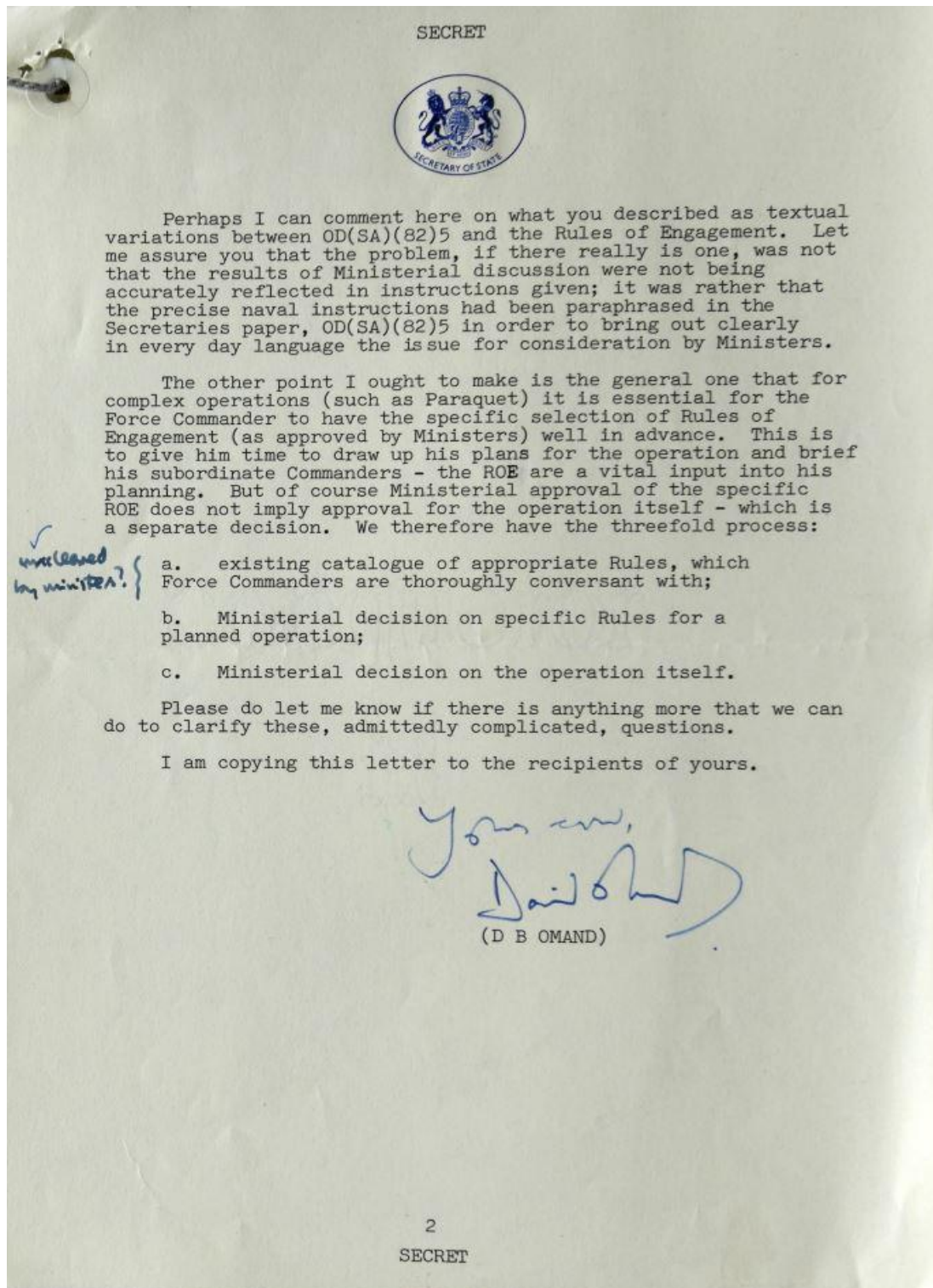


Fig 24

Letter from David Omand<sup>1</sup> (Principle Private Secretary to Secretary of State for Defence) to Brian Fall (Principal private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs) regarding the distinction between Rules of Engagement (ROEs) in advance to Royal Navy deployments, SSNs and specific ROEs issued in response to new intelligence.

<sup>1</sup> David Omand was appointed Director GCHQ from 1996 to 1997 prior to his appointment as Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office.



## SANTA FE INCIDENT

Sigint played a major part in providing information about the intentions and activities of the Argentinian submarine ARA Santa Fe, including its precise location. The first UK military strike action by the British took place on 25 April when the Santa Fe was detected and attacked near Grytviken by helicopters from the Task Force. The senior aviator of the group was Antrim's flight commander, Lt Cdr Ian Stanley. His Wessex 3, known to all as 'Humphrey', was quite an old airframe but one of a small number equipped with radar.

The observer, Lt Chris Parry, had responsibility for navigating, communicating and weaponry

*"I think I'd fused the depth charges in about 10 seconds. In terms of the main conflict, this was the opening shot," said Parry.*

On the morning of 25, Stanley and Parry convinced their captain to allow them to launch and go in search of the submarine, and thus began the unfold of events that enabled GCHQ to become a force multiplier to the conflict.

*"We couldn't see a submarine or anything. And I suggested to my flight Commander that we do one transmission on the radar. So, on the one sweep – which faded very quickly, I saw a small 'contact' about six miles away off Cumberland Bay, so we closed in to have a look. We ran in, dropped the depth charges. One of them bounced off the casing of the sub, the other dropped alongside. They both exploded and the whole back end lifted out the water".*

of Humphrey.



Fig 25: HMS Antrim and Humphrey

The near misses by two Mk11 depth charges punctured a ballast tank. Unable to dive, the submarine limped back towards Grytviken. As she did, one of HMS Brilliant's Lynx helicopters attacked with a Mk46 torpedo which failed to explode, and the two Endurance Wasps fired AS12 missiles, hitting the fin. HMS Plymouth's Wasp fired another AS12 and both of Endurance's Wasps continued to strafe with machine guns, badly damaging the submarine. They were later to learn that Humphrey had been the first helicopter ever to engage a submarine and that the action was the first to disable a submarine since World



War Two. The crew of the Santa Fe had little time prior to abandoning the boat, but enough for the communicator to throw the cipher machine overboard.

During an inspection of Santa Fe the following day, several classified items were recovered, including the daily settings of the Argentine callsign and codeword system (which remained unchanged for the remainder of that year) and the Argentine Order of Battle (OOB) and locations on the islands. During questioning at Ascension, prior to being sent back to Argentina, the communicator admitted that he knew that he had failed to get rid of the codebooks, despite telling the other crew that he had.



Fig 26 left & Fig 27 right. Badly damaged Argentine submarine ARA Santa Fe

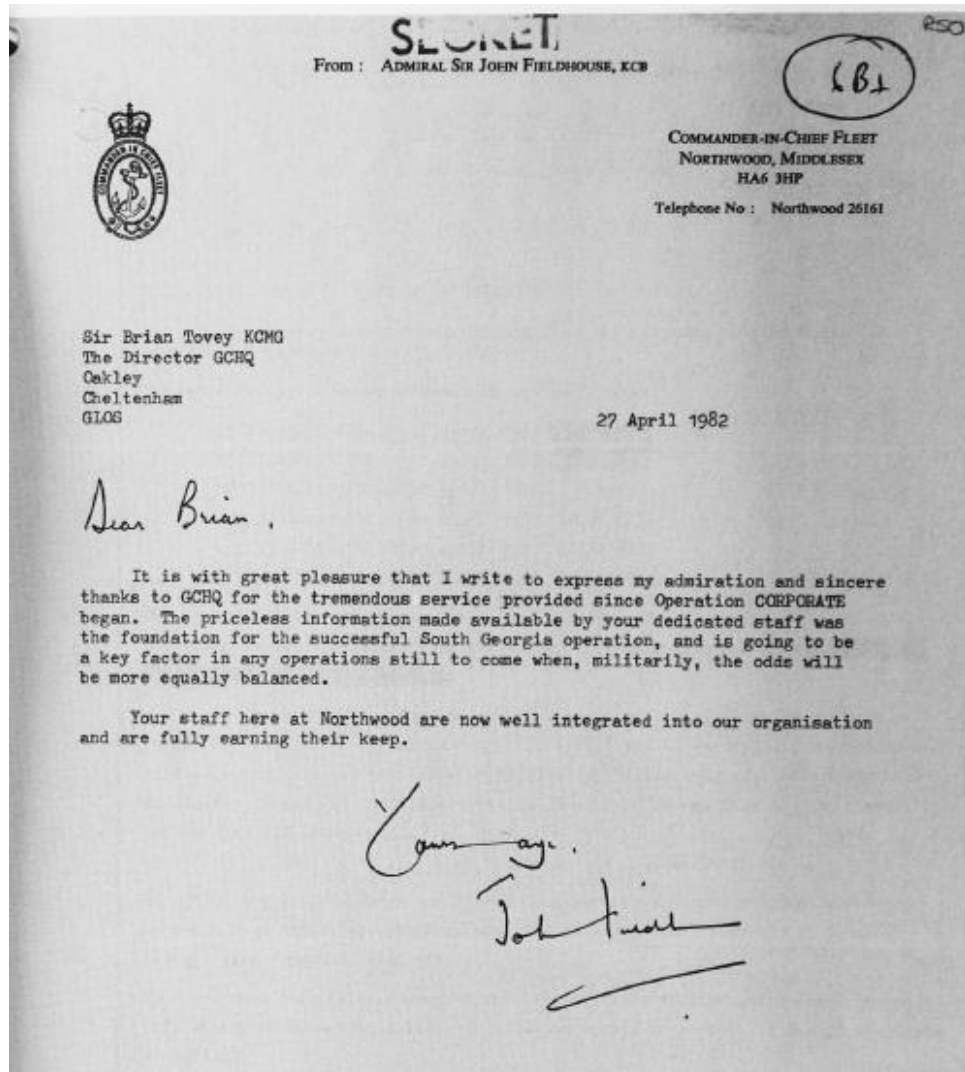


Fig 28: Letter to GCHQ Director Brian Tovey from C-In-C Fleet Admiral John Fieldhouse

Aside from reducing the operational submarine fleet by 50%, the attack on Santa Fe has not been regarded as particularly significant in the context of the conflict, however, the recovery of this information early in the war was a significant intelligence coup. The Sigint team on HMS Endurance transmitted five lengthy messages back to GCHQ, headed by 'Stand-by, it's Christmas'. Details included a description of how the hand-cipher of the callsign systems worked and the daily crypto settings till 31 December 1982. The recovered Argentine OOB and locations also influenced subsequent ingress of reconnaissance missions by the UK Special Forces.



Fig 29: 15 April 1982 Woodward arrived on HMS Hermes, flagship of Task Group 317.8 and nerve centre of Operation CORPORATE

### **SIGNALS INTELLIGENCE / SPECIAL TASK DETACHMENTS**

The lead time to produce formal Sigint reports was too long to affect tactical decision-making, the strategic system was not designed to provide intelligence to lower echelons of the military in a timely manner to meet the tactical requirement. This was remedied by the Task Force being strengthened by the deployment of Special Task Detachments (STD) on the assault ships HMS Intrepid and Fearless. The specialist activities of these small teams, whose existence was unknown to many, included providing Electronic Warfare (EW) support (interception of Argentinian electronic and radio signals) which allowed almost real-time receipt of local enemy plans. Military sponsored, the teams received pre-deployment training and equipment from GCHQ. An account of the STDs by Major David Thorp, called *The Silent Listener*, was originally published July 2011. As the Task Force came closer to the Falklands, the levels of Argentine military communications became increasingly accessible, thus tactical intelligence derived from High Frequency (HF) and Very High Frequency (VHF) radio became available locally and not back at Northwood. In addition to identifying and countering enemy radio communications, they maintained communications between the 2<sup>nd</sup> Parachute battalion and the Amphibious Assault Command ship HMS Fearless. An example of an STD situational report can be read [here](#).



D30  
ZL  
ADL  
GCU NTHWOOD.

[REDACTED]

P 261500Z MAY 82  
FM UKN 2921  
TO GCHO  
NODUK  
[REDACTED]

ZEM

TOP SECRET UMBRA MARGAY  
GCHO FOR P7/S1/K25X  
NODUK FOR DI24(A)  
ARMY EW DET - SITREP NO 5

1. OPERATIONAL

A. THE 2 X ARMY EW DETS HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED AS FOLLOWS:

(1) EW DET A (CAPT CORBETT AND GROUP FROM BADR) LOCATED AT BDE HQ ON LAND.

(11) EW DET B (STD - COMMS AND SY GP/[REDACTED]) LOCATED ON BOARD

WMS INTREPID.

B. ON ESTABLISHING BEACH HEAD AT PORT SAN CARLOS, IT WAS DECIDED THAT EW DET B WOULD REMAIN ON BOARD SHIP. MANY FACTORS DETERMINED THIS DECISION, THE MOST IMPORTANT AS FAR AS THE DET WAS CONCERNED WAS THAT BDE COULD NOT AFFORD TO LOSE OUR PRODUCT FOR APPROX 12 HOURS (THE TIME EXPECTED TO TAKE TO DISEMBARK).

C. EW DET A DISEMBARKED ON 22 MAY AND INITIALLY WERE LOCATED WITH BDE HQ. AS OF TODAY, THIS DET HAS HARDLY BEEN OPERATIONAL.

Fig 30

THE IDEA IS TO DEPLOY THIS DET TO HIGH GROUND OVERLOOKING BDE HQ, ALAS, EVERY TIME THE DET MOVES A SHORT DISTANCE IT GETS >SOGGED DOWN>> AND HAS TO BE RECOVERED.

D. PRIOR TO >D DAY>, IT WAS AGREED THAT DET A WOULD COVER TARGETS IN THE VHF FREQ RANGE AND DET B, TARGETS IN THE HF FREQ RANGE. DET B HAS VIRTUALLY EMPLOYED ALL ITS ASSETS TO COVER AND REPORT THE HF FREQ RANGE. THEREFORE, VERY LITTLE VHF ACTY HAS BEEN INTERCEPTED. NOW THAT THE CONTACT BATTLE HAS STARTED (GOOSE GREEN), IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE HF TARGET IS NOT BUSY, ALLOWING DET B TO OBSERVE THE VHF FREQ RANGE.

E. THE PASSAGE OF INT TO BDE HQ OVER THE DEDICATED EM LINK HAS WORKED VERY WELL. THE ONLY >HICK-UP> WE HAVE HAD IS THE INTERPRETATION OF OUR PRODUCT. HAVING A PERSON WITH EXPERIENCE OF OUR PRODUCT COLOCATED AT THE BDE HQ INT CELL WOULD HAVE MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE. FOR EXAMPLE:

DET INFO BDE THAT PATROLS HAD BEEN DEPLOYED TO 5 FORWARD LOC.

BDE TO DET. WE KNOW, THEY ARE PATROLS FROM BRIT PARA.

(COMMENT - ARGIE DIDN'T TELL US WHO'S PATROLS THEY WERE)

LATER THAT DAY, I WAS SPEAKING WITH CO FROM PARA AND HE ASKED FOR THE LOCS AS PASSE TO BDE. ON CHECKING HIS LOCSTAT, ONLY THE FIRST 2 LOCS WERE THE SAME. OBVIOUSLY ALL THE LOCS GIVEN WERE NOT CHECKED, AND IT DIDN'T ENTER THEIR HEADS TO THINK THAT POSNS AS GIVEN WHICH WERE LARGE HILLS COULD BE OCCUPIED BY BOTH SIDES.

2 MANNING

A. EM DET A - DET CONSISTS:

CAPT G CORRETT R SIGS 14 SIG REGT

SGT FANTHROPE 14 SIG REGT

CPL ELLIS 14 SIG REGT

LCPL SPENCER 14 SIG REGT

SGT CAMPBELL 13 SIG REGT

CPL COLEMAN 13 SIG REGT

SGT VOLLENTINE 3 SQN 13 SIG REGT

B. EM DET B - NO CHANGE TO SITREP NO 4.

Fig 31

3 EQUIPMENT  
A. NO PROBLEMS WITH EQUIPMENT ON HMS INTREPID.  
B. FOR P7 - 54M EQPT. FORSEE NO PROBLEM WITH THIS EQUIPMENT  
IF DET WAS TO GO ON SHORE. EQUIPMENT WOULD NOT FIT  
INTO OWN VEHICLE, MAY FIT INTO EM DET A VEHICLE. IF NOT COULD BE  
PLACED ON A TABLE IN VEHICLE PENTHOUSE/TEMP.  
4 FUTURE INTENTIONS  
  
FOR D124(A). DET WAS DEPLOYED TO SUPPORT 3 RMC BDE. VERY SOON  
EXPECT TO SEE 5 BDE ON THE ISLAND AND POSS A DIV HQ. PLEASE  
ADVISE SOONEST CHAIN OF COMMAND FOR THIS DET AND TO WHOM WE  
SHOULD PROVIDE OUR PRODUCT. THIS INFORMATION ESSENTIAL IN ORDER  
TO PLAN FUTURE INTENTIONS.  
5 ADMIN  
1. NO PERSONAL OR ADMIN PROBLEMS.  
2. EVEN AFTER TAKING ALL THAT ARGIE HAS DROPPED ON US, DET  
MORALE REMAINS VERY HIGH EVEN THOUGH A LITTLE TIRED.  
/ 12  
NNNN

Fig 32

Figs 30, 31 & 32: STD situation report regarding the disposition and tasking



GCHQ Director Brian Tovey relays the praise received from London customers.

0 291730Z APR 82 ZYH  
 FM GCHQ LDN  
 TO GCHQ  
 SUKLO  
 ZEM  
 T O P S E C R E T UNBRA  
 DR DP G H J K N P Q R S V W X Z AND SUKLO  
 FROM DIRECTOR (COPY TO D1 FOR CIRCULATION (S-DO-DC)).  
 2. I HAVE RECEIVED WITHIN THE LAST FORTY-EIGHT HOURS THE  
 FOLLOWING WELL-MERITED INDICATIONS OF THE IMMENSELY HIGH  
 REGARD IN WHICH SIGINT IS HELD IN RELATION TO THE CURRENT  
 FALKLAND ISLANDS CRISIS:  
 A. I AM INFORMED (BUT THIS IS NOT TO BE QUOTED OUTSIDE GCHQ)  
 THAT, AT AN INNER CABINET MEETING LAST SATURDAY, ALL THOSE  
 PRESENT FROM THE PRIME MINISTER DOWNWARDS SPOKE IN GLOWING  
 TERMS OF THE VALUE OF THE SIGINT CONTRIBUTION.  
 B. ON TUESDAY I WAS TOLD BY CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF THAT QUOTE  
 WHAT SIGINT IS PRODUCING IS FIVE HUNDRED PER CENT MARVELLOUS  
 UNQUOTE.  
 C. YESTERDAY (DCDS11) TOLD ME THAT, NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME,  
 SIGINT WAS PROVIDING A SERVICE BEYOND ALL POSSIBLE PRAISE.  
 D. TO-DAY, AT JIC, DGI MADE AN IMPROMPTU SPEECH TO THE EFFECT  
 THAT QUOTE SIGINT IS VIRTUALLY THE ONLY HARD OPERATIONAL  
 INTELLIGENCE WE HAVE UNQUOTE.  
 2. YOU WILL ALSO BE AWARE THAT WE ARE LIKELY IN THE NEAR  
 FUTURE TO RECEIVE A VISIT BY A FOREIGN OFFICE MINISTER. THE  
 PRIME PURPOSE OF THIS VISIT IS TO CONVEY TO THOSE WHO ARE  
 DOING SUCH MAGNIFICENT WORK THE THANKS AND APPRECIATION OF  
 HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT.  
 3. ANYTHING I CAN ADD IS LIABLE TO VERGE ON THE SUPERFLUOUS  
 BUT THIS MUCH I CAN SAY: IN OVER THIRTY YEARS SERVICE IN  
 GCHQ I HAVE NEVER KNOWN US DO A MORE THOROUGHLY PROFESSIONAL  
 JOB OR RECEIVE MORE WELL-EARNED COMPLIMENTS FROM THOSE  
 WHOM WE SERVE. MY WARMEST THANKS AND HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS  
 GO TO ALL CONCERNED: I AM VERY PROUD OF YOU.  
 4. PLEASE ENSURE THAT ALL STAFF INVOLVED IN CRISIS-RELATED  
 WORK SEE THIS SIGNAL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. WITHIN PALMER STREET  
 A COPY GOES TO ZL.  
 #0006  
 NNNN

Fig 33

## SIGINT SERVICE TO THE SPECIAL AIR SERVICE

For the first time, a direct Sigint circuit to 22 SAS Hereford was approved with a tightly controlled service of intelligence, approve by a Z officer and transmitted via the W DSO.

**SECRET** **UK EYES A** **HANDLE VIA COMINT CHANNELS ONLY**

Reference..... Z/9388GC/8312/3  
5 May 1982

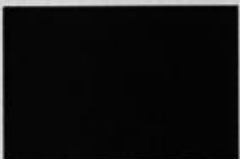
K25X (2) Private

D1 K2 R10 W60 (DSO) for information - copy to each Private

Z10 for information - to see on file

SIGINT ALERT MARGAY: REQUIREMENTS OF 22 SAS, HEREFORD

1. A special service of Sigint to 22 SAS, Hereford has been approved and the necessary arrangements for passing relevant information to them have been established. Their requirement is for any information on Argentine Orbat, deployment, equipment or Operations on or around the Falklands.
2. The service is special and it is important that no other recipient of a report should be aware that a copy has gone to SAS. For this reason K25X will not be responsible for marking material to them. Instead, for reports meeting the SAS requirement above, K25X should inform Z Division, (in working hours Z10B or Z10 and out of working hours the appropriate Z Duty Officer) of the reference and if known the DTG of relevant reports. The Z officer will then arrange with the DSO for the despatch of such items to 22 SAS.

  
Z10B

**UK EYES A**

**SECRET** **CODE 18-78** **GAW** **HANDLE VIA COMINT CHANNELS ONLY**

Fig 34

## THE ARGENTINE NAVY

After the initial invasion the Argentine Navy had returned to their base, Puerto Belgrano, and had generally remained there except for training days.

On 24 April, Argentina dispatched the aircraft carrier ARA Veinticinco de Mayo (25 de Mayo), the cruiser ARA General Belgrano, seven destroyers including ARA Santisima Trinidad and Hercules, three frigates and support ships.

The ships originally split into three Task Groups, the first Group was made up of the three frigate/corvettes, the second the aircraft carrier 25 de Mayo in company with her escorts, Santisima Trinidad and Hercules, and the third of the General Belgrano and her escort of two destroyers Bouchard and Piedra Buena.

SIGINT had reported the departure of Belgrano from the mainland and the location to form the task group of TG 79.3 with destroyers Hipolito Bouchard, Piedra Buena and the requisitioned tanker Puerto Rosales.

The three frigates and the 25 de Mayo groups stayed north of the Falklands, while the Belgrano group headed south to patrol between Tierra del Fuego and the Falkland Islands. Also on 24 May, the Argentine military issued a two-phase battle plan which was intercepted and reported to the Royal Navy the following day, and prompted the order to the British attack submarine (SSN) HMS Conqueror (CHURCHILL Class) to track down and stay with the southern Argentine task group (TG 79.3).

There were sharp ironies of the war regarding the dispositions of the Argentine fleet. The first being that the 25 de Mayo had originally been British and the second being that the Santisima Trinidad and Hercules were both Type 42 destroyers, sister ships of HMS Coventry, Glasgow and Sheffield, all of whom were sailing with the British Task Force.



**ARGENTINE NAVY TASK FORCE 79.0 (TF 79.0)**

GCHQ intercepted and reported the structure of the TF 79.0 as reported by the Argentine Commander Submarine Forces and the inclusion of combat instructions. Note, this signal confirms that no Super Etendards were embarked on the carrier 25 de Mayo.

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To be handled in accordance with IRSIG

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**TOP SECRET UMBRA**

3/AA/97246-82  
K25X 1804821126  
TAG ARN NOPS NORG AR FL GB  
ARGENTINE  
SPANISH

ARGENTINE NAVAL ACTIVITY: COMMANDER, SUBMARINE FORCES GIVES DETAILS OF TASK FORCE 79 AND ISSUES COMBAT INSTRUCTIONS.

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Ø	MODUK	505	K26
Ø	HQ STRIKE COMMAND	506-507	K25C
Ø	UKLP	508	K11
*	UKMIS NEW YORK	509	K11D
*	EMBASSY WASHINGTON	510	V2AJX
*	JARIC	511	J12
		512-513	K25X
251		514	DIRECTOR/DP
Ø		515	V2
Ø			
Ø			
301			
Ø			
Ø			

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TDS 7 + 15/5

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Fig 35

**TOP SECRET**

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3/AA/97246-82

2/4

FROM: ((COMMANDER, SUBMARINE FORCES))

TO : ((ALL SUBMARINE FORCES)).

NO'S: 122-123-124

INTERCEPT DTG: 1804820429Z

AMMENDMENT BULLETIN NO 1 TO COMMANDER SUBMARINE FORCE 2 +S+/82  
NRF XX-1.

## 1. MODIFY THE PARAGRAPH +ORGANISATION+ AS FOLLOWS:

SUBMARINE A.R.A. SALTA CFBNACD DON ROBERTO SALINAS—  
SUBMARINE A.R.A. SAN LUIS CFCBNACD DON FERNANDO M. AZCUETA  
SUBMARINE A.R.A. SANTA FE CFCBNACD DON HORADO BICAIN

## 2. AT ITEM 1B ADD THE FOLLOWING:

## B.1. TASK FORCE 79

## TASK GROUP 79.1

A.R.A 25 DE MAYO 1 AIRCRAFT CARRIER  
AERO-NAVAL GROUP EMBARKED 7/8A40 ((SKY HAWK))  
3/4TBSWE ((NFI))  
1/2SZA ((TRACKER))  
2/3H3 ((C% LYNX))  
2/3A103 ((C% SEA KING))

## CORVETTE DIVISION

3 CORVETTES

A.R.A SANTISIMA TRINIDAD 1 DESTROYER

TANKER-SHIP VYF CAMPO DURAN 1 TANKER

## B.1.2. TASK GROUP 79.2

SECOND DESTROYER DIVISION 4 DESTROYERS

A.R.A HERCULES 1 DESTROYER

A.R.A PUNTA MEDANOS 1 TANKER

**TOP SECRET**

UMBRA

Fig 36

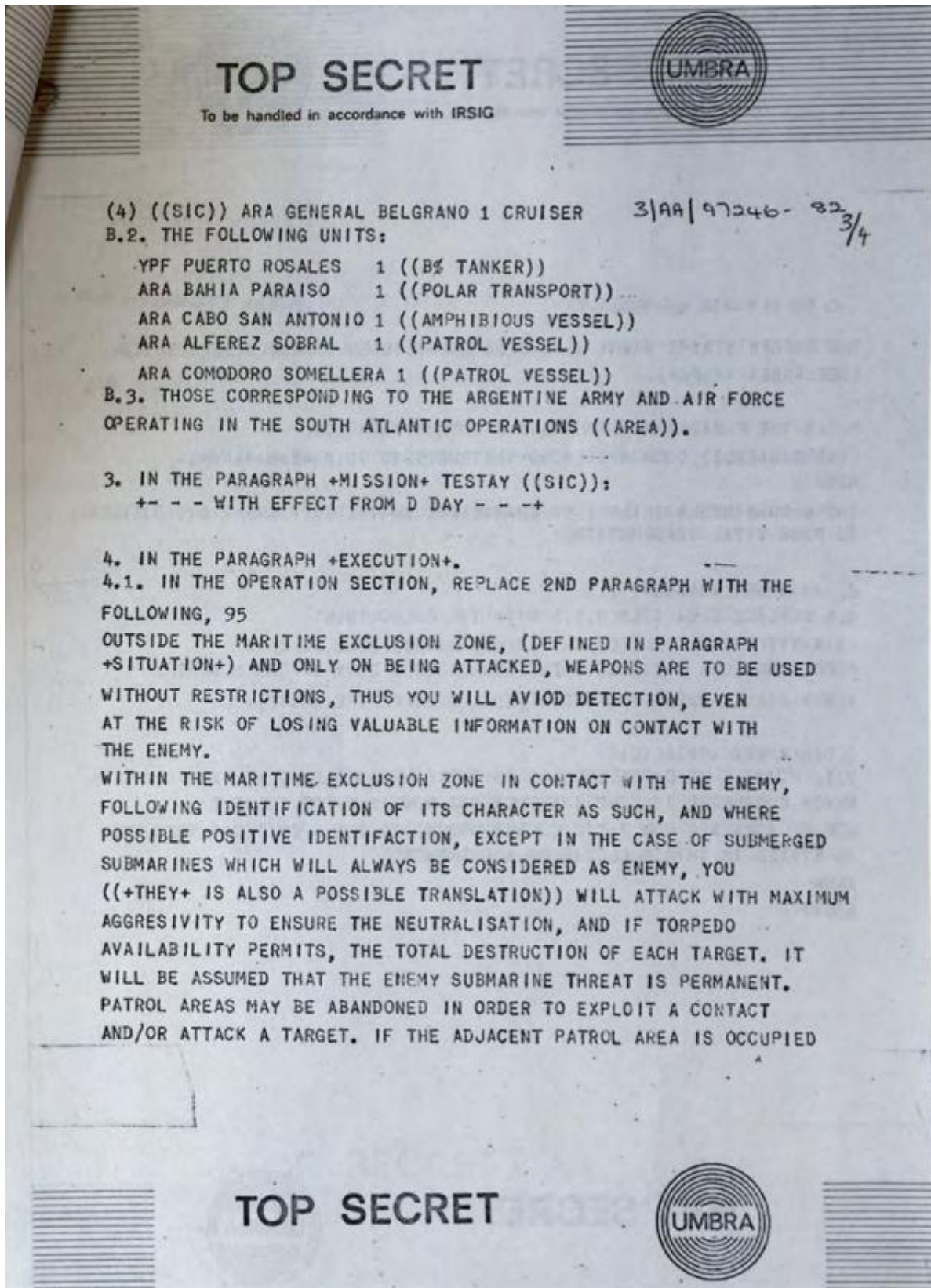


Fig 37



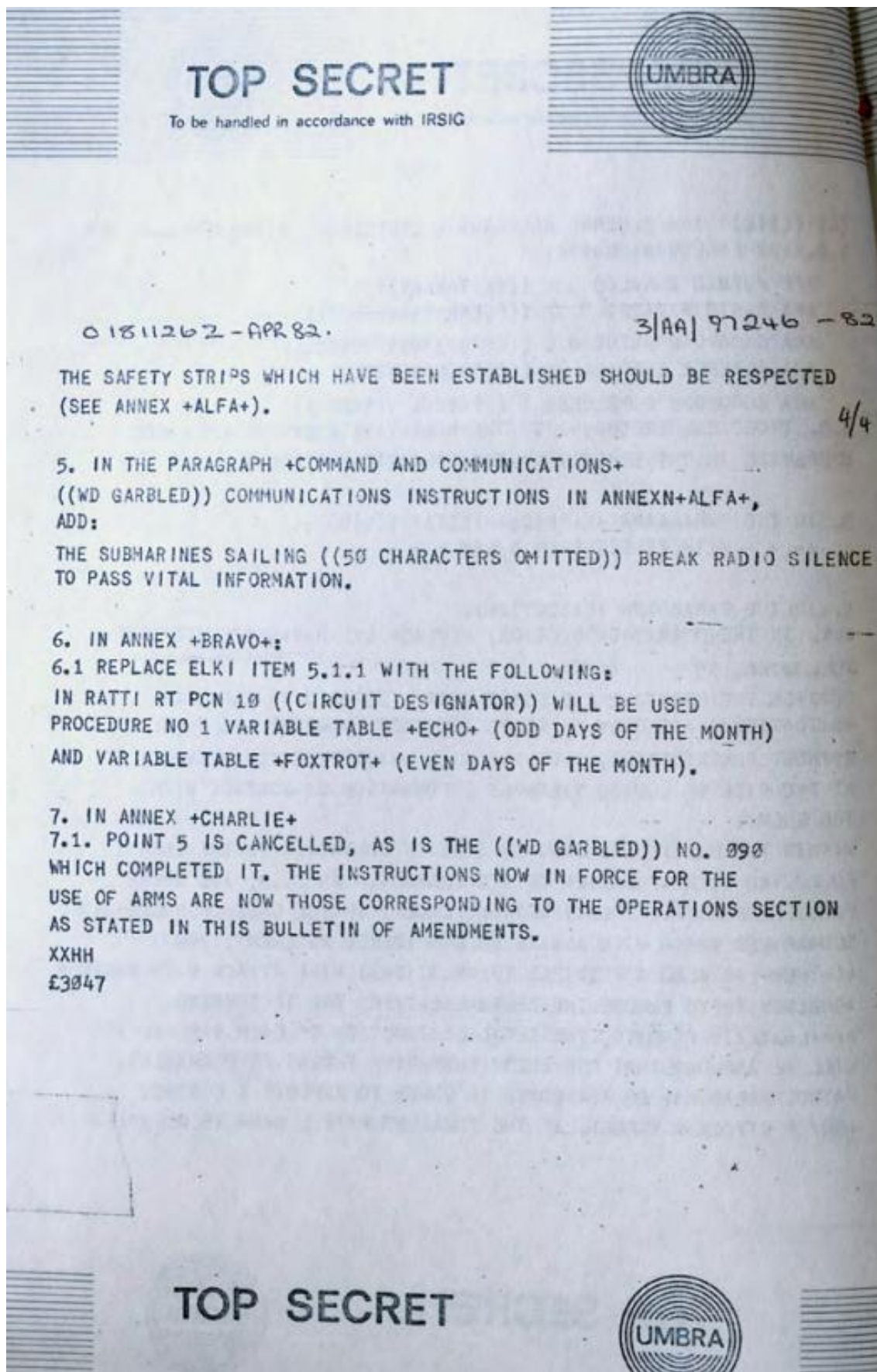


Fig 38

Figs 35, 36, 37 &amp; 38: Argentine Navy Order of Battle of Task Force 79.0 and Task Groups

Commander-in-Chief South Atlantic Operations – Vice-Admiral Juan Lombardo

### **TG 79.1**



Fig 39: Commander of TG 79.1 Rear Admiral Jorge Allara

ARA Veinticinco de Mayo – Carrier

ARA Hercules – Destroyer. One of the two Type 42 destroyers in service in the Argentinian Navy. Hercules was the only type 42 destroyer fitted with 4 x MM-38 Exocet which gave additional surface defence & attack capability

ARA Santísima Trinidad – Type 42 destroyer

ARA PY – Destroyer armed with MM-38 Exocet

ARA Punta Medanos – Fleet tanker

### **TG 79.3**

Captain Héctor Bonzo

ARA General Belgrano – Brooklyn-class light cruiser

ARA Hipolito Bouchard – Allen Sumner class destroyer armed with MM-38 Exocet

ARA Piedra Buena – Allen Sumner class destroyer armed with MM-38 Exocet

ARA Puerto Rosales – Fleet tanker

### **TG 79.4**

Captain Juan Calmon

ARA Drummond – Corvette/frigate armed with MM38 Exocet

ARA Guerrico – Drummond class corvette/frigate armed with MM-38 Exocet

ARA Granville – Drummond class corvette/frigate armed with MM-38 Exocet

At first ARA Hercules operated independently along with a group of older destroyers, but the development of mechanical problems forced the Argentine Commander to merge the two Type-42 destroyers into one escorting force TG79.1.



Fig 40: Veinticinco de Mayo (25 de Mayo)

The aircraft carrier Veinticinco de Mayo was used to support the initial Argentine landings. On the day of the invasion, she waited with 1,500 army soldiers outside Stanley harbour pending the securing of landing areas. Her aircraft were not used during the invasion.

In December 1981 Argentina received the first five of a batch of Super-Etendards acquired to replace the A4-Q Skyhawk, the mainstay of the carrier. The purchase included the delivery of one x AM-39 Exocet missile per jet. Although five had been received by the time of the conflict, crews were not qualified to operate from carriers.

Argentina deployed 48 A-4 Skyhawks during the conflict with 22 lost to Fleet Air Arm Sea Harriers and surface-to-air missile systems. The purchase of 16 second-hand aircraft in 1971, renamed to A4-Qs, were capable of operating from a carrier. Capable of dropping four x 500lb Mk82 unguided bombs, this weapon was credited with the sinking of HMS Coventry, Antelope, Ardent and RFA Sir Galahad.



Fig 41: A4-Q Skyhawks



Fig 42: ARA Granville

In March 1982 ARA Granville sailed with her sister ship Drummond to cover the amphibious landings. After the attack she operated north of the Falklands, as part of TG79.4. Although classed as a Corvette, this class of vessel was armed with four x MM-38 Exocet missiles, torpedoes, a 100mm gun and a number of smaller anti-aircraft armaments.



ARA Hercules was one of the two type 42 destroyers in service in the Argentinian Navy. Hercules was the only Type 42 destroyer fitted with four x MM38 Exocet which gave additional surface defence & attack capability which was unusual, as the Type 42 destroyer was designed to provide anti-aircraft cover.



Fig 43: ARA Hercules

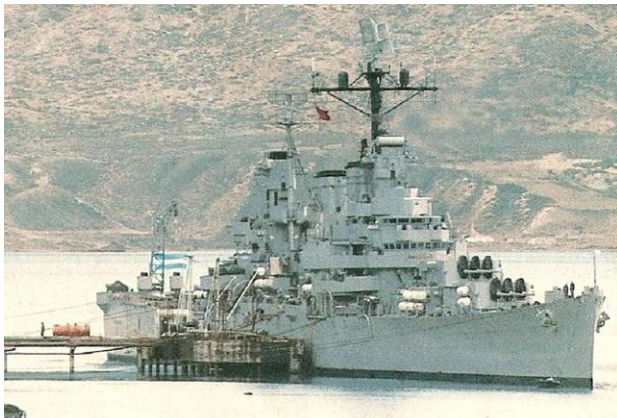


Fig 44: ARA General Belgrano

ARA General Belgrano was a Brooklyn-class light cruiser. With a main armament of 15 x six-inch guns, she had been upgraded with two British Sea Cat anti-aircraft missile systems. Despite her Second World War vintage, the six-inch guns were capable of firing a 130lb projectile over 14 miles, providing more than a formidable opponent to the British Task Force. With good weather looking out towards the horizon, Belgrano could almost see out to this distance from the bridge.

Destroyer ARA Bouchard and sister ship Piedra Buena formed the escort to the Belgrano. In addition to six x five-inch guns, this class of vessel also carried four x MM38 Exocet canisters.



Fig 45: ARA Bouchard



## THE MM-38 EXOCET THREAT

The MM-38 Exocet is a Cold War era anti-ship missile of French origin, the first generation of the Exocet missile and one of the first operational sea skimming missiles.

### Design

A conventional layout, long and cylindrical, the nose housed the radar with the warhead located behind. The rear half of the missile being made up of the solid propellant rocket motor and control surfaces.

### Guidance

The MM-38 can be launched towards a target by the host vessel, or a coastal defence system. Since the Exocet flies just above water level, inertial guidance is used until the target can be acquired by the missile active radar homing system.

### Firepower

The MM-38 was subsonic, flying at Mach 0.9 out to a maximum range of about 38 km (23 miles). The 165 kg (360 lb) warhead comprised of a blast-fragmentation type, optimised for use against post Second World War ships without armour. A delayed impact fuse ensures detonation, once inside the target.

The MM-38 was an extremely versatile anti-ship missile, used on a wide variety of ship types and was acquired by many nations. This system was extensively used throughout the Argentinian navy.



Figs 46 & 47 MM-38 Exocet missiles within canisters and launching.



Fig 48 left: Argentine vehicle mounted Exocet missiles at Port Stanley. The missiles had been removed from the Drummond Class corvettes in Argentina, flown to the Falklands and mounted on trailers. Deployment was limited to the Port Stanley area because the trailers and towing vehicles could not be used off road. One of these missiles struck HMS Glamorgan causing extensive damage and killing 14 crew.

KEY INTELLIGENCE – THE ARGENTINE BATTLE PLAN

By 25 April the Royal Navy were now in receipt of the Argentine battle plan and scheme of manoeuvres for positions RICARDO (4830S 6500W), JUAN (5530S 6100W) and MIGUEL (5410S 6440W). All the Argentine ships were in place on the 29 April, a day before the British fleet entered the area, including at least one submarine within the TEZ. Orders were issued, and the use of arms without restriction had been approved. By this time the British submarines HMS Splendid and Spartan were also on station north of the Falklands. Splendid subsequently detected part of TG 79.4, but as the Argentine carrier group was the bigger prize and threat, Splendid was ordered to leave and hunt for the carrier.

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SIGINT ALERT MARGAY  
3/AA/97487-82.  
K25X Z2404820636

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ARGENTINE SPANISH

ARGENTINE BATTLE PLAN: DETAILS FROM COMMANDER TASK FORCE 79

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Fig 49

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FROM COMMANDER TASK FORCE 79 *3/11/97487 -82*

TO CIRCULAR *2/8*

NO F1621

INTERNAL DTG 2404821255

CHANGE NO 3 TO REFERENCE SLA-05

1. ORGANISATION PARAGRAPH.

IN TASK FORCE GROUP 79/2/, UNDERLINE 4TH DESTROYER DIVISION,  
ADD 2ND DESTROYER DIVISION

IN TASK FORC GROUP 79.3 ADD 2ND DESTROYER DIVISION AND  
1ST AUXILIARY OILER (PUERTO ROSALES).

2. ANNEX BRAVO - CONCEPT OF THE OPERATION

CHANGE IT TO READ:

CONCEPT OF THE OPERATION

1. SITUATION.

THE PRESENT SITUATION IS DETERMINED BY THE FOLLOWING BASIC CHARACTER

**TOP SECRET**

**UMBRA**

Fig 50

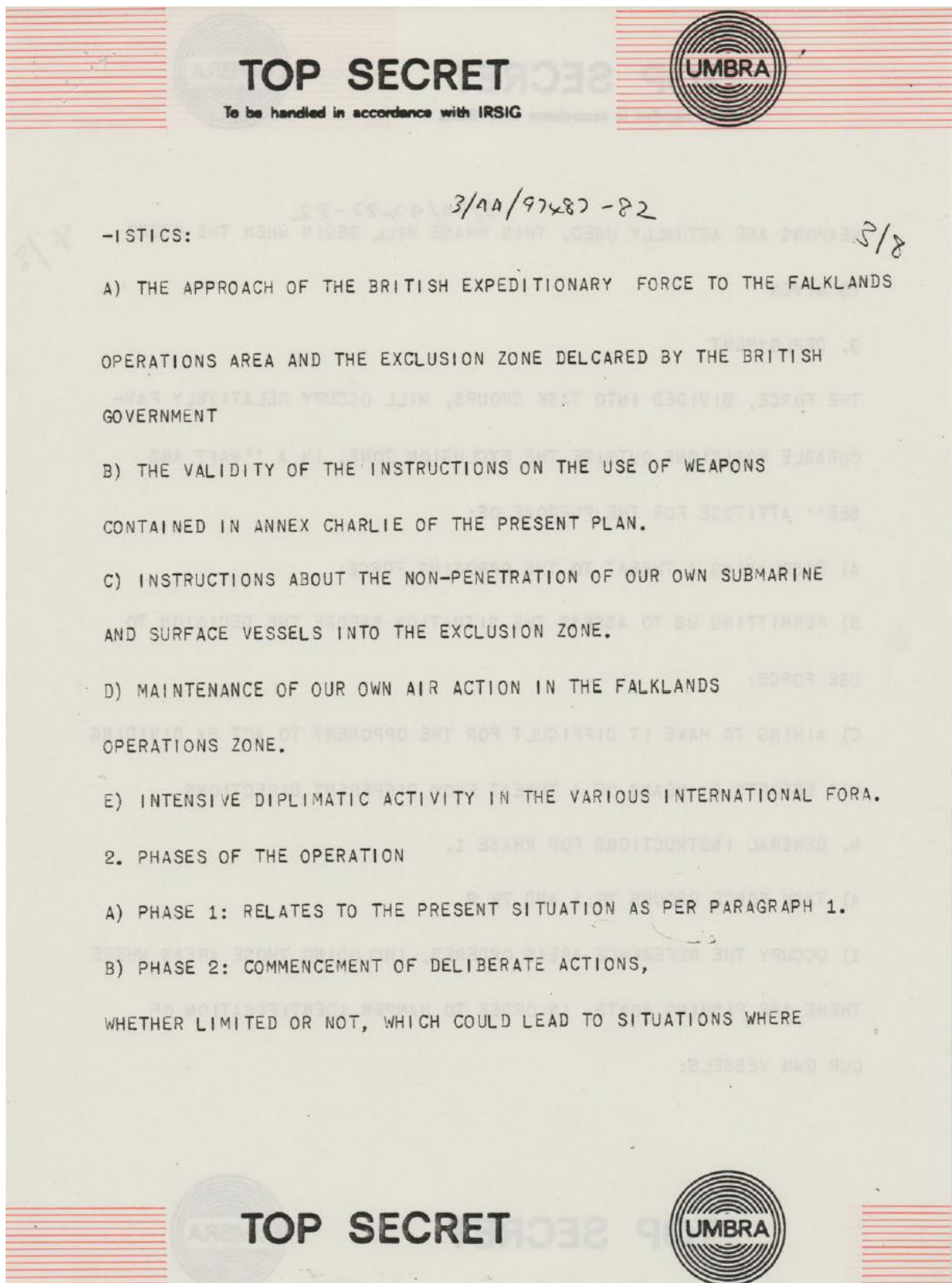


Fig 51



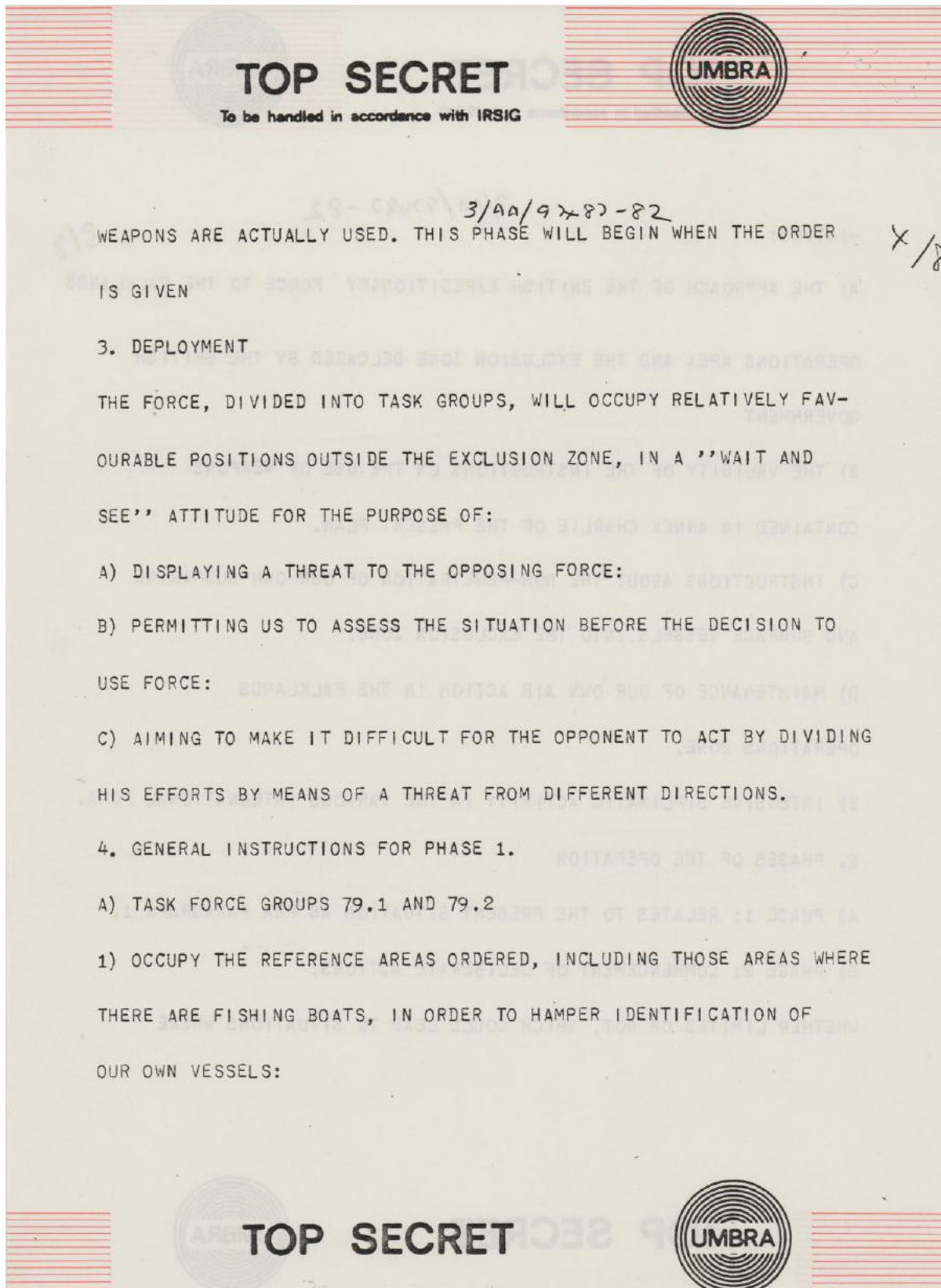


Fig 52

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3/97/9 7x87-82  
 2) WHEN THESE POSITIONS HAVE BEEN REACHED, THEY WILL BE MAINTAINED  
 IN THE HOPE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE POLITICAL SITUATION, AND IN  
 ACCORDANCE WITH THE AVAILABLE INTELLIGENCE, NETS WILL BE SET UP  
 SO THAT WE CAN OCCUPY SUITABLE POSITIONS:

S/8

3) MOEVEEMENTS WILL BE MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH A DEPLOYMENT WHICH  
 MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE MUTUAL SUPPORT AND UHF LINKS, VIA WHICH  
 IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO EMPLOY THE RETRANSMISSION PROCEDURE THROUGH  
 SHIPS AND POSSIBLY AIRCRAFT.

4) THE COMMANDWERS OF THE TASK GROUPS WILL KEEP THEIR VESSELS  
 REFUELLED THE CONCEPT BEING TO USE THEM TO THE MAXIMUM OF THEIR  
 ABILITY WITH THE MINIMUM OF FOREWARNING, FOR THIS PURPOSE, THEY  
 WILL GOVERN THE LOCATIONS OF THE TANKERS ASSIGNED TO THEM.

B) TASK FORCE GROUP 79.3

1) WILL REMAIN WAITING IN AN AREA BETWEEN THE ISLA DE LOS ESTADOS  
 AND THE SOUTH OF THE BURDWOOD BANK, OUTSIDE THE EXCLUSION ZONE.

2) WILL SURVEY THE ACCESS TO THE SOUTH OF AL TOAS, IN ACCORDANCE

**TOP SECRET**

Fig 53

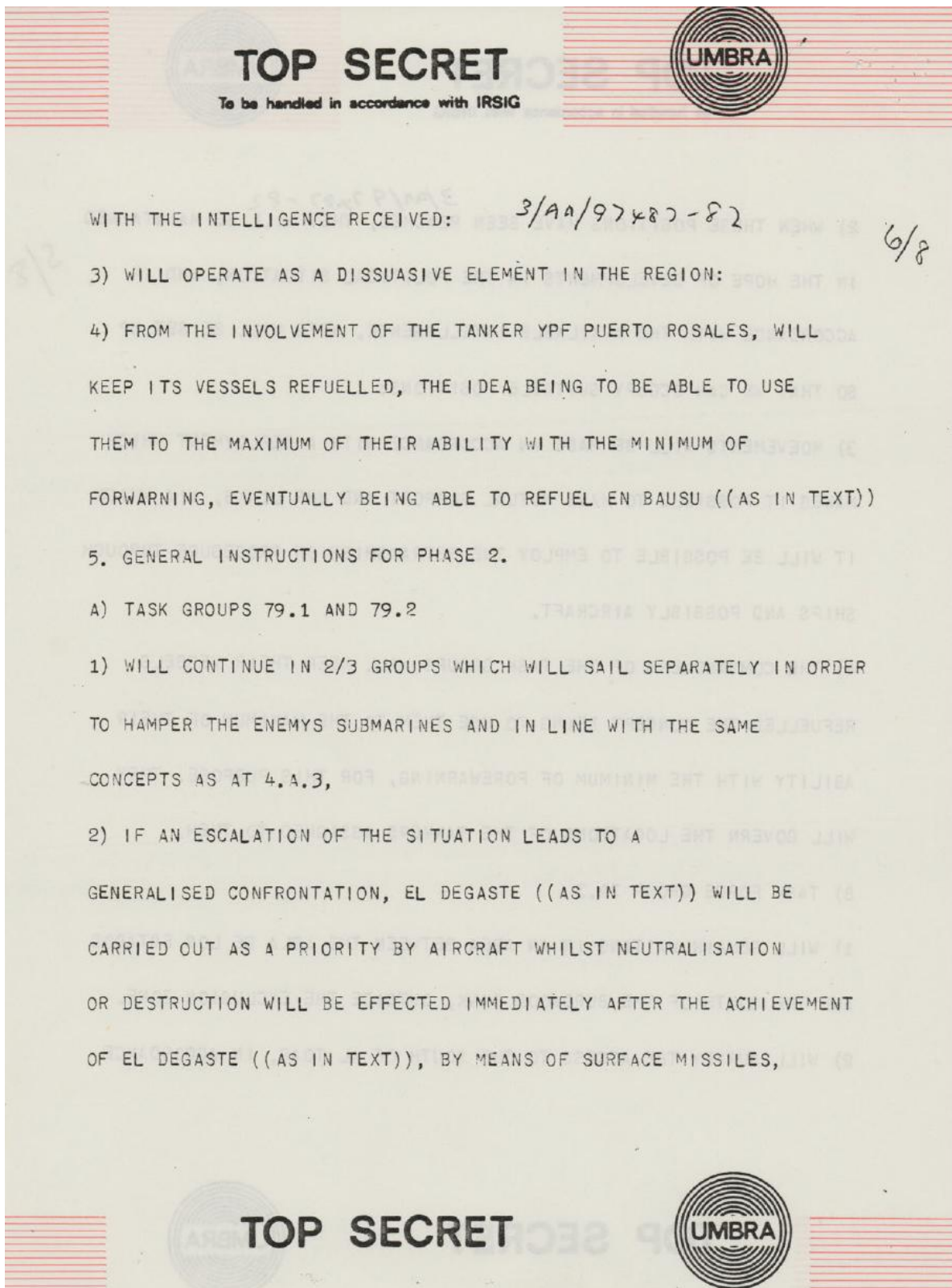


Fig 54



**TOP SECRET**  
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3/4A/9 2487-82 7/8

3) WILL INTERCEPT AND/OR NEUTRALISE - UPON ORDERS- ((C PERCENT ENEMY)) VESSELS, THE IDEA BEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE MISSION OF FORCE AS A WHOLE, BY ACTING IN COORDINATION.

B) TASK GROUP 79.3:

1) WILL INTERCEPT AND/OR NEUTRALISE - UPON ORDERS- ((C PERCENT ENEMY)) VESSELS, THE IDEA BEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE MISSION OF FORCE AS A WHOLE, BY ACTING IN AS CO-ORDINATED A WAY AS POSSIBLE WITH THE OTHER GROUPS.

2) THE COMMANDER OF TASK GROUP 79.3 WILL BE ABLE TO REQUEST THE SUPPORT OF RECONNAISSANCE AND ATTACK AIRCRAFT BY EFFECTING THE NECESSARY CO-ORDINATION WITH THE NAVAL AIR AUTHORITIES IN RIO GRANDE, AS THERE MAY BE LIMITS TO THEIR USE OWING TO OTHER REQUIREMENTS

**TOP SECRET**

UMBRA

Fig 55



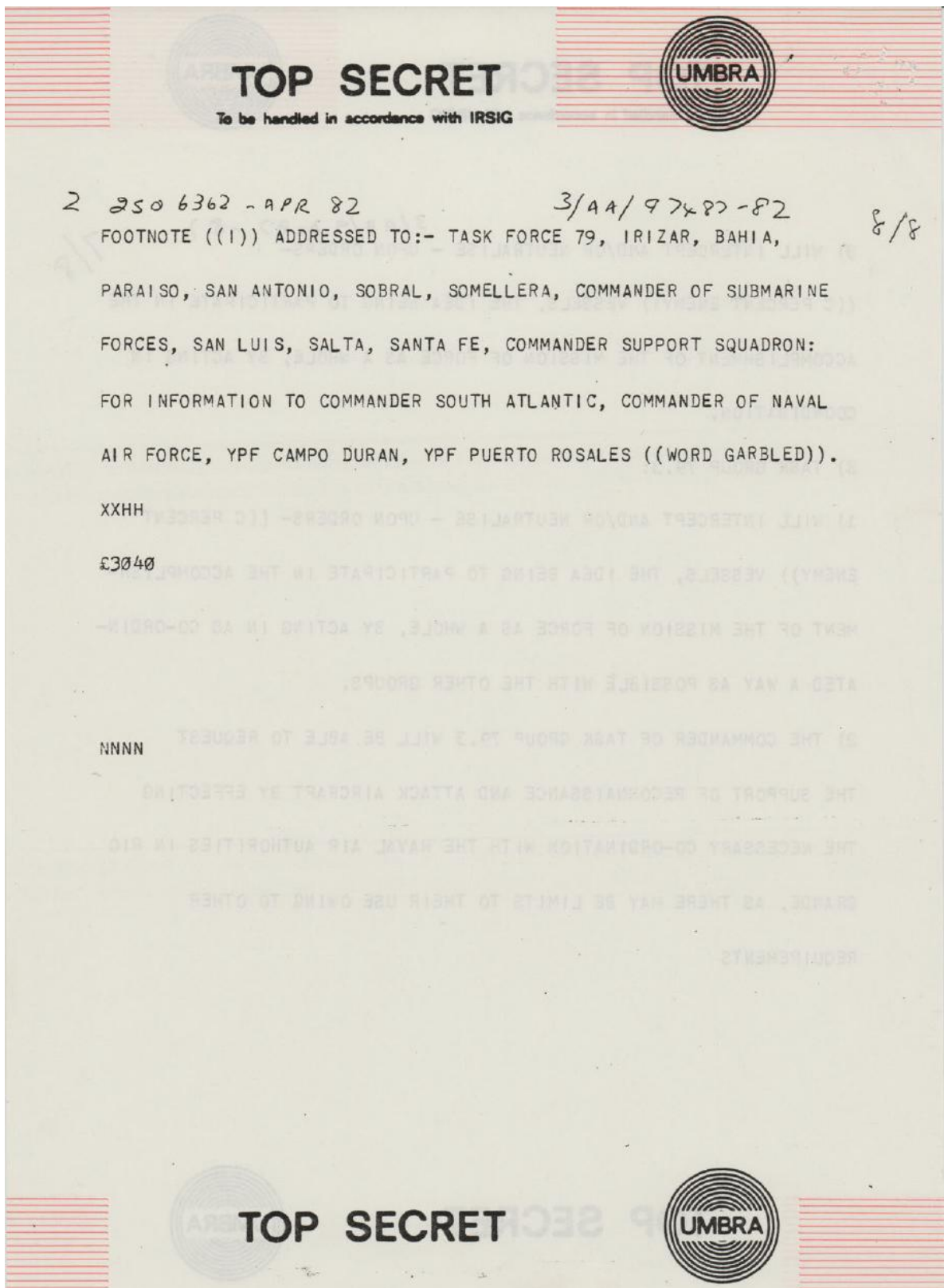


Fig 56

Figs 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54 & 56: GCHQ report 3/AA/97487-82 The Argentine Battle Plan dated 24 April. Provides details of the 'pincer movement' via a coordinated maritime and air attack.

## THREAT POSED BY THE ARGENTINE CARRIER EXPOSED

A minute to the Assistance Chief of Defence Staff (ACDS) Details the threat posed by the Argentine carrier, details the pros/cons of attack methods.

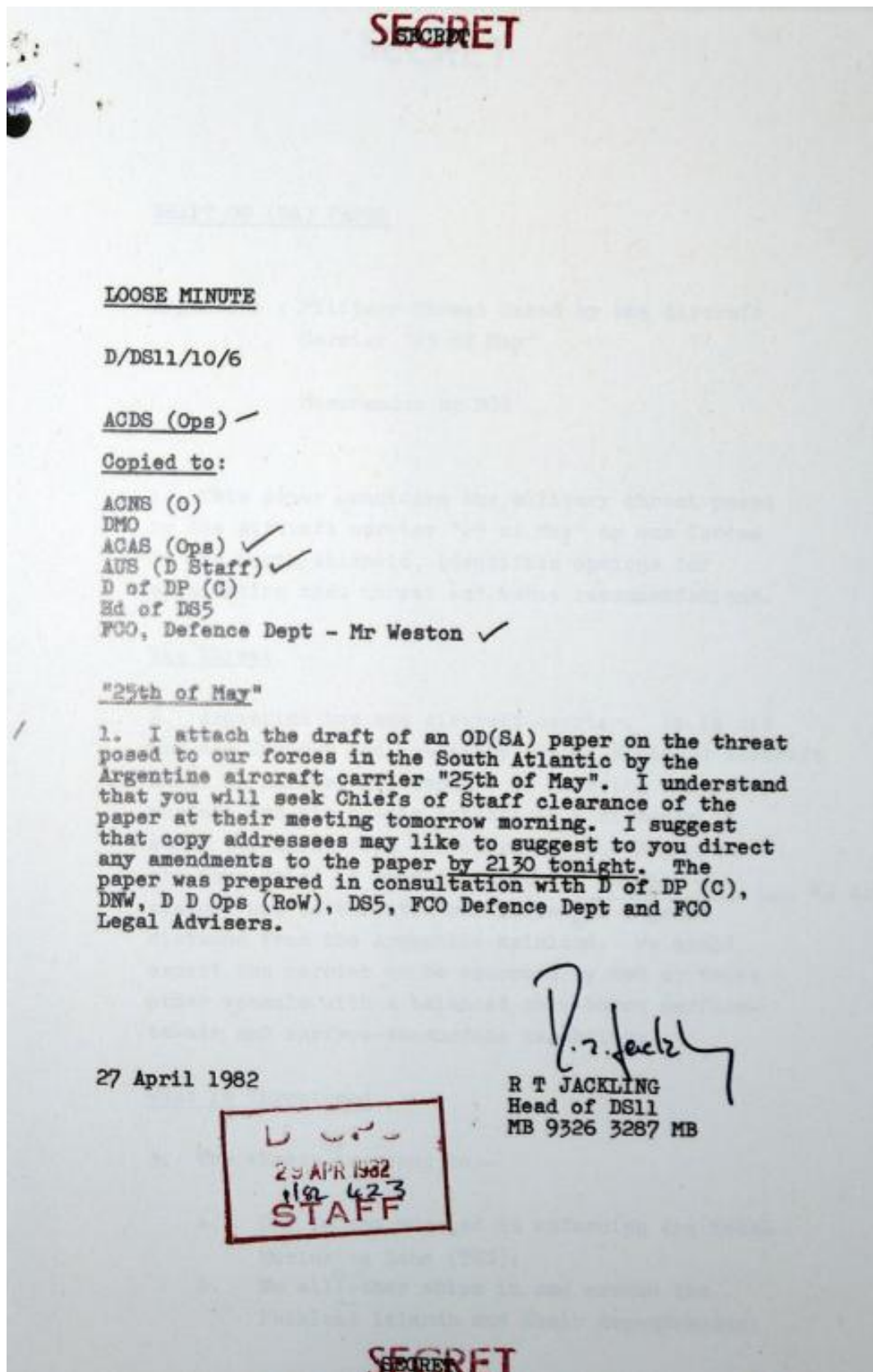


Fig 57

**SECRET**DRAFT OD (SA) PAPERArgentina : Military Threat Posed by the Aircraft  
Carrier "25 of May"

Memorandum by MOD

1. This paper considers the military threat posed by the aircraft carrier "25 of May" to our forces in the South Atlantic, identifies options for eliminating that threat and makes recommendations.

The Threat

2. Argentina has one aircraft carrier. It is old but the Skyhawk and, possibly, Super Etendard aircraft which it carries are capable of mounting air-to-surface and air-to-air attacks at a distance of about 500 miles from the carrier. The Argentines are thus able, if they deploy their carrier against us, to threaten our forces <sup>from the air</sup> at a great distance from the Argentine mainland. We would expect the carrier to be escorted by two or three other vessels with a balanced ship-borne surface-to-air and surface-to-surface capability.

What is Threatened

3. The threat is posed to:-

- a. Our forces engaged in enforcing the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ);
- b. ~~To~~ all <sup>our</sup> other ships in and around the Falkland Islands and their dependencies;

- 1 -

**SECRET**

Fig 58



SECRET

- c. ~~To~~ all the vessels in the re-supply and reinforcement chain from Ascension Island which will be <sup>only</sup> lightly escorted by RN warships.

#### Capability to Defeat the Threat

4. Argentine carrier-launched aircraft engaging our forces can be defeated by our own aircraft, by anti-aircraft missiles and, best of all, by neutralising the carrier. The air cover provided by our Sea Harriers should be able to cope with land based Argentine aircraft which challenge the TEZ and will be near the end of their radius of action. But the threat from carrier based aircraft launched outside but close to the TEZ and capable of sustained operations in the TEZ is considerable. Anti-aircraft missiles can be effective but may be no match for an air attack by several aircraft simultaneously, particularly on the re-supply/ reinforcement <sup>route</sup> from Ascension, or on elements of the Task Force without the benefit of Sea Harrier cover. The requirement, therefore, is to neutralise the carrier itself.

#### How to Neutralise the Threat

5. Means The carrier could be engaged by surface ships, Sea Harriers or submarines. The most economical method is to use a submarine (SSN). The carrier could be shadowed covertly, and an attack could be launched with an acceptable level of risk to the SSN's own security. Engaging the carrier by surface ships or Sea Harriers would require the diversion of ships and aircraft

- 2 -

SECRET

Fig 59



SECRET

specifically to this task and would involve considerable risk to these forces. A SSN would give the greatest certainty of success.

6. Effect of Attack on Carrier A SSN could only attack the carrier with torpedoes. As a result of such an attack, the carrier would probably be disabled. It is possible that the carrier might sink/ but unlikely given a reasonable level of damage control. An attack by gunfire, missiles or bombs might have more serious results (fire, direct hit on magazine etc). If the carrier did sink, it is likely that her crew would have time to abandon ship with life rafts. Her escorting vessels should be able to pick up survivors.

/quickly,

7. When to Attack *There are three options:-*  
~~The carrier could be attacked~~

- a. Wherever our force locate her;
- b. Whenever she approaches to within a certain distance from our forces;
- c. When she advances beyond a boundary line, defined by us, and notified to Argentina.

The political disadvantage in a. is that the carrier could be ~~sunk in port~~ <sup>attacked</sup> or while in no way posing an immediate threat. The political disadvantage of b. is that the carrier might be on innocent passage. c. appears to be the best of these options in that the area to which the carrier was confined would be clearly stated, and by transgressing that boundary would be demonstrating hostile intent.

*and unaware  
of her proximity  
to our forces*

- 3 -

SECRET

Fig 60

**SECRET**

8. Warning There are strong arguments, both political and legal, for notifying the Argentine authorities that their carrier is liable to attack by our forces, <sup>which is an option of those</sup> ~~in any of the circumstances~~ <sup>selected</sup> listed above. This could be done bilaterally through the Swiss along the lines that their carrier, in certain specified circumstances, would be treated as hostile and encounter the appropriate response.

Recommended Option

9. The recommended option would be to notify Argentina that their carrier would be treated as hostile if ~~it~~ <sup>she</sup> advanced south and east of a line joining the positions  $23^{\circ}$  S  $32^{\circ}$  W and  $43^{\circ}$  S  $56^{\circ}$  W, thence westward along latitude  $43^{\circ}$  S to the mainland. A map is attached.

10. Provided the carrier remained north and west of the designated line, she would not be liable to attack. Beyond that line, she would be and would indeed pose a direct threat to our forces in and around the TEZ and the re-supply/reinforcement chain between Ascension Island and the TEZ.

11. The best method of enforcing this prohibition would, after a warning period, be to instruct a SSN to shadow the carrier and attack her if the line was crossed. This solution requires a dedicated SSN, but is more economical than keeping the carrier under surveillance by other means, which would in any case be difficult. An attack by SSN would require the SSN to close within about 1500 m of the target. The probability of a hit at this range is good. A disadvantage is that the SSN can only be contacted periodically (at 12 hours interval) but this should be sufficient leeway to enable a counter order to be issued if political events demanded it.

- 4 -

**SECRET**

Fig 61

Figs 57, 58, 59, 60 & 61: Head of MOD DS11 minutes for ACDS(OPS) draft OD (SA) paper on Argentine carrier, inviting comments from CINCFLEET

**SECRET**

E43

0.39/2

ASIS(Ops)

Copy to:

DMO  
ACAS(Ops)  
AUS (D Staff)  
D of DP(C)  
Hd of DS5  
FCO - Defence Dept

7/10/2

"25th OF MAY - MILITARY THREAT"

Reference:

A. D Ops Staff 7/10/2 of 27 April 1982.

1. CinC Fleets' initial comments on the reference are as follows. He stresses that CTG 317.8 has not been consulted.

2. a. Para 2: Amend last line to read:

✓ "surface-to-air, surface-to-surface and limited ASW capability".

✓ b. Para 5c: Add "and UK aircraft". *both new 3d*

c. Para 4: Delete first sentence. Rewrite old second and third sentences as follows:

*Similar point already included*

"The Sea Harriers will be stretched in order to cope with the land-based Argentine aircraft, which challenge the TEZ, although these will be near the end of their radius of action. The threat from carrier-based aircraft launched outside but close to the TEZ and capable of sustained operations in the TEZ will greatly increase this task".

d. Para 6: CinC accepts that this is designed to show that torpedoing ships is not so bad really!!

e. Para 7: Suggested that a fourth option should be included:

*mainly taken care of in new self-defence clause*

"d. After a stated time or when any attack has occurred on our own maritime forces".

f. Para 9: If line is to include large areas of Argentine territorial waters in the "no-go" zone, CinC would like to go further and make southern limit 40° S. He would not press this point if it threatened concept.

g. ✓ Para 11: Suggest 2000m as reasonable SSV torpedo range.

*43°S is already in the N. Am. version*

**D. OPS**  
2 - APR 1982  
117 428  
**STAFF**

Page 1 of 2 pages

**SECRET**

Fig 62



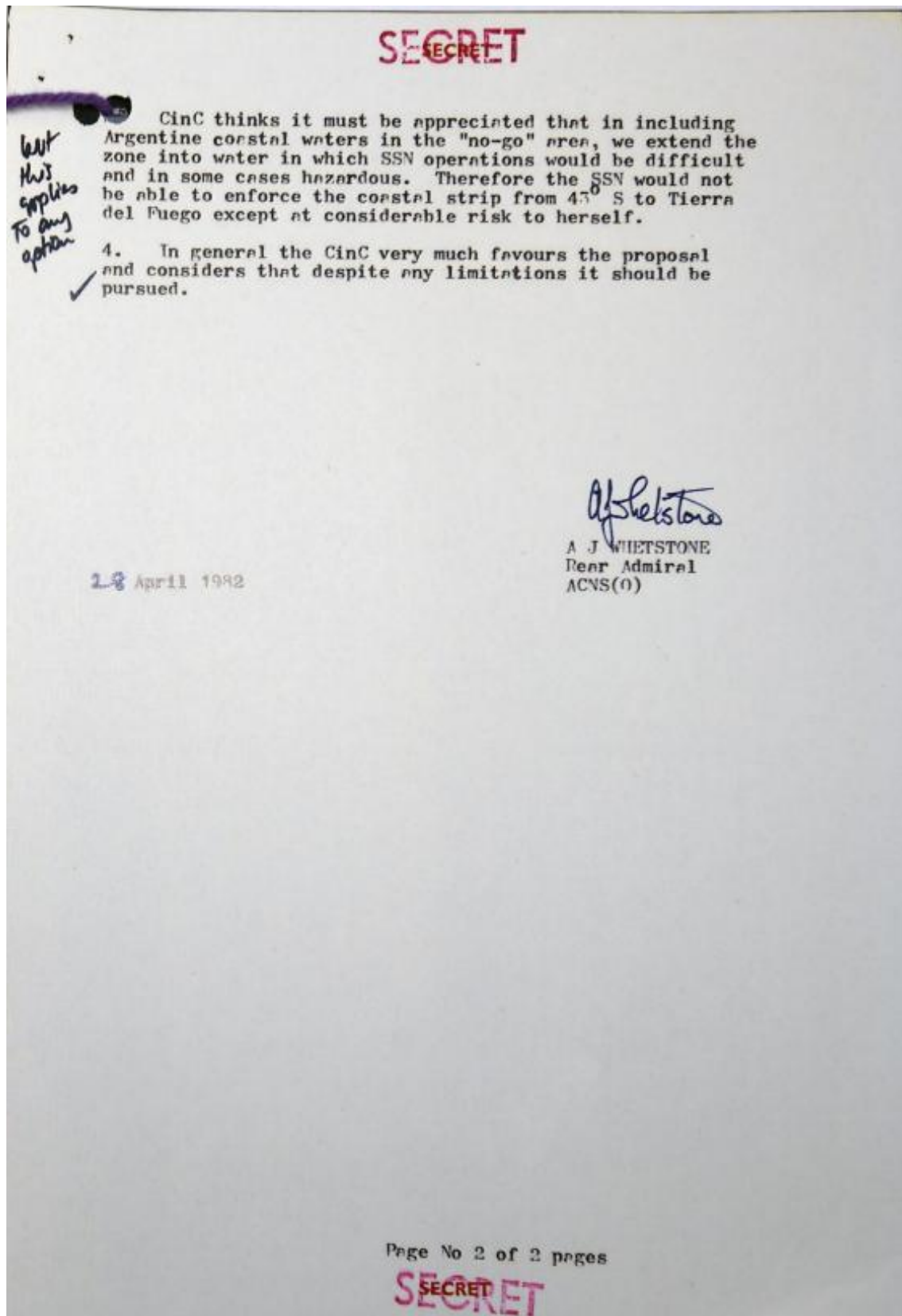


Fig 63

CINCFLEET Comments: The preferred method to attack the carrier would be via a SSN, assessed as most likely to achieve the aim to disable with probable reduced loss of life compared to a combined surface and air attack.



Sigint report 3/AA/090057-82 dated 29 May provides situational awareness of the stagnated political situation, that Argentine submarines has entered the TEZ, units were authorised to operate within the TEZ and use of arms without restriction approved.

3 3/AA/090057-82

FROM: COMMANDER TASK FORCE  
TO: TASK FORCE 79 [i]  
INTERNAL DTG: 2904821527 [ii]

RETRANSMISSION OF P 291155

UPDATE OF SITUATION:

1. THE LACK OF PROGRESS IN THE DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS DOES NOT PERMIT ANY EXPECTATION OF IMMEDIATE CHANGE IN THE EXISTING SITUATION.
2. A CONTINUATION OF BRITISH OFFENSIVE ACTION IS FORESEEABLE.
3. OUR SUBMARINES ENTERED EXCLUSION ZONE.
4. AIR AND SURFACE UNITS OF TASK FORCE 79 ARE AUTHORIZED TO OPERATE IN EXCLUSION ZONE IF NECESSARY.
5. USE OF ARMS WITHOUT RESTRICTION AS IN MY 291145.
6. THE BATTLE PLAN GIVEN IN MY 241255 [ii] RETAINED, ESPECIALLY POINT 3.

Fig 64

The Argentine Battle Plan 241255 (as reported 3/AA/97487-82) was emphasised again on 29 April, (Note point 3, be poised to conduct a coordinated attack from different directions).

On 30 April, Woodward's task group had arrived on station to enforce a declared TEZ, effectively blockading the Falklands and warning that any Argentine asset would come under attack.

## STATEMENT OF CASE TO PERMIT UK SSNs ATTACK ARGENTINE CARRIER

Memo by CDS Admiral Lewin to SoS Defence John Nott presents a significant change to the ROEs to allow SSNs to attack the Argentine carrier 25 de Mayo if deemed a threat.

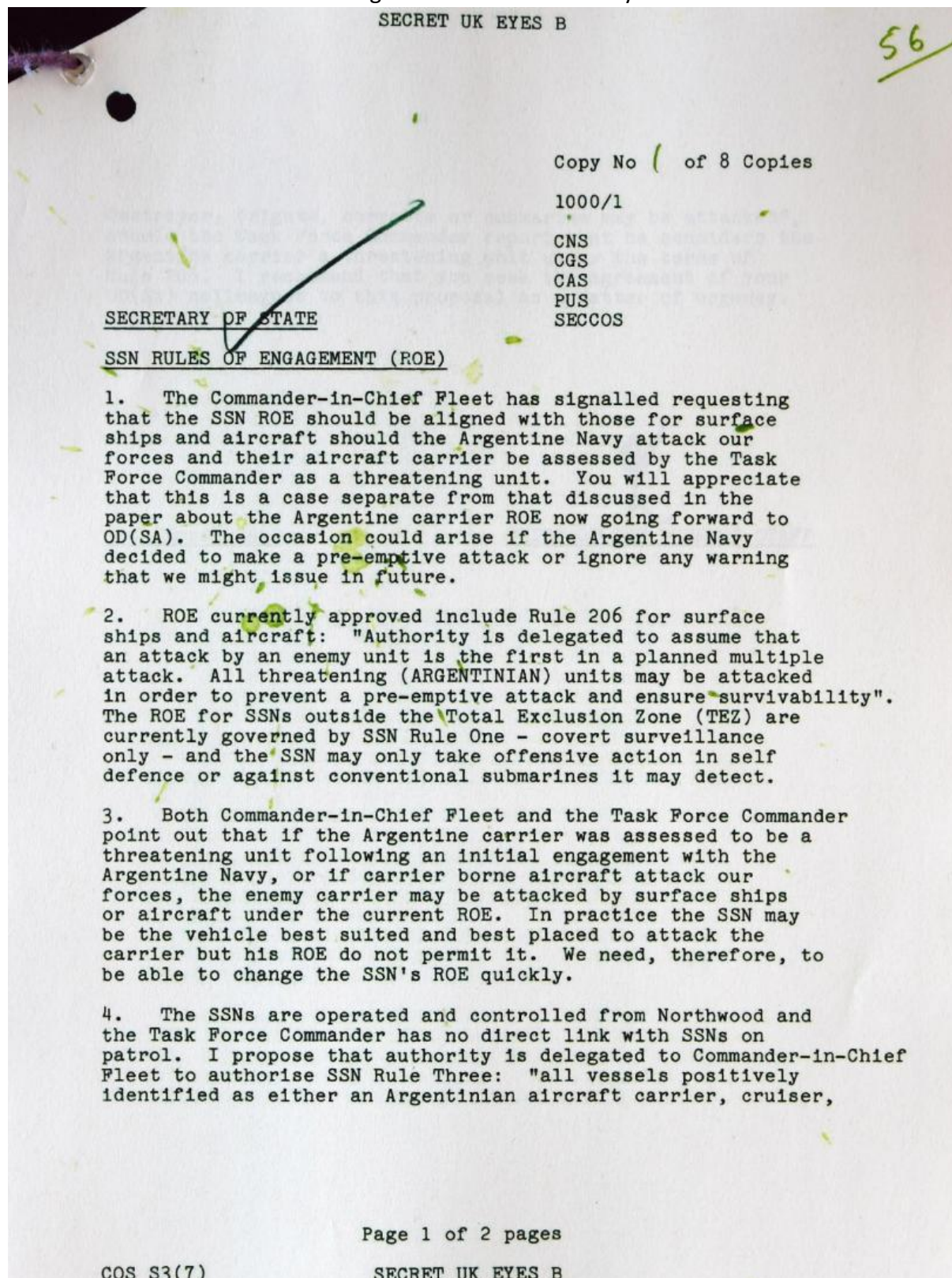



Fig 65

destroyer, frigate, corvette or submarine may be attacked", should the Task Force Commander report that he considers the Argentine carrier a threatening unit under the terms of Rule 206. I recommend that you seek the agreement of your OD(SA) colleagues to this proposal as a matter of urgency.

30th April 1982

  
CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF

2

COS S3(7)

SECRET UK EYES B

Fig 66



PERMISSION GRANTED

VV SECRET

ZPA069 30/1804 120E4196 SPECIAL HANDLING

FOR ZPA

FLASH/FLASH 301526Z APR 82

FROM MODUK  
TO CTF 317  
INFO MODUK NAVY  
MODUK AIR  
HQSTC  
FOSM

SECRET

PARAPHRASE NOT REQUIRED

UNCLASSIFIED COPY ON FILE

307081

FLASH

UK EYES B

SECRET UK EYES BRAVO

SIC AAA/19F/JEE

OPERATION CORPORATE - ROE AGAINST ARGENTINIAN CVA (DESIG 25 MAY)

1. MISSION: TO ATTACK ARGENTINIAN CVA DESIG 25 MAY AT EARLIEST POSSIBLE MOMENT EXCEPT WHEN CVA IS BOTH NORTH OF 35(8) DEGREES SOUTH AND WEST 48(2) DEGREES WEST OR WITHIN 12(3) NM TERRITORIAL LIMITS.

2. ROE APPLICABILITY: APPLICABLE TO ALL UK FORCES ENGAGED IN OPERATION CORPORATE.

3. TIME LIMIT: ON RECEIPT UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

4. RULE ONE TWO THREE (ARGENTINIAN CVA DESIG-25 MAY) AND SSN RULE THREE (ARGENTINIAN CVA DESIG 25 MAY ONLY) AUTHORISED.

5. AMENDMENTS TO FORMATTED ROE SIGNALS FOLLOW BUT RULES IN PARA FOUR TO BE IMPLEMENTED IMMEDIATELY

ORIG: R ADM, D W BROWN, ACDS(OPS), NAVY OPS ROE CELL, EXT 2230  
BT

DSC (ROW)

DSC (AF OPS) ACTION

DSC (NAVY OPS) ACTION

DNOT ACTION

DNOW ACTION

ACDS (OPS)

UK EYES B

DSC DISTRIBUTION:

PSO/CDS

COSSEC

DS11 (for S of S, PUS, AUS(DS), Resident Clerk as appropriate)

SCPL (for VCDS(P&L) and or ACDS(P&L))

DIC

Duty Commander

Army Ops

AF Ops

SOG (as appropriate)

SECRET

Fig 67

With approval secured, the MOD signalled Woodward to advise that, with immediate effect, the decision to permit SSNs to attack the Argentine carrier if within criteria specified. Command of SSNs remained with Vice Admiral Peter Herbert, Flag Officer, Submarines.

SECRET

DEFENCE STAFF  
2500 COPIES 2  
24

TELEPHONE INFORMATION - OPERATIONAL MATTERS

From: ACOS(O) CINC(Fleet)

To: DNOT

Time: 011650A May

CincFleet had been telephoned by CBNS(W) as  
<sup>FLO</sup>  
soft/had requested up to date information.

Informed all quiet. Last signal received was  
CTG's 011220Z which reported no sign of the  
Argentinian aircraft carrier, and that he was  
intruding Sea Hawk surface search in direction  
310° to depth 250 miles from Hermes in position  
51° 51'N 055° 06'W

Subsequent telephone call received by CinFleet  
(time not known) from CTG stated that he still  
had no feel for the '25 de Mayo's' whereabouts.  
Had been expecting attack but it had not materialized.  
Carrier could have withdrawn from area.

S of S will be seeking further information from  
Northwood at 1800 - any information available  
should be passed to ACOS(O) to connect with this call

Fig 68

Record of phone conversation. Woodward had been expecting attack from Argentine carrier, but none materialised. Had no feel for its whereabouts. The memo is printed below for clarity.

## OFFICIAL

### TELEPHONE INFORMATION – OPERATIONAL MATTERS

From : ACOS (O) CINCFLEET

TO: DNOT

TIME: 011650A MAY

CINCFLEET HAD BEEN TELEPHONE BY CBNS(W) AS SOS FCO HAD REQUESTED UP TO DATE INFORMATION. INFORED ALL QUIET. LAST SIGNAL RECEIVED WAS CTGs 011220Z WHICH REPORTED NO SIGN OF THE ARGENTINIAN AIRCRAFT CARRIER, AND THAT HE WAS INITIATING SEA HARRIER SURFACE SEARCH IN DIRECTION 310 TO DEPTH 250 MILES FROM HERMES IN POSITION 51 51'N 055 06'W.

SUBSEQUENT TELEPHONE CALL RECEIVED BY CINCFLEET (TIME NOT KNOWN) FROM CTG STATED THAT HE STILL HAD NO FEEL FOR THE 25 DE MAYO'S WHEREABOUTS.

HAD BEEN EXPECTING ATTACK BUT IT HAD NOT MATERIALISED, CARRIER COULD HAVE WITHDRAWN FROM AREA.

S OF S FCO WILL BE SEEKING FURTHER INFORMATION FROM NORTHWOOD AT 1830 – ANY INFORMATION AVAILABLE SHOULD BE PASSED TO ACOS(O) TO CONNECT WITH THE CALL.



## FCO DRAFT STATEMENT FOLLOWING ANTICIPATED ATTACK AGAINST THE CARRIER

Whilst the position of the Argentine groups TG 79.1 and TG 79.4 were approximately known through intelligence, the SSNs HMS Spartan and Splendid had yet to locate the carrier.

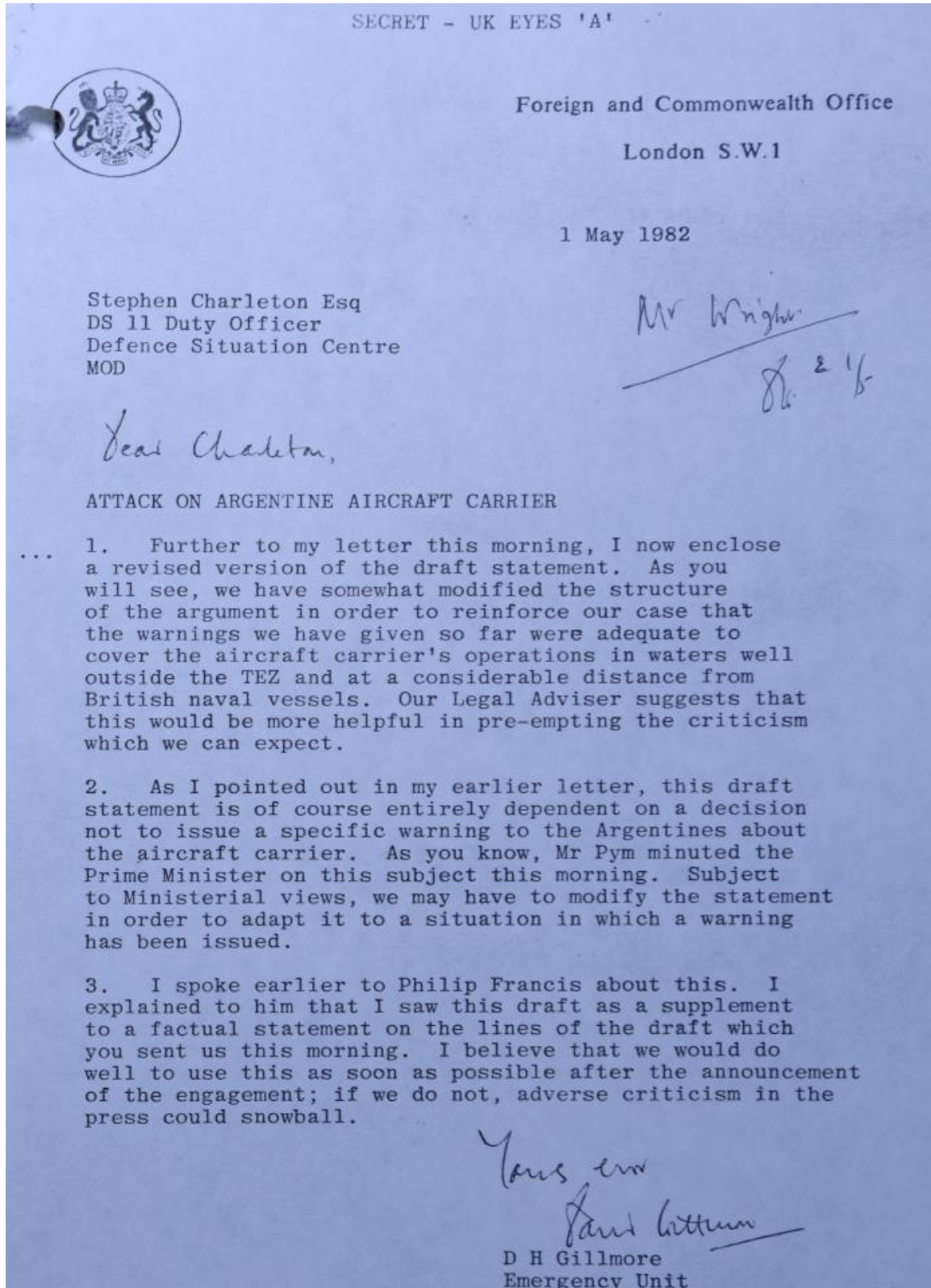


Fig 69

SECRET - UK EYES 'A'

DSR 11C

DRAFT STATEMENT FOLLOWING CRIPPLING OR SINKING OF  
ARGENTINE AIRCRAFT CARRIER

(It is assumed the aircraft carrier will be crippled or sunk, without further warning, on the high seas outside the TEZ)

1. The United Kingdom is entitled, in the exercise of its inherent right of self-defence as recognised in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, to take appropriate measures to protect its forces as well as its territory.
2. The Argentine carrier, the 25th May, when at large in the South Atlantic and operating within imminent striking range of our naval units, was a dangerous threat to those units - not only those in the TEZ itself but also to those in our vital sea lines of communication on which the Task Force is dependent.
3. On 23 April we gave a warning to the Argentine Government that any approach by Argentine warships or military aircraft which could amount to a threat to interfere with the mission of British forces in the South Atlantic would encounter the appropriate response. Subsequently, on 28 April, the Government declared a Total Exclusion Zone in the area of 200 nautical miles around the Falkland Islands.
4. The Argentine Government chose to ignore these warnings. On 29 April the Argentine Military Junta issued a communiqué declaring that it would treat as hostile all British shipping within 200 miles of the Argentine coast, and within a 200 mile radius of the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Moreover, Argentine naval vessels, including the carrier, have been manoeuvring at sea for several days.

Fig 70



SECRET - UK EYES 'A'

range of carrier-borne aircraft and their ability to launch stand-off weapons meant that the capacity of this carrier to make an effective strike against our units operated over a distance many times greater than in the case of an ordinary vessel. In addition, the speed and mobility of the carrier itself meant that it could, if it escaped surveillance even for a short period, bring itself within much closer launching range of our units without their having any effective warning. In these circumstances, the operation of the carrier at large in the area in which it was encountered in itself constituted a threat to our vessels of the kind against which they were warned in our notification of 23 April.

6. In the face of this threat, and of Argentina's declared intention to submit British forces to attack, the Government's duty was clear, as was its right to act as it did. We are entitled and obliged to protect the lives and safety of our officers and men on the Task Force, which is there in defence of our rights and our people in the Falkland Islands. We are not prepared to tolerate hostile actions by the Argentine forces directed against our legitimate response to the attempts by the Junta to perpetuate its armed aggression against the Falkland Islands while it continues the build-up of its forces there in flagrant defiance of Security Council Resolution 502.

7. The Junta should be in no doubt that we do not, and will not, shirk our responsibilities.

Fig 71



On 1 May an Argentine tracker aircraft reported that elements of the British Task Force were “moored”, believed pending a maritime landing on the Falklands. As a result, Freedom of Action was declared, in effect, to take whatever action deemed necessary should they come into contact with British forces. Sigint in the early hours on this day also reflected an order for Belgrano to ‘deploy South of the Burdwood Bank.

01 MAY 1982 1555 FM: COMD SOUTH ATLANTIC  
TO: COMD TASK FORCE 79  
Enemy moored. Freedom of action.

Fig 72: Extract from SIGINT, Argentine declaring Freedom of Action



Fig 73: Argentine tracker aircraft leaving the deck of 25 de Mayo

**SECRETO** AGREGADO Nº 5 1 MAY 1982

O 01 20 07

FM CPT 79

TO CGT 79.1 CGT 79.3 CGT 79.4

INFO COATLANSUR

BT

INICIACION OPERACIONES OFENSIVAS PD MISION SEGUN REP SLA - 05 PD EJECUCION CLN GT 79.1 SE DESTACARA EN HORAS NOCTURNAS HACIA PRF PARA LANZAR ATAQUE AEREO DIURNO SOBRE UNIDADES DESTACADAS MI 011841 UNA VEZ LOCALIZADO ENO MEDIANTE EXPLORACION PROPIA PD ESTE MOVIMIENTO SE REALIZARA DURANTE NOCHE MANTENIENDO DISTANCIA AL ENO PARA MINIMIZAR RIESGOS ATAQUE AEREO NOCTURNO CMM PARA LUEGO INICIAR ATAQUE PRIMERAS LUCES PD GT 79.4 DESTACARA HACIA BORDE SUR AREA GASTON A FIN DE ALCANZAR POSICION QUE PERMITA ATACAR UNIDADES DESGASTADAS POR ATAQUE AEREO Y EVENTUAL MENTE UNIDADES DISPERSAS PD GT 79.3 SE DESTACARA POR SUR BANCO BURDWOOD EN APROXIMACION ENO INTENTANDO CONTACTO CON UNIDADES SUPERFICIE QUE OPEREN HACIA SUR ((MLV)) PARA DESGASTARLAS MEDIANTE ATAQUE MISILES CMM ATACAR UNICAMENTE BLANCOS OPORTUNIDAD TENIENDO EN CUENTA AMENAZA AEREA

BT

**ES COPIA**

ARMADA ARGENTINA  
OPERACIONES

ALVINO CASTRILLI  
TENIENTE DE NAVIO  
JCFE

Fig 74: Argentine attack order from Vice-Admiral Juan Lombardo (as received by ARA Bouchard TF 79.3 Belgrano Group)

INITIATE OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS PD MISSION ACCORDING TO REF SLA05 FD EXECUTION CLN GT 79.1 WILL DETACH ER NIGHT HOURS TOWARDS PHE TO LAUNCH DAYTIME AZHEO ATTACK ON DETACHED UNITS MIO1841 ONCE LOCATED THROUGH OWN EXPLORATION PD THIS MOVEMENT WILL BE CARRIED OUT DURING NIGHT, MAINTAINING DISTANCE FROM THE ENO TO MINIMIZE RISKS NIGHT AIR ATTACK CIM TO THEN BEGIN FIRST LIGHT AIR ATTACK DF GT 79.4 WILL DETACH TOWARDS SOUTHERN EDGE GASTON AREA IN ORDER TO REACH A POSITION THAT ALLOWS ATTACKING UNITS WORN OUT BY AIR ATTACK AND EVENTUALLY DISPERSED UNIST FD GT 79.3 WILL STAND OUT OVER SOUTH BURDWOOD BANK ON ENO APPROACH TRYING TO MAKE CONTACT WITH SURFACE UNITS OPERAITNG TOWARDS SOUTH ((MLV)) TO WEAR THEM DOWN BY ATTACKING CCM MISSILES. ATTACK ONLY OPPORTUNITY TARGETS TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE AIR THREAT.

## SEQUENCE OF EVENTS 1 / 2 MAY – ARGENTINE ATTACK PLAN

The sequence of events, the content and timing of intelligence now explains one of the most controversial acts of the war.

On 1 May Admiral Allara was informed by Argentine intelligence that Harriers were now within range of the Falklands, indicating a UK carrier group was in the area. By 1600 that afternoon he believed, from his Tracker aircraft, that elements of the British Task Force were “moored” in readiness to launch an amphibious landing. In response, the 25 de Mayo group moved East towards the Falklands with a reconnaissance scout aircraft screen.

Coincidentally, at this time the British Task Force also received comprehensive Sigint intelligence of Argentine intent to mount a massive attack. This was the last intelligence available to the British prior to the events leading to the sinking of the Belgrano.

Despite the British Task Force being detected by a Tracker aircraft on the afternoon of the 1 May, the overall position of the entire UK Task Force was not entirely clear to the Argentinians, and believed to be out of range of the 25 de Mayo A4-Q Skyhawks. Throughout the night and into the early hours of 2 May, the Argentine carrier group moved closer to the TEZ in an attempt to close the range, for a 0600 launch of its Skyhawk fighter-bombers. This was a high risk for the Argentine Navy as, unlike the British Sea Harrier, A4-Q aircraft were not equipped for a night attack, yet their own fleet could face an air attack if they themselves were detected.



Fig 75: A4-Q Skyhawk being readied for the attack

The 25 de Mayo had embarked eight A4-Q Skyhawks but only six were serviceable. The planned air strike was aimed to cause confusion in the British Task Force, and to coincide with the smaller ships with their lesser radar signatures from the combined TG79.1 and TG79.4 groups closing the distance to within MM-38 Exocet range. If conditions permitted, the attack would be joined by aircraft from the Argentine mainland. Together with the Belgrano group TG79.3, which was also equipped with MM-38 and 15 x six-inch guns, the British Task Force would face tremendous firepower at a considerable range from different directions.

Each of the six A4-Q Skyhawks were originally carrying four 500 lb bombs. The Argentines had calculated that two aircraft would probably be lost on ingress, but four aircraft would get to a bombing position. Of the possible 16 bombs dropped, it was calculated that four, possibly eight, would hit their intended targets, the Royal Navy carriers. Despite an assessment that they could lose another two aircraft during the egress, a successful strike with the loss of four aircraft in exchange for four hits was considered acceptable as this could inflict a decisive change to the course of the conflict with the loss of a UK Carrier.

Lieutenant-Commander Alberto Philippi was the leader of the Skyhawk sortie being planned:

*"We started the briefing at 1100 p.m. We only had six aircraft serviceable. There were two teams of pilots, and my team was on the roster that time. In the middle of the briefing, Lieutenant-Commander Castro Fox came up from behind and tapped me on the shoulder. He was the squadron commander, but I was senior to him, having come back from a staff job to re-join the squadron. He said: 'Please, this is the first combat mission of my unit. Will you please let me have the honour of leading it?'. I said that I was sorry but, no, I was on the roster and I would take the mission. Later, however, I talked alone with the intelligence officer who was making the analysis of the English ships and their missiles; he came to the conclusion that only four of the six aircraft would reach the target and only two of them would return. I was really afraid. It was the surface missiles - Sea Wolf, Sea Dart and Sea Cat – that worried me most. It was only during and after the war, when things had been tested in action, that we realised the fighters were a greater danger. But dawn did not bring favourable conditions. The wind was still very light, and the meteorological officer's forecast was that there would be no change for twenty-four hours, an unusually long period of calm in this area. A minimum wind speed of 15 knots was needed to allow the Skyhawks to take off with a maximum of two 500-lb bombs and sufficient fuel to attack a target 200 miles away; the current conditions only permitted an 80-mile sortie and one bomb to be carried because of the reduction in the aircrafts' loads necessary for take-offs in the light wind."*

With reduced bomb loads, the revised figure considerably changed the odds of a success to an assessed probability of only two bombs potentially getting through for the loss of four aircraft. This, combined with the range as the British carriers continued to track East, the 'risk v reward' strike balance was becoming very less favourable. Any plan to attack that day went completely awry when an Argentinian Tracker reported that the British ships had moved beyond the range of the A4-Qs.

A report from Stanley also reached Rear-Admiral Allara, telling him that the suspected British landings had not developed. To Allara, this meant two things, firstly that the British



ships would now be concentrated and not dispersed, and secondly that there was no longer the urgency to attack. Warned by his Meteorological staff that the benign weather was to remain for at least another 24 hours, Admiral Allara took the decision to delay the strike and move his groups, including that of the Belgrano, to the West until the weather improved to fly. None of this intelligence became available to the Royal Navy until after the sinking, with critics incorrectly arguing that the Belgrano was sailing away from the TEZ to return to base.

DATE/TIME (LOCAL Z-3)	EVENT
02 MAY 1982 0145	FM: COMD TASK FORCE 79 TO: COMD SOUTH ATLANTIC, COMD TASK GROUPS 79-4 and 79-3 From 020050 TG 79-1 detected by scout aircraft in contact evaluated as a Harrier between 60/70 miles [from Task] Force for 30 minutes then orbiting at 110 miles until 020135. Wind conditions make an attack by our own aircraft unacceptable because of range and limitation of armaments. I am moving away.

Fig 76: Commander of TG79.1 Rear Admiral Jorge Allara signals his intent to break away

Woodward realised that if the group TG79.3 were to split up, HMS Conqueror would not be able to follow all three ships, and during the cover of darkness the Argentines could also steam hard towards the British fleet and attack the UK carrier groups.

### THE NEED TO CHANGE TO THE ROE TO ATTACK TG 79.3 OUTSIDE THE TEZ

Whilst the whereabouts of the 25 de Mayo group were not known, Woodward reckoned that dealing with one arm of the enemy pincer was the appropriate action. Time was of the essence. A coordinated Argentinian air and maritime strike might materialise at any time and if either one of this carriers Hermes or Invincible were to be put out of action, the entire operation would have to be abandoned.

Woodward, who had spent most of his career as a submariner, was not in direct communication with Conqueror who had now sighted the Belgrano group. Woodward could send a signal to Conqueror, but it would only be received by if it was put on the submarine broadcast by Northwood. The direct command of the three nuclear submarines patrolling the TEZ remained with Flag Officer, Submarines, Northwood. Woodward's dilemma was to get the ROE changed quickly before Conqueror lost the opportunity to attack. He considered the arduous chain of communications necessary to reorient the ROE and knew the hours would play into Argentinian hands. At Northwood, Admiral Herbert's staff, as Woodward expected, did not relay the signal, so had no effect on any of her tactical decisions until the approved change to the ROEs had been received later that day.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF BURDWOOD BANK

The Burdwood Bank, is an undersea bank with a prominence of approximately 200 metres (110 fathoms), projecting some 370 miles from Cape Horn in the South Atlantic Ocean and located some 120 miles south of the Falkland Islands (5430S 5000W)

. The bank forms a natural barrier some 190 miles east to west and some 37 miles from north to south. The bank effectively requires a submarine to come close to the surface and unable to follow a surface contact, without a high risk of being detected.

## WOODWARD EXCEEDS HIS AUTHORITY

Woodward realised that Conqueror might lose contact with General Belgrano at any moment as the cruiser steamed toward the shallows of the Burdwood Bank. Therefore, he pushed the sequence of events to a swift conclusion, significantly exceeding his authority with the order:

“From CTG [Commander Task Group] 317.8, to Conqueror, text priority Flash – Attack Belgrano group.”

Woodward later recounted;

*“Attacked from different directions, by different weapons requiring different responses” presented a tremendous challenge, Woodward reasoned, admitting that his force “could probably shoot down five or six of the incoming Skyhawks – but it would be very bad news if 16 Exocets arrived from the southeast at more or less the same time”. A co-ordinated attack might well be disastrous, he concluded, and many sailors of Task Group 317.8 “could all be swimming around in the South Atlantic, getting a bit cold and wondering where the hell those 16 Exocets just came from.”*

At Northwood, Admiral Herbert’s staff picked up the message on satellite and, just as Woodward expected, did not refile to Conqueror. However, it served its intended purpose to instigate an emergency meeting of the War Cabinet at Chequers.

*“Early in the morning on 2 May, all the indications were that the Veinticinco de Mayo carrier and her group of escorts had slipped past my forward SSN barrier to the north, while the cruiser General Belgrano and her escorts were attempting to complete the pincer movement from the South, still outside the Total Exclusion Zone. But as Belgrano still had Conqueror on the trail, my fear was that Belgrano would lose the SSN as she ran over the shallow water of the Burdwood Bank, and that my SSN barrier would be evaded down there too. I therefore sought, for the first and only time throughout the campaign, a major change to the Rules of Engagement to enable Conqueror to attack Belgrano outside the Exclusion Zone”.*

Woodward continued;

**THE MEETING AT CHEQUERS / CHANGE TO THE ROE APPROVED**



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13

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As from: Cabinet Office,  
London,  
SW1

2 May 1982

PSO/CDS  
PS/PNS  
SM/CNS  
NA/CGS  
PS/CAS  
AOS(Ops)  
Aus/DS/mt  
H 1 DS II  
5  
S. 1005

5/21 A 15

Dear David,

Falklands : Military Decisions

The PM held an ad hoc meeting at Chequers at 1245 today. Those present were the Home Secretary, the Defence Secretary, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Attorney General, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Force Commander and the Permanent Under Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

In the light of the latest intelligence about the movements and intentions of the Argentine fleet, and of the new situation created by the military events of 1 May, it was agreed that British forces should forthwith be authorised to attack any Argentine naval vessel (but not naval auxiliaries) on the same basis as had been approved by OD(SA) on 29 April in the case of the Argentine aircraft-carrier (OD(SA)(82) 22nd meeting, conclusion 1). The Attorney General made the point that any such attack would be harder to justify if it took place a long way away from the Total Exclusion Zone; Admiral Fieldhouse said that the patrol areas of the British units involved made that very unlikely to happen.

A meeting of OD(SA) was held subsequently at 1430 today, also at Chequers. It was attended by those listed above plus the CNS, the CGS, the CAS, Frank Cooper, Jim Eyre, Michael Palliser and Robert Armstrong. Formal minutes will be issued on 4 May. Because of the intervening Bank Holiday, it may be convenient if I set out in this letter an advance record of the military decisions taken:-

- (1) OD(SA)(82)39 and 40 were approved.
- (2) The Defence Secretary was authorised at his discretion to bring Argentine naval auxiliaries within the scope of the decision recorded in paragraph 2 above.

OD(SA) also

- (3) took note of OD(SA)(82)41;
- /(4) invited

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Fig 77

TOP SECRET

- 2 -

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- (4) invited the FCO to investigate what more needed to be done to step up the quality and quantity of vernacular and English language broadcasts audible by listeners both in Argentina and in the Falkland Islands (the cost of this was to be regarded as legitimate additional expenditure in the context of our current military operations, and it was suggested that American technical help might be sought if needed);
- (5) invited the FCO, in consultation with the MOD, to consider, e.g. with the ICRC, what arrangements should be made for the removal of Argentine prisoners who might be captured as a result of our military operations;
- (6) agreed to meet again at 0900 on 4 May.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to other members of OD(SA) and the Attorney General; and to the CDS, Antony Acland and Robert Armstrong.

*For ever*  
*Robert*

R.L. WADE-GERY

D.B. Omand, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

**TOP SECRET**TOP SECRET

Fig 78

Figs 77 & 78: Memo from Robert Wade-Gery (Secretary to the Cabinet) to David Omand, formally capturing ROE change which approved an attack against TF 79.3 outside the TEZ.



**ATTACK BY HMS CONQUEROR - Extracts from the attack report by Cdr Chris Wreford-Brown, CO HMS Conqueror (All times local)**

Early on the 30 April HMS Conqueror received tasking to locate and remain with the cruiser General Belgrano. The best estimate of the cruiser's position according to intelligence was between Isla Del Los Estados and Burdwood Bank. The submarine at the time was approaching her initial patrol area to the west of the TEZ. A decision was made to conduct a search down the Western edge of Burdwood Bank to a position off its southern edge to get between the Task Group and a predicted transit route should it deploy to South Georgia.

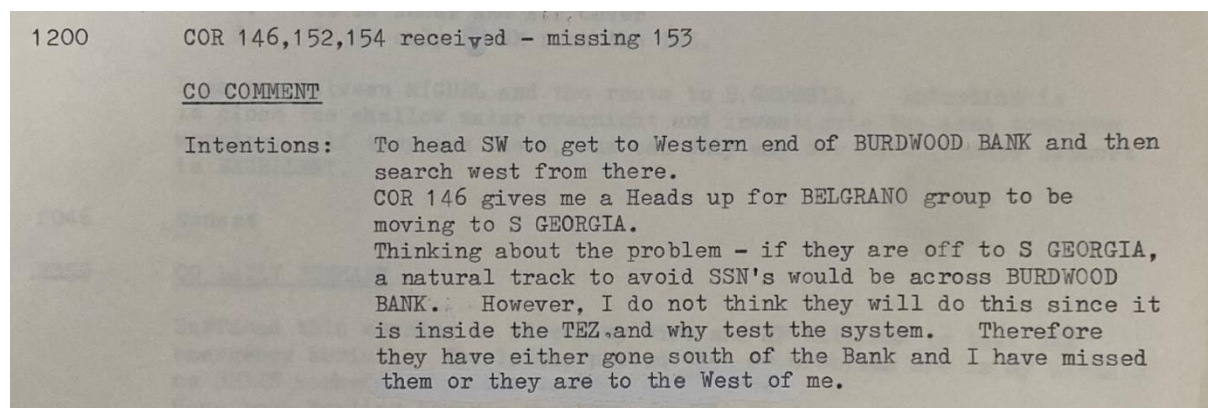


Fig 79

**EVENT REPORT 01 – INITIAL CONTACT WITH TG 79.3**

At 1645 an initial detection of a diesel signature was made to the West. This was held intermittently for the next twenty-four hours. Bearing triangulation suggested the contact to be in an area 40 miles North of Los Estados Isle at an approximate range of 100K yards (57 miles). The tonal was thought to be radiated from the commercial oiler Puerto Rasales. This was subsequently proved correct. Broadband and Tonal search was conducted in this direction overnight 30/1<sup>st</sup>. By 010745 COR 160 was decrypted and gave excellent intelligence on TG79.3 position and intention. Orders were also given to attack when the ROE allowed.

Sunrise 07.40 local (1140) produced excellent visibility, but nothing visual observed. Broadband solutions suggested the contact to be at 30,000 yards and it was decided to go deep and run in fast for one hour to close the sonar contact. At 1250 the submarine returned to periscope depth with the contact loud on sonar. One and subsequently five ships were sighted ahead in a fairly close formation, at a range of about 10,000 yards. By 1302, thanks to excellent intelligence, these were identified as the cruiser Belgrano conducting an abeam Replenishment At Sea on the port side of the oiler Puerta de Rosales, two Allen Sumner Class destroyers in company in a loose line of bearing, and a further mast in the distance. The groups movement was 130 speed 8 and ESM checks at 1322 and 1357



confirmed they were operating under EMCON silence. However, this policy was somewhat ruined by the reconstructed detection range on the tanker of more than fifty miles.

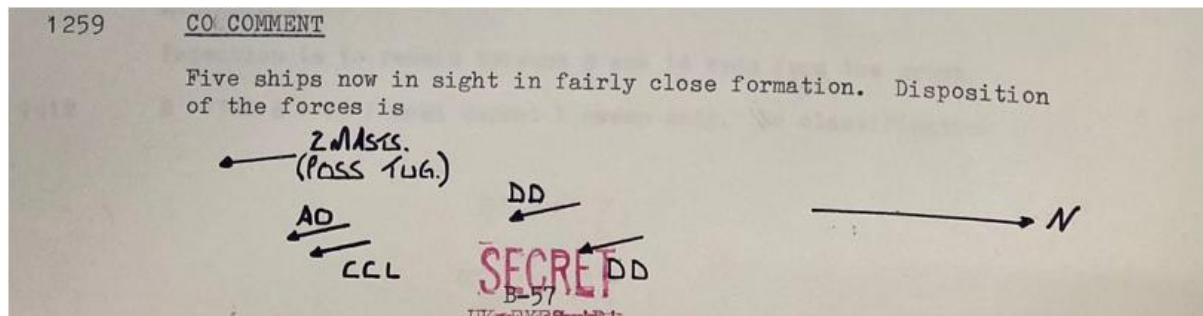


Fig 80

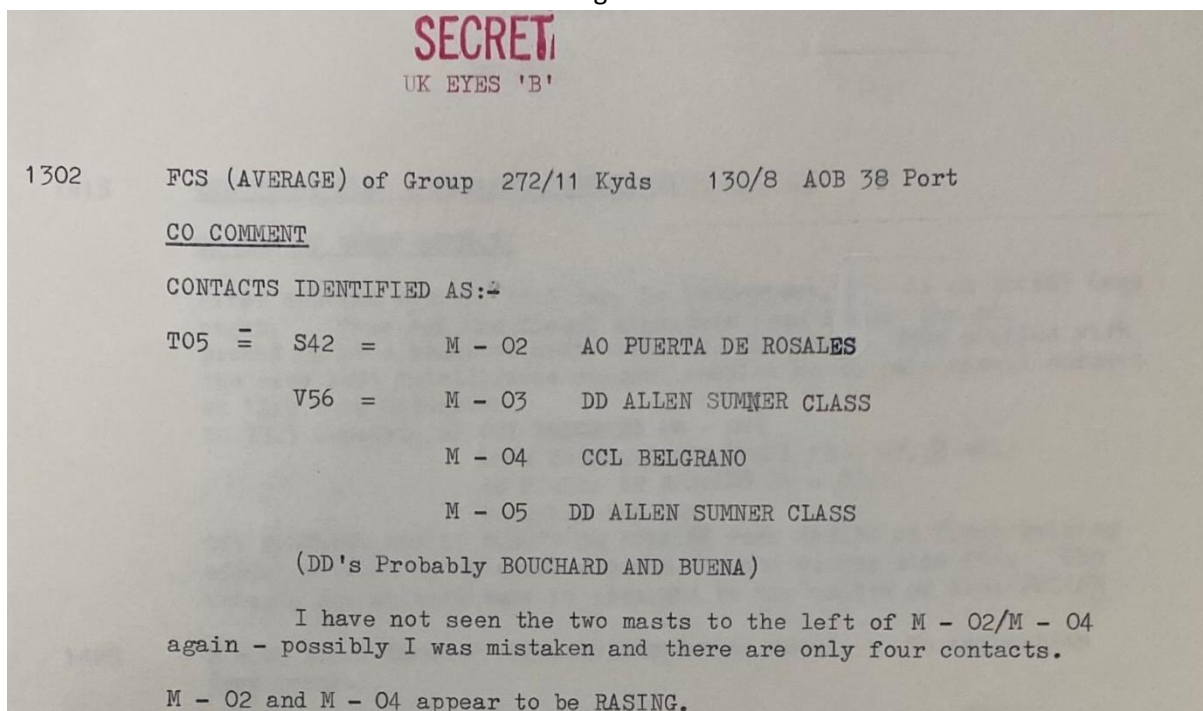


Fig 81

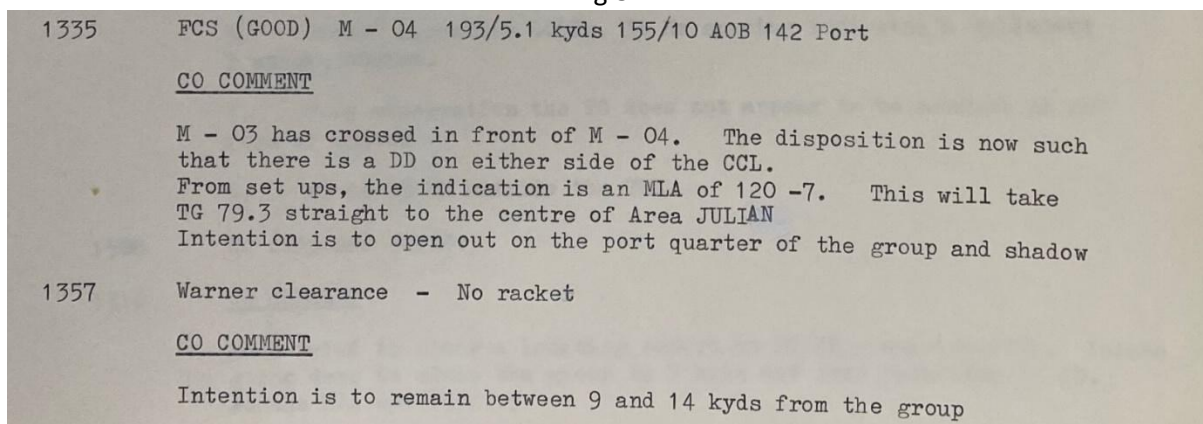


Fig 82

By 1400 the submarine was on station on the port quarter of the Task Group. Attempts to clear (transmit) a locating report failed so the submarine went deep at 1515 to run in fast to 7000 yards. Arrival at periscope depth at 1613 was in time to see the cruiser break away from the tanker. Shortly afterwards the Puerta de Rosales altered course to the West and

the Task Group formed on a loose line of bearing and increased speed to 13 knots. The submarine settled into their trail at ranges between 5 and 14,000 yards on the Port Quarter. Their route was such as to skirt to TEZ by twenty miles.

1413 END EVENT 0101 - INITIAL CONTACT WITH TG 79.3

CO END OF EVENT SUMMARY

First contact with TG 79.3 was, in retrospect, T - 04 at 301645 last night. This was the diesel signature from M - 02 the AO, picked up at a range of approximately 100 Kyds. This coupled with the excellent intelligence support enabled me to gain visual contact at 1249 this afternoon.

TG 79.3 consists of CCL BELGRANO (M - 04)  
 DD's BOUCHARD AND BUENA (M - 03, M - 05)  
 AO PUERTA DE ROSALES (M - 02)  
 Possibly one tug

CCL BELGRANO and AO PUERTA DE ROSALES were RASING on first gaining visual contact which could account for the Groups slow SOA. The Group's course will take it straight to the centre of Area JULIAN

1425 M - 05 Black Smoke - possibly increasing speed, No indication from sonar.

1429 White Maroon seen above M - 04.

CO COMMENT

1. The white Maroon has not caused any change in the groups activity - perhaps it marks the end of the RAS?
2. VISUAL DESCRIPTION OF M - 02 PUERTA DE ROSALES  
 MKMF white superstructure, dark Hull, dark funnel, white king posts.
3. Diesel signature 645Hz, 36 Hz spacing indicates 6 cylinders 2 stroke engine.
4. From observation the TG does not appear to be conducting any form of zigzag
5. TG is 28 NM outside the TEZ.

Fig 83

2359 CO DAILY SUMMARY

Having followed the 'steer' from my intelligence support and Tonal 05, I at last gained visual contact on TG 79.3 at 1250 this afternoon.

I have remained in the trail for the last 11 hours. TG 79.3 have maintained an MLA in keeping with that suggested by my intelligence support which has been of great assistance.

TG 79.3 are not burning Navigational lights so I shall maintain the trail from deep - ready to conduct a TIGERFISH Attack should TG 79.3 head north into the TEZ.

A good day - in contact with the Enemy at last!

Fig 84

## EVENT REPORT 02 – ATTACK ON TASK GROUP 79.3

After trailing the Task Group from deep for 8½ hours the submarine returned to periscope depth to read the routine (signal traffic from Northwood). The Task Group continued to proceed West at eleven knots. From 1410 to 1625 the submarine remained at periscope depth with the range slowly opening to 12,000 yards whilst struggling to read the broadcast via HF and satellite.

1613 C/D PD

CO COMMENT

TG 79.3 are still in the same disposition at 12 kyds. MLA 130/13.5. Returned to PD in time to see AO break away returning to the NW. Remaining forces appear to have speeded up. They need 12 knots to get to Area JULIAN by 020200. Intention is to increase to 21 knots to close, deep.

Fig 85

1625 M - 04 FCS(Good) 258/12 kyd 287/12 AOB 151 Port

CO COMMENT

Traffic now received. COR 177 gives me permission to Attack. Delay due to confusion in that COR 174 cancelled an instruction (not received) from CTG 317.8 to attack the Cruiser. DTG of COR 177 not initially received and so awaited reruns to be absolutely certain. I have ROE to attack. Aim now is to close TG 79.3 and then work into a firing position. Preferred weapon Mk 8 Mod 4. If a good attacking position cannot be achieved because of the Escorts, then I shall use a Mk 24.

Fig 86

At 1701 the submarine returned to periscope depth for a visual and check on the escort ships relative positions. The Belgrano's fire control solution was calculated but unfortunately one of the destroyers were too close to the intended firing position. The submarine went deep to cross the stern of the cruiser and run up its port side in order to work a firing position on the opposite side.

1718 C/D 200 C/S 16

CO COMMENT

DD is too close to firing position on CG Stbd side therefore my intention is to pass astern of BELGRANO and come up on her port side so that she is between me and the destroyers when I attack.



Fig 87

1813 START EVENT 02/01 - ATTACK ON TG 79.3 - G BELGRANO

CO COMMENT

In position 55 23.1S 61 21.0W. I am on the port quarter of TG 79.3 and my target, the Cruiser G BELGRANO, is on the left wing. My intention is to close to a firing position such that I shall fire a salvo of 3 X Mk 8 Mod 4's from 1800 yds on a Torpedo Track Angle of 100° and a zero gyro angle. I shall then evade to the SE leaving the datum between me and the destroyers for as long as possible to assist my escape.

Fig 88

At 1813 (dusk) after another return to periscope depth for a visual, the visibility was assessed as 3000 yards and the submarine went to action stations.

1820 M - 04 FCS (GOOD) 020/5.2 kyds 274/10 AOB 75 Port

CO COMMENT

Having come up for my final Target set up, M - 04 has zigged away and opened whilst I was deep. Intend going deep and fast to close into my firing position.

Fig 89

At 1820 the submarine again returned to periscope depth anticipating a preferred final firing solution only to find the target had changed course to starboard and was now steering at 275. Another two 'duck ups' were required prior to 1853, and undetected, the submarine achieved a good position on the port bow at a range of 2000 yards for a final firing solution. From then until 1856 the submarine waited for the optimum firing angle, and at 1857 a salvo of three Mk 8's were fired at a range of 1400 yards.

1843 M-04 FCS (GOOD) 040/35 kyds 294/10 AOB 75 Port

CO COMMENT

D.O.T. is 3.3 kyds. Will 'Duck and up' again to close range.

C/D 150 C/S 18

1850 C/C 000 C/S 6

1851 Set Target Speed 11 knots C/D PD

Standby 1,2,6 tubes, open 1,2,6 tube bow caps

1852 C/C 010 - for a 105° Torpedo Track Angle (TTA)

1853 Final set-up

MO4 FCS (GOOD) 042/2 kyds 280/11 AOB 58 PORT

1854 All-round look

CO COMMENT

Nothing else in sight. M-04 BELGRANO is not aware of my presence. Intend to wait until the target's relative bearing is G13 when it will be a zero gyro angle shot.

TTA now 90° after re-assessing the ATB at the last look, but will not C/C now as I am about to fire.

1854½ Final set-up

M-04 FCS (GOOD) 035/1.6 kyds 280/10½ AOB 65 PORT

Set target speed 10½ knots

1856 Final set-up

M-04 FCS (GOOD) 030/1.55 kyds 280/10½ AOB 70 PORT

1856¾ Check firing bearing 023½

FIRE

Order of firing 6, 1, 2

1857 Shut 1,2,6 tube bow caps

3 explosions heard

C/D 300 C/C 180 to clear the datum

Shut off for Counter-Attack

Fig 90

CO COMMENT

Orange fire-ball seen just aft of the centre of target, in line with the after mast, shortly after the first explosion was heard. Second explosion heard about 5 seconds after I think I saw a spurt of water aft, but it may have been smoke from the first. Third explosion heard but not seen - I was not looking!

1904 Explosions heard

CO COMMENT

These explosions are possibly depth charges or some type of ASW weapon from the two destroyers M-03 and M-05. Datum is now 4 kyds to the NW of me.

1911

1917

1919 END OF EVENT 02/01

CO END OF EVENT SUMMARY

Having been in the trail of TG 79.3 for the last 24 hours, I had dropped astern of the group while reading my broadcast routine. On receipt of COR 177 authorising me to attack I went deep to close the group.

The intention was to close to an 'ideal' firing position on the side of the BELGRANO away from the escorting destroyers. A salvo of Mk 8 Mod 4's was considered better than a Mk 24 Mod 1, because of the BELGRANO's thick armour plating and anti torpedo bulges.

The Task Group were conducting a very limited zig zag plan of  $\pm 30^\circ$  approximately around  $270^\circ$ . Having manoeuvred into a firing position on the port beam of the target, the parameters on firing were:-

Own Course	010		
Own speed	6 kts		
Target Course	280	296 ))	
Target speed	$10\frac{1}{2}$ knots	10 kts)	Reconstruction
Torpedo Track Angle	90	106 )	
Range on firing	1400 yds	1200 yd)	from the LOP
Gyro Angles	1st Weapon	$1^\circ$ Right	
	2nd Weapon	Zero	
	3rd Weapon	$2^\circ$ Left	
Angular Spacing	$5\frac{1}{4}$ degrees		
Hitting Run	56 seconds	-	$57\frac{1}{2}$ seconds timed on Sonar Recording

Fig 91

At 1904, at 4,000 yards from the firing position a burst of active sonar transmissions was detected followed by two depth charge type explosions. These were assessed as coming from one of the escorts.



A 3 torpedo salvo was fired using Average Solutions because the poor visibility (3 kyds) made ATB assessment and ranging difficult. The command requirement was one hit. Onboard analysis, using both the visual solution from the final set up and the LOP Solution, gives two hits from the second and third weapons, with the first weapon missing astern. This is not supported by the visual sighting of a hit 57 seconds after discharge of the first weapon. Replaying the Sonar Recording of the attack gives two definite explosions with a possible third, although this was not confirmed visually. No visual assessment of damage to the BELGRANO was possible because evasive action was taken to clear the area from the two escorting destroyers. The submarine was not detected throughout this event or at any other time.

RETAINED UNDER  
SECTION 3(4)

1927 [REDACTED]

1953 B - 280 S - 30 getting louder. There is a lot of 'banging' on this bearing

2000 Position . 55 42.6S 60 58.3W  
Weather - Deep SSS 6+  
SVP 020 - 4827  
420 - 4834

2004 B - 272 Datum R - 26 kyds

2010 Loud Bang - heard to the West - No Bearing

CO COMMENT

If this is the Destroyers chasing me they are either lucky in their choice of direction, or there happened to be a NEPTUNE in the local area with JEZ buoys that has directed them; because there have been no active transmissions at all. The 'Bangs' reported by the Sound Room sound like gun fire - is it BELGRANO's ammunition going off? Perhaps the 'Big Bang' was her magazine. Interval between first two 48 mins, second two 6 mins, so there is nothing significant.

2037 Sunset

Fig 92

After a further evasion of 1 hour 50 minutes to the East the submarine was some twelve miles from the target, two sonar contacts were detected closing from the West. At 2052 three depth charge explosions were heard again and at 2103 further loud explosions were heard close on the port side with sonar contacts assessed as inside 5,000 yards. At the time the escorts were considered close, but it was not certain how they achieved this. If they had simply been firing salvos indiscriminately to frighten the submarine away, the final salvo achieved the aim and the submarine evaded to the South East at 24 knots for a further hour. At 2200 the submarine returned to periscope depth to transmit the attack report.

2052 3 explosions heard to the West  
C/D 500 C/S 15 B - 260 S.30  
CO COMMENT  
S.30 to the West is 2 x 4, probably M-03 or M-05. I don't think these bangs are coming from the destroyers. Still no active transmissions, so there is no way that they could have contact on me. Perhaps there is an aircraft up there.

2059 C/C 130

2103 Loud explosions - appeared to be on the port side

2105 B - 265 Very loud noises - M-03 or M-05?  
C/C 150 C/S 23

2130 CO COMMENT

Opened out [redacted] kyds to [redacted] of the Datum. Slowed to 6 knots prior to returning to PD. While I cleared stern arcs, both DDs were heard at 290 and 300, Mod loud - assessment, tracking East inside 10 kyds. I was just considering returning to PD for a look when 2 bangs were heard, Mod loud. Altered to East at 10 knots; 8 minutes later, 2 further sets of bangs - close! Inside 5 kyds by my assessment!

[redacted] Nothing further heard,

Do not know what they might be - no helos seen. Perhaps aircraft dropping depth charges?? More probably, the DDs sweeping to East, guessing we went in that direction because the torpedoes came from the SE, and dropping the odd charge to drive me away - it did! Still no active transmissions.

RETROSPECTIVE COMMENT

Listening to the sonar recording of the loud bangs, run at half speed, gives 5 distinctive discharge noises prior to the loud explosions, which in turn are 5 separate explosions. The discharge noise sounds like a Limbo/Hedgehog type weapon, presumably on the DDs.

Fig 93

At 2200 the submarine returned to periscope depth to transmit the attack report.

CO DAILY SUMMARY

Trailed TG 79.3 all night tracking outside TEZ to East. At 0805 reversed course to West. On return to PD at 1415, discovered that CC and DD had crossed over during reversal of course. Spent from then until 1620 obtaining traffic. COR 177 - Attack. Slightly garbled the first time.

1620-1900 - Closing to attack. Initially on the starboard side of G. BELGRANO (M-04) but DD was too close there, so crossed over to Port side to obtain a good firing position. 1900-2100 - spent evading to EAST and then SE. I still cannot understand why the explosions were so close. 2100-2359 - spent clearing the datum to SE.

Will move South and then West approximately 50 nm from the Datum before heading NW back to a search position off the Isla de los ESTADOS.

Fig 94



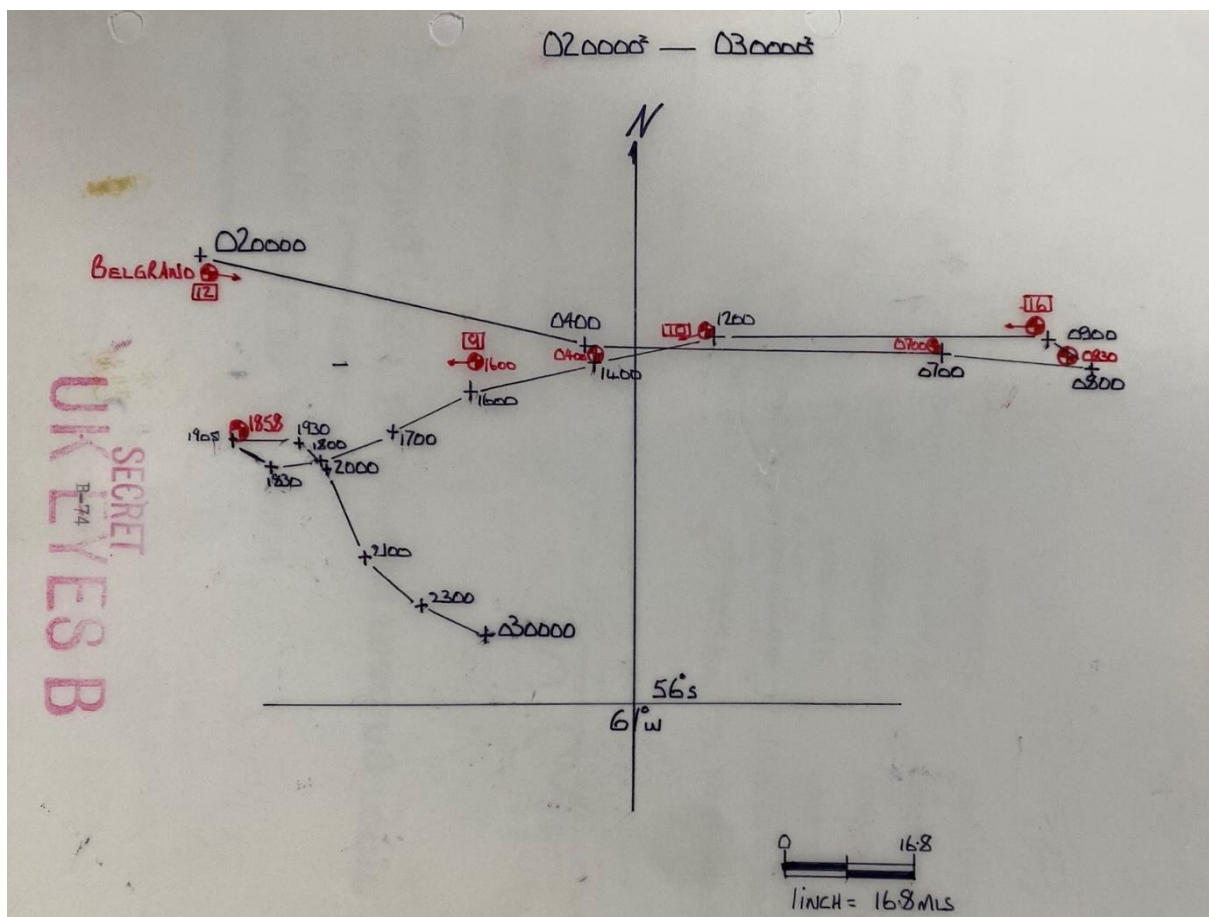




## COMMANDING OFFICER'S CONCLUSIONS

Having been in the trail of TG 79.3 for the last 24 hours, I had dropped astern of the group while reading my broadcast routine. On receipt of COR 177 authorising me to attack, I went deep to close the group. The intention was to close to an 'ideal' firing position on the side of the Belgrano away from the escorting destroyers.

A 3-torpedo salvo was fired using Average Solutions because the poor visibility (3K yds) made ATB assessment and ranging difficult. The command requirement was one hit. Onboard analysis, using both the visual solution from the final set up and the LOP Solution, gives two hits from the second and third weapons, with the first weapon missing astern. This is not supported by the visual sighting of a hit, 57 seconds after discharge of the first weapon. Replaying the Sonar Recording of the attack gives two definite explosions with a possible third, although this was not confirmed visually. No visual assessment of damage to the Belgrano was possible because evasive action was taken to clear the area from the two escorting destroyers. The submarine was not detected throughout the event.



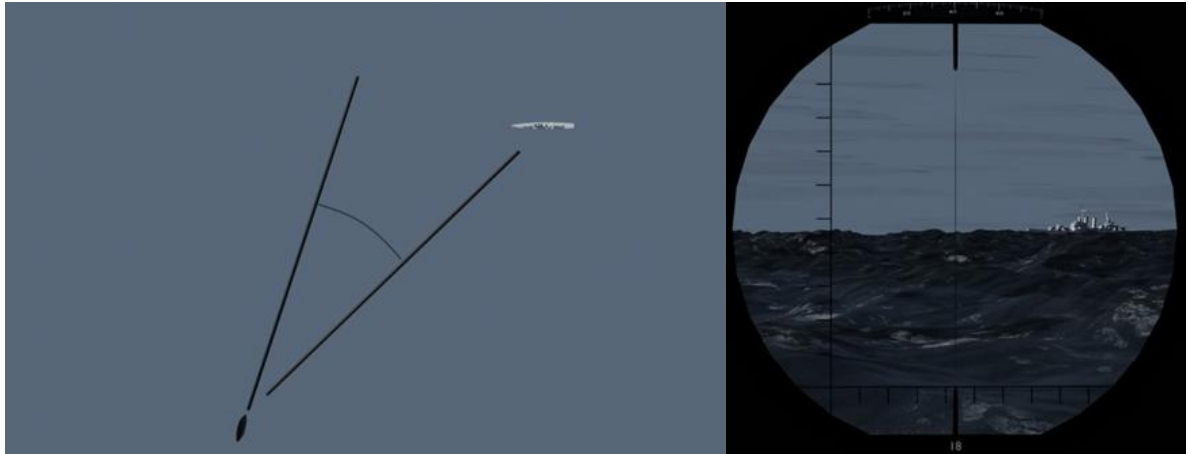


Fig 97: Reconstruction of the off-set for firing at Belgrano at 1400 yards ©Stuart Wicks



Fig 98: ARA General Belgrano comes alongside the Puerto Rosales for replenishment at sea unaware that HMS Conqueror was on her tail

Adding to the confusion, the crew of the Bouchard thought they felt an impact that was possibly the third torpedo striking at the end of its run (an examination of the ship later showed an impact mark consistent with a torpedo but nothing has been proved beyond doubt). The two ships continued on their course westward and began dropping depth charges indiscriminately. By the time the ships realised that something had happened to General Belgrano, it was already dark and the weather had worsened, scattering the life rafts.

Escaping the ship, Lieutenant Sgut rescued a camera, which still worked despite a good drenching, so he took a few pictures over the next half hour as the ship slowly sank. Now he and roughly 700 other survivors were adrift in the icy South Atlantic, and would be another

24 hours of waiting before rescue would arrive. Upon arriving back at the naval base in Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Sgut turned his film over to Argentina's Naval Intelligence Service, believing it was highly sensitive material. To his, and the world's shock, the photos would appear on the front page of the Sunday New York Times on 9 May and around the world.



Fig 99

Belgrano listing to port sinking by the stern



Fig 100

Capt Héctor Bonzo and Maj. Ramon Barrionuevo standing on deck, the last survivors to escape the sinking of the ship



One of the torpedoes struck 10 to 15 metres aft of the bow, outside the area protected by the ship's side anti-torpedo armour. The second torpedo struck about three-quarters of the way along the ship, just outside the rear limit of the side armour plating, exploding in the aft machine room, damaging the electrical power which prevented the ship putting out a distress call.

### **SELECTING THE MK VIII MOD 4 TORPEDO**

A World War Two vintage torpedo with a larger warhead was selected as having a better chance of penetrating the World War Two vintage cruiser's armour belt and anti-torpedo bulges.

#### **Dimensions**

Diameter 533 mm (21 Inch)

Length 6.58 m (22 feet)

Weight 1.566 kg

#### **Warhead**

365 kg (722 lb) Torpex

Fuse – Impact

#### **Guidance**

Mk VIII is a straight running torpedo with Gyroscope stabilisation

#### **Propulsion**

Engine type 4 cylinder radial semi diesel, single four blade propeller

#### **Performance**

Speed 45.5 or 41 knots

Range 4.5 km at 45.5 knots, 6.4 km at 41 knots

Depth Runs near surface

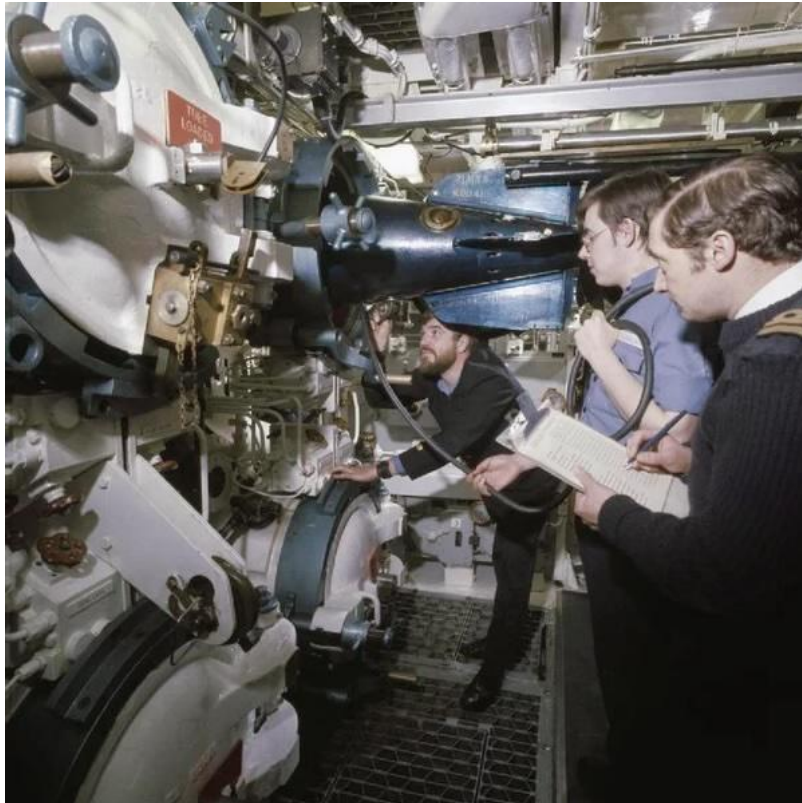


Fig 101

Loading of a MKVIII torpedo in a Churchill-class submarine

## COMMUNICATIONS WITH SUBMARINES

The need for a submarine to operate undetected is paramount, but to do so limits the methods of communications, primarily to Very Low Frequency (VLF), achieved either via a long semi-buoyant trailed antenna from the deep or while at periscope depth via aerials fitted in the fin. Data received via VLF is quite slow, a matter of characters per minute, not per second. However, the distance of 6,800 miles could simply not be bridged, so the far riskier alternative was for the submarine to break surface with its receivers for High Frequency (HF) and via satellite Ultra High Frequency (UHF). Complex at the best of times, notoriously difficult in harsh maritime conditions, despite the greater transmission speed, messages received by Conqueror were often needed to be taken several times from the broadcast before a clean copy (minus garbles and missed characters) was received due to the mast being damaged. Throughout the conflict this challenged the ability of the submarine to receive signals reliably in good time.

Information provided by Chris Wreford-Brown for this publication explains HMS Conquerors communications build and challenges;

*"We were fitted with satellite communications shortly before we sailed and this rapidly became the principal method of receiving and sending signals. We also had a floating wire aerial streamed so we could read HF signals from New Zealand. [The wire had to be streamed while on the surface as we did not have the system where it could be streamed from an inboard dispenser like some of the other boats].*

*We read broadcasts at intervals as directed. On the way down when we were transiting fast and deep, it was every 12 hours, whereas when in area it was every 2 hours. However, when in area we spent much of the time at periscope depth so could receive traffic even more rapidly. We were in the area of South Georgia from 19 April to after the recapture, patrolling to the NW of the island specifically looking for Argentine submarine and surface units. For reasons unknown, we received none of the intelligence regarding the presence or location of the Argentine SSK Santa Fe.*

*Early on in the patrol, late April, we damaged the Wireless mast when on patrol in very rough weather to the North West of South Georgia. Despite spending time on the surface for two nights trying to repair the damage this was to have a significant affect for the rest of our time down south. Signals received were not always clean the first time round, so we spent a lot of time challenging the satellite to get clean copies. This was particularly the case when we were receiving the Rule of Engagement change, that allowed attacks outside the UK's Total Exclusion Zone, on the afternoon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May. We started receiving the 1400 broadcast, but did not get a clean copy until around 1600. It should have only taken a few minutes if everything had been working correctly. Although frustrating and initially worrying we learnt to cope with the problem and did not have to withdraw to make more dramatic repairs."*



Emergency Unit memo to David Gillmore FCO to clarify the guidance of timelines from transmission and the receipt of a signal to a SSN. This personal interpretation would not serve as a guarantee as the norm based on the example of HMS Conqueror.

*Handwritten:* F. Gordon, Mr Gillmore, 4/5

**SECRET**

*Handwritten:* This is exactly the point I made this morning at the meeting with Mr Jackson & others. PUS

*Handwritten:* I think the ROE was the 12 hour delay to sink them per se.

**RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR SSNs**

1. The sinking of the Belgrano has brought to light one point about the timing of communications with the SSNs which is perhaps worth recording.
2. On several occasions over the past few weeks when the question of communicating quickly with the SSNs has been discussed with the Chiefs of Staff, the latter have insisted that the transmission of a message from the UK to SSNs could not be guaranteed in less than 12 hours, because of technical factors concerning sending and receiving cycles.
3. According to Mr Wright's minute of 2 May, the change in the ROE applying to warships outside the TEZ was reported by the PUS at 1330 hours on that day (presumably fairly quickly after Ministers had made the relevant decision). At 2100 hours that evening the Belgrano had been engaged and torpedoed outside the TEZ, ie an interval appreciably less than 12 hours. Assuming that on receipt of his changed rules of engagement the SSN commander needed a certain amount of time to go to action stations, close with and attack the Belgrano, this incident appears to show that the 12-hour delay referred to in paragraph 2 above is very much a worst-case estimate. No doubt the Navy would say that they were simply lucky in being able to get the amended ROE through at their first attempt. But the point may become more than academic if we are contemplating a temporary ceasefire in the near future.

*Handwritten:* Yes, immediately

*Handwritten:* 11

*Handwritten:* Bowser

**- 6 MAY 1982**

**P. J. Weston**  
Emergency Unit

**4 May 1982**

**cc PS/PUS**  
**Mr Wright**

*Handwritten:* Mr Weston

*Handwritten:* See PUS's comment

*Handwritten:* 4/5

Fig 102

## DIPLOMATIC MESSEGES

CONFIDENTIAL

2

3 - MAY 1982

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10 2  
9 3  
8 4  
7 5  
6

ALQ 050/25

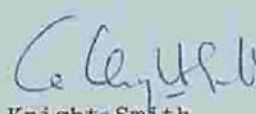
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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

REPORTED SINKING OF GENERAL BELGRANO AND SECOND ARGENTINE PATROL/NAVAL AUXILIARY VESSEL

1. UKMIS New York rang the Emergency Unit at approximately 6.30 pm to say that they had been told privately that the UN Secretariat had received a message from a Minister in the Argentine Mission to the UN to the effect that:
  - (a) The Argentine cruiser General Belgrano had now sunk with 500 people on board (there was no indication as to whether the 500 had all drowned or whether there were survivors).
  - (b) Two Argentine patrol/naval auxiliary vessels had also sunk (presumably the two that were attacked by Lynx helicopters).
2. UKMIS were concerned that if this report became current it might have an adverse effect on sentiment in the UN where consultations were now taking place.
3. After consulting with the MOD I told UKMIS New York that we had no information to substantiate this report; on the other hand we did not have either vessel under constant surveillance and they could have sunk without us knowing. I undertook to ring UKMIS again if and when we had any further news. There is no report on the News Agency tapes as yet about the sinking of these vessels.

  
 I Knight-Smith

3 May 1982

cc:  
 Private Secretary  
 PS/PUS  
 Mr Wright  
 Mr Giffard  
 Mr Gillmore

Mr Mallaby  
 Emergency Unit Distribution  
 CONFIDENTIAL

[No 10 also reformed]

Fig 103: Emergency Unit memo



SECRET

FALKLAND ISLANDS: FCO SITREP: 0730 HOURS, 4 MAYSECRETARY OF STATE'S MOVEMENTS

1. On morning of 3 May, Mr Pym called on the President of the Security Council. It was a singularly unproductive meeting. He also gave a press conference at the UN. Mr Pym arrived back in London at 8 p.m. London time. Our Embassy gave a Community briefing to EC Missions in Washington about Mr Pym's visit.

CEASEFIRE PLEA BY MR HAIG

2. Mr Haig told Sir Nicholas Henderson last night that further successful military action by Britain might cause US, and for that matter Western opinion in general, to swing against her. We might be accused of over-reacting and of being too bellicose.

3. Haig had spoken to President Belaunde of Peru, who believed that the Argentines would accept a seven-point peace plan. This would be adjusted to provide for an interim administration by the US and Peru only. Haig thought that it was desperately urgent for the Prime Minister to propose a ceasefire to come into effect within hours to be followed by the implementation of the peace plan.

4. Mr Haig was informed by Sir Nicholas that the Secretary of State would consider this with the Prime Minister and senior colleagues at 9 a.m. London time today.

5. In a subsequent telegram we asked our Ambassador in Washington to make clear to Mr Haig that the Prime Minister would discuss new developments, including the Peruvian proposals. Meanwhile, military developments in the area would continue to be governed by existing rules of engagement but nothing unprecedented was contemplated before coming back to him.

6. Washington telegram number 1584 (received 0630 hours) refers to a document from Haig transmitted in telegram number 1585 (received 0700 hours) expressing his worry today at focus on military action and his belief that it is the moment for us to make a magnanimous diplomatic move when we have given proof to the whole world that, if need be, we can dictate military terms. The document contains a seven-point proposal for peace and a suggested ceasefire statement, to be made by HMG, to come into effect at 1600 GMT on 5 May.

UNITED NATIONS

7. The Secretary-General has told Sir Anthony Parsons that if "escalation continued" and there was another major incident at sea the Security Council would have to meet.

/SINKING

Fig 104



SINKING OF GENERAL BELGRANO AND AN ARGENTINE PATROL VESSEL

8. In a communiqué reported by Buenos Aires radio, the Argentine Foreign Ministry has announced that the cruiser General Belgrano with 1042 men on board was sunk by a British submarine at 1700 hours (2000 GMT) on 2 May. The attack took place 36 miles outside the Total Exclusion Zone. A joint staff communiqué reported by Buenos Aires radio said that Argentine naval ships have so far picked up 123 survivors from the General Belgrano, and that rescue operations are continuing.

9. The attached MOD press release refers to the sinking of an Argentine patrol vessel.

4 May, 1982

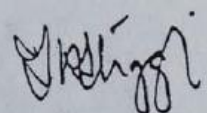
  
T H Steggle  
Emergency Unit

Fig 105

ADDITIONAL MOD STATEMENT OF 3 MAY ON ENGAGEMENT WITH  
PATROL CRAFT

I am now able to give some additional information about the engagement (early this morning)(yesterday) in which British helicopters responded to attacks by two Argentine patrol craft on another helicopter. We described these vessels as Argentine patrol type naval auxiliaries. We are now able to confirm that the vessels were armed ocean-going tugs used by the Argentine Navy as patrol craft. One of these has provisionally been identified as Alferez Sobral (listed in Janes Fighting Ships as being armed with 40 mm and 20 mm guns). I am not able to say whether it was the Alferez Sobral or the other vessel which was sunk.

Fig 106

Figs 104, 105 & 106: Extracts from the FCO Crisis Log

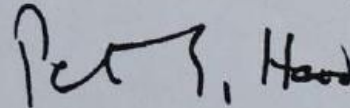
Sir Anthony Parsons was the UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations. At the outbreak of the conflict, he tabled a resolution which was adopted as UNSCR502 demanding an immediate cessation of hostilities and a withdrawal of Argentine forces.

## CONFIDENTIAL

## NOTE FOR THE FILE

GENERAL BELGRANO: SIR ANTHONY PARSONS

1. Sir Anthony Parsons telephoned at 1100 BST on 3 May asking for information on the fate of the General Belgrano. He said that he was meeting the President of the Security Council within the half-hour and wanted to be able to comment on a rumour being spread by the Argentinian Mission, that 500 Argentinian casualties had resulted from our attack on the General Belgrano.
2. I told him that, as Mr Nott had said in his television press conference that evening, we had no further information on the attack. Neither did we have any information on casualties. I also told him that according to communique no. 16, released by the Joint General Staff, the Argentinians now presumed the ship sunk.
3. UKMIS New York subsequently telephoned at 2.00 BST, Tuesday, 4th May, to ask whether there was any further information on the General Belgrano and whether a reply would be sent to Washington telegrams numbers 1574 and 1575 of 3 May.
4. I replied, on a secure line, that certain sources suggested that the ship had sunk at the coordinates given in the above communique. On the second point, I referred him to FCO telegram number 898 of 4 May to Washington which I expected he would receive in the next few minutes.



4 May, 1982


 Martyn Warr  
Emergency Unit

Fig 107

Copy of a request for information from Sir Anthony Parsons prior to him meeting with the President of the Security Council.



UNCLASSIFIED

3279 - 3

UNCLASSIFIED

FM FCO 041030Z MAY 82

TO IMMEDIATE CERTAIN MISSIONS AND DEPENDENT TERRITORIES  
GUIDANCE TELEGRAM NUMBER 85 OF 4 MAY 1982

FALKLANDS: SINKING OF GENERAL BELGRANO

1. IN COUNTERING CRITICISM OF THE FACT THAT THIS SHIP WAS SUNK OUTSIDE THE TOTAL EXCLUSION ZONE (TEZ), YOU SHOULD DRAW ON MR NOTT'S STATEMENT OF 3 MAY (VERBATIM NO 059 REPEATING TELNO 899 TO WASHINGTON (NOT TO ALL)). YOU SHOULD ADD THAT:

A. ON 23 APRIL THE SWISS EMBASSY IN BUENOS AIRES PASSED A MESSAGE FROM HMG TO THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT, WHICH INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING: 'ANY APPROACH ON THE PART OF ARGENTINE WARSHIPS, INCLUDING SUBMARINES, NAVAL AUXILIARIES OR MILITARY AIRCRAFT, WHICH COULD AMOUNT TO A THREAT TO INTERFERE WITH THE MISSION OF BRITISH FORCES IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC, WILL ENCOUNTER THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE'.

B. THIS MESSAGE WAS IMMEDIATELY CIRCULATED IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL AND RELEASED PUBLICLY.

C. MOD SPOKESMEN HAVE EXPLAINED THAT EACH COMMANDER IN OUR TASK FORCE TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE CAPABILITIES OF ANY ARGENTINE VESSEL OR AIRCRAFT, IN CONSIDERING WHETHER IT CONSTITUTES A THREAT, WHICH CALLS FOR A RESPONSE. ONCE SUCH A THREAT IS IDENTIFIED, BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF MODERN WEAPONS, BRITISH COMMANDERS CANNOT WAIT FOR THE OTHER SIDE TO FIRE FIRST. THUS THE PRESENCE IN ITSELF IS A THREAT.

PYM

BY TELEGRAPH:

BRUSSELS (UKREP,EEC)  
BRUSSELS (UKDEL,NATO)  
STOCKHOLM  
MOSCOW

CARACAS  
MEXICO CITY  
BRASILIA

MONTEVIDEO  
CANBERRA  
WELLINGTON

[ALL IMMEDIATE]

ANKARA  
ISTANBUL  
ATHENS  
COPENHAGEN  
THE HAGUE  
LISBON  
LUXEMBOURG  
OSLO  
STRASBOURG (UKDEL)  
ROME  
BERNE  
GENEVA (UKMIS)  
DUBLIN  
HELSINKI  
MADRID  
VIENNA (UKMIS IAEA)  
WARSAW  
SAO PAULO  
RIO DE JANEIRO  
BOGOTA

HAVANA  
LIMA  
SANTIAGO  
ASUNCION  
LA PAZ  
PANAMA  
QUITO  
SAN JOSE  
SANTO DOMINGO  
TEGUCIGALPA  
AMMAN  
JEDDA  
KUWAIT  
TEL AVIV  
CAIRO  
DAKAR  
KINSHASA  
CAPE TOWN  
PRETORIA  
ISLAMABAD

[ALL PRIORITY]

PEKING  
TOKYO  
NEW DELHI  
DACC  
COLOMBO  
ACCRA  
LAGOS  
NAIROBI  
SALISBURY  
LUSAKA  
KINGSTON  
PORT OF SPAIN  
GEORGETOWN  
BRIDGETOWN  
NASSAU  
BELMOPAN  
HONG KONG  
GIBRALTAR (PERSONAL)  
ASCENSION ISLAND  
ST HELENA

AND SAVING TO CERTAIN OTHER POSTS

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GUIDANCE

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	INDEX	FILED

Fig 108

FCO guidance to outstations



## CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE NOTES

SECRET

Fco(Def Dept)

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COS 41ST MEETING/82

Copy No. 6 of 79 copies

(78)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

CONFIDENTIAL ANNEX  
TO

COS 41ST MEETING/82 HELD ON  
TUESDAY 4 MAY 1982 AT 12 NOON

ALQ 050/H

RECEIVED IN REGISTRY  
- 6 MAY 1982

DESK OFFICER	REGISTRY
INDEX	PA
	Action Taken

OPERATION CORPORATE

ITEM 1. INTELLIGENCE

1. SIR TERENCE LEWIN invited the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Intelligence) to update them on current intelligence.
2. LIEUTENANT GENERAL GLOVER (Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Intelligence)) reviewed the intelligence published in the latest summary (1). He said he would issue later that day a detailed assessment of the capability of the Venezuelan armed forces.

ITEM 2. OWN FORCES

3. The Task Force organisation was set out in the Force Tote Sitrep (2).
4. The operations of the previous 24 hours had been summarised in the television briefing preceding their meeting. It was noted that units of the Task Force had been ordered (3) not to attack Argentine ships or aircraft searching for survivors from the GENERAL BELGRANO.
5. In discussion it was pointed out that the sea line of communication to the Falkland Islands was very long and unprotected.

ITEM 3. PUBLIC RELATIONS

6. The Committee were reminded of the need to keep our allies and other friendly nations informed about the true situation in the South Atlantic. They noted that foreign attaches accredited in London were to be given a further briefing on 6 May. The Secretary of State and the Chief of the Defence Staff also intended to brief their respective NATO colleagues during the NATO meeting that week.

Notes:

1. Intsum No 60 040600Z May
2. Force Tote Sitrep, Issue 39.
3. CTG 324.3 AAA/I9F/LGQ 040848Z May 1982.

Page 1 of 5 pages

COS S24(10)

SECRET

Fig 109

SECRET

Part I to COS 41st Meeting/82  
4 May 1982

7. In discussion it was agreed that it was essential to devise effective controls over the security aspects of reports being sent from press correspondents with the Task Force, and it was noted that the Task Force Commander had already sent instructions (4) to the Task Group Commander to that effect. The Permanent Under Secretary said he was also looking at procedures within MOD, and he had arranged a further meeting with London editors later that week; he considered relations with the British press were generally good, and it was essential to retain their cooperation.

ITEM 4. ACTIONS AND DECISIONS REQUIRED

8. The Committee noted the summary of actions in hand (5).

ITEM 5. DEFENCE OF ASCENSION ISLAND

9. REAR-ADMIRAL BROWN (Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Operations)) said he had now received the signalled report (6) from the officers sent to assess the defence of Ascension Island. The Task Force Commander had been asked to forward his recommendations that day.

10. Summing up a short discussion, SIR TERENCE LEWIN said they would wish to agree that a Wing Headquarters and one Flight of the RAF Regiment and an air defence early warning radar should be sent to Ascension Island as soon as possible. They would also wish to instruct the Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Operations) to examine further any other requirements, including the need for a short range surface surveillance radar, and to report to them out of committee the next day.

ITEM 6. US ASSISTANCE

11. The Committee had before them a paper (7) identifying specific areas in which US military assistance in support of Operation CORPORATE might be sought. In discussion it was agreed that there was a need for a focal point both in London and in Washington to coordinate such assistance. Although care should be taken to ensure that the normal supply and procurement channels should continue to be used as far as possible, there would be occasions when special arrangements would need to be made for urgent operational loans and purchases.

Notes:

4. CTF 317 AAA/I9F/EUJ 031558Z May 1982.
5. Annex A to COS 40th Meeting/82.
6. CBFSU Ascension I9F 031800Z May 1982.
7. Attachment to COS(Misc) 189/742/1 dated 2 May 1982.

2

COS S24(10)

SECRET

Fig 110

SECRET

Part I to COS 41st Meeting/82  
4 May 1982

12. Summing up, SIR TERENCE LEWIN said that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary had already discussed US assistance in broad terms with the US Defence Secretary and the US Secretary of State. Further high level approaches would be made by himself and by the Secretary of State to their US colleagues at the NATO meetings that week, during which they would draw as necessary on the paper (7). Pending the outcome of these discussions, they would wish their staffs to continue to refine the areas of possible assistance. They would also wish to instruct the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Operational Requirements) to continue to coördinate MOD staff action to obtain items needed urgently.

Annex:

A. Operation CORPORATE - Actions in Hand.

Note:

7. Attachment to COS(Misc) 189/742/1 dated 2 May 1982.

3

COS S24(10)

SECRET

Fig 111



SECRET

ANNEX A TO  
PART I TO COS 41ST MEETING/8  
4 MAY 1982

## OPERATION CORPORATE - ACTIONS IN HAND

ITEM	ARISING FROM COS MEETING	DECISION OR ACTION REQUIRED	SPONSOR	ACTION/ DECISION BY	CONTINUED	CURRENT STATE
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
0023	6/82 Item 1 (re-titled 40/82)	Military Options for Repossession of the Falkland Islands	ACDS(Pol)	DPS/DS 11	7/82 Item 4 12/82 Item 6 35/82 Item 4 40/82 Item 7	Revised paper for COS 6 May
0065	-	Maintenance of a British Garrison in the Falkland Islands	VCDS(P&L)	VCDS(P&L)	VCDS(P&L)127/3/3 dated 19 Apr 82 33/82 Item 9	For COS 7 May
0066	-	Long Term Measures to Sustain Op CORPORATE	CDS	DCDS(OR)	CDS 2038/1/1 dated 22 Apr 82 D/DORS/58/1 dated 26 Apr 82	
0067	-	Op SUTTON - Prisoners	CDS	ACDS(P&L)	CDS 2038/1 dated 25 Apr 82	For COS o/c 4 May
0071	31/82 Item 6	US Assistance	CDS	ACDS(Pol)	38/82 Item 3 41/82 Item 6	

A - 1

COS S24(9)

SECRET

SECRET

ANNEX A TO  
PART I TO COS 41ST MEETING/8  
4 MAY 1982  
(Concluded)

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
0075	33/82 Item 7	Defence of Ascension Island	ACDS(Ops)	ACDS(Ops)	35/82 Item 7 37/82 Item 4 39/82 Item 4 40/82 Item 5 41/82 Item 5	ACDS(Ops) to report to COS o/c by 5 May
0076	33/82 Item 9	Long Term Logistic Requirements	VCDS(P&L)	VCDS(P&L)		Included in 0065
0077	35/82 Item 4	Arrangements for POW at Ascension Island	VCDS(P&L)	VCDS(P&L)		For COS o/c 4 May
0081	38/82 Item 3	Supply of US Equipment	DCDS(OR)	DCDS(OR)		Included in 0071
0082	40/82 Item 6	Special Forces	ACDS(Ops)	ACDS(Ops)		For COS 5 May
0083	40/82 Item 6	Hercules air-to-air refuelling	AFD	AFD		For COS 5 May (with 0082)

A - 2

COS S24(9)

SECRET

Fig 112

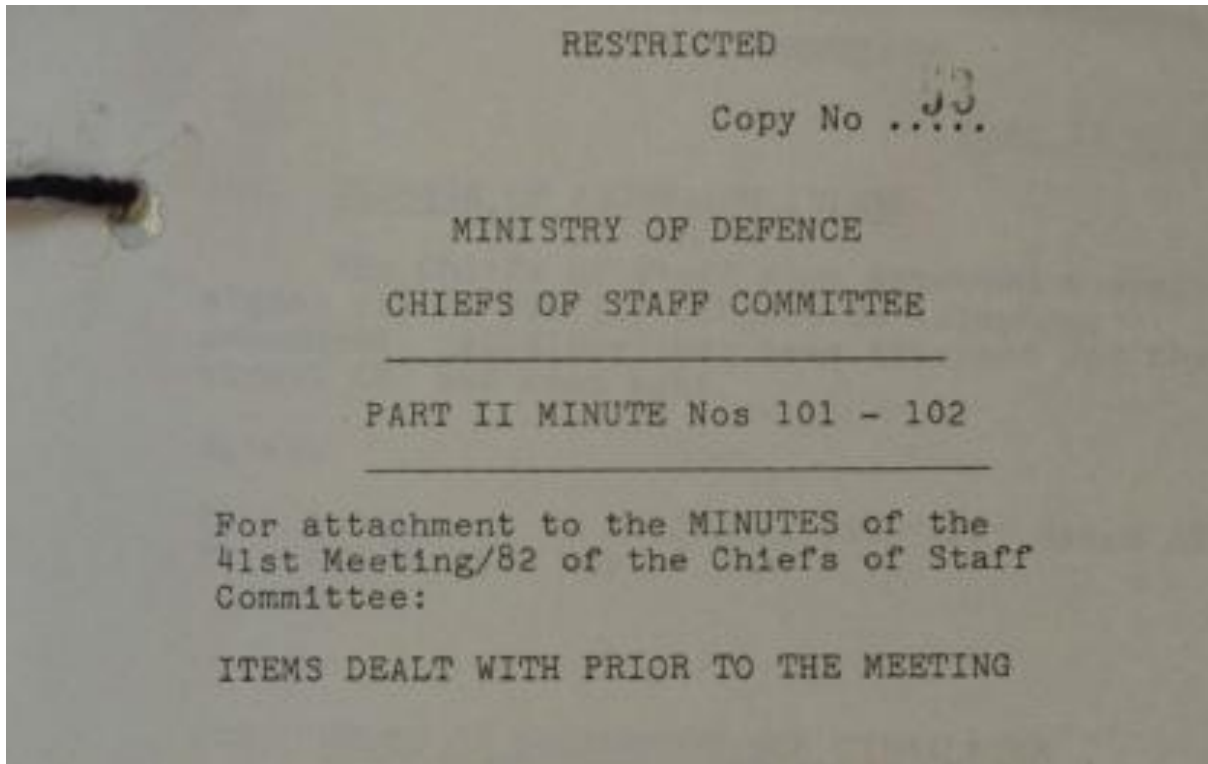


Fig 113

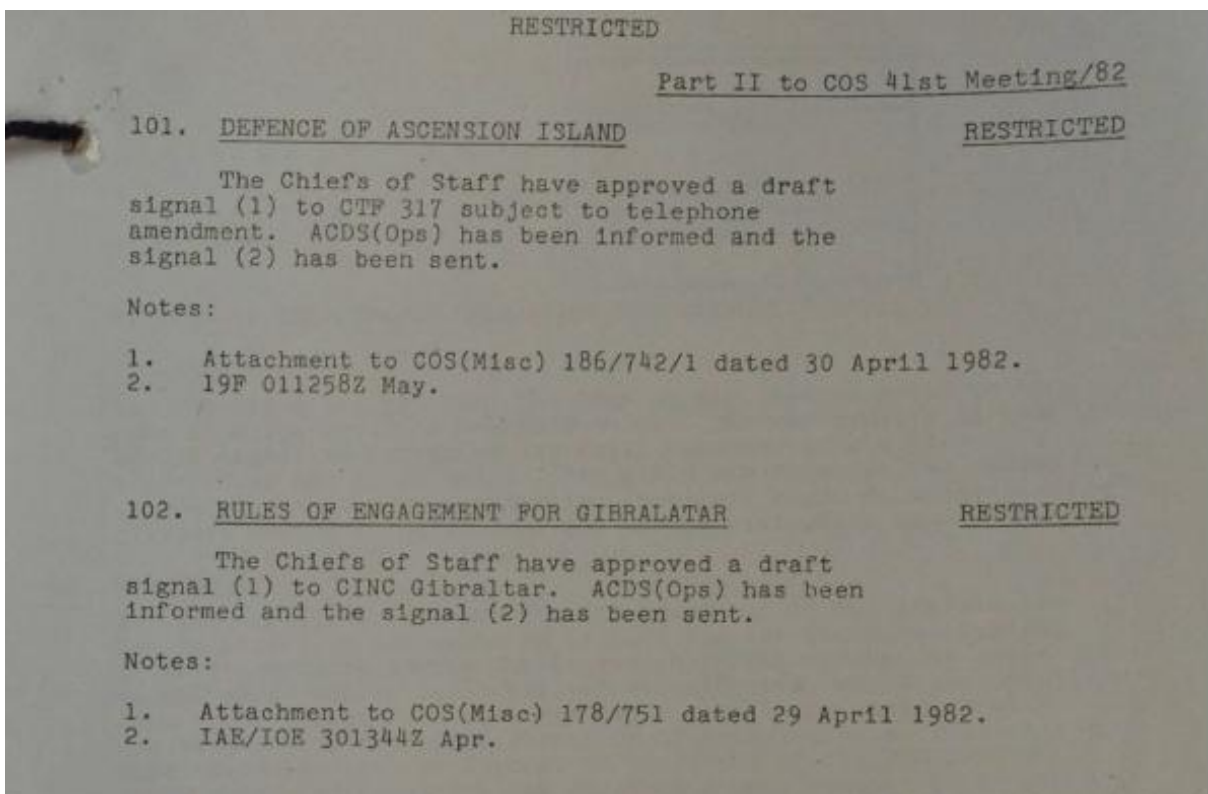


Fig 114

Figs 109, 110, 111, 112, 113: Minutes from Ministry of Defence Chiefs of Staff Committee 4 May

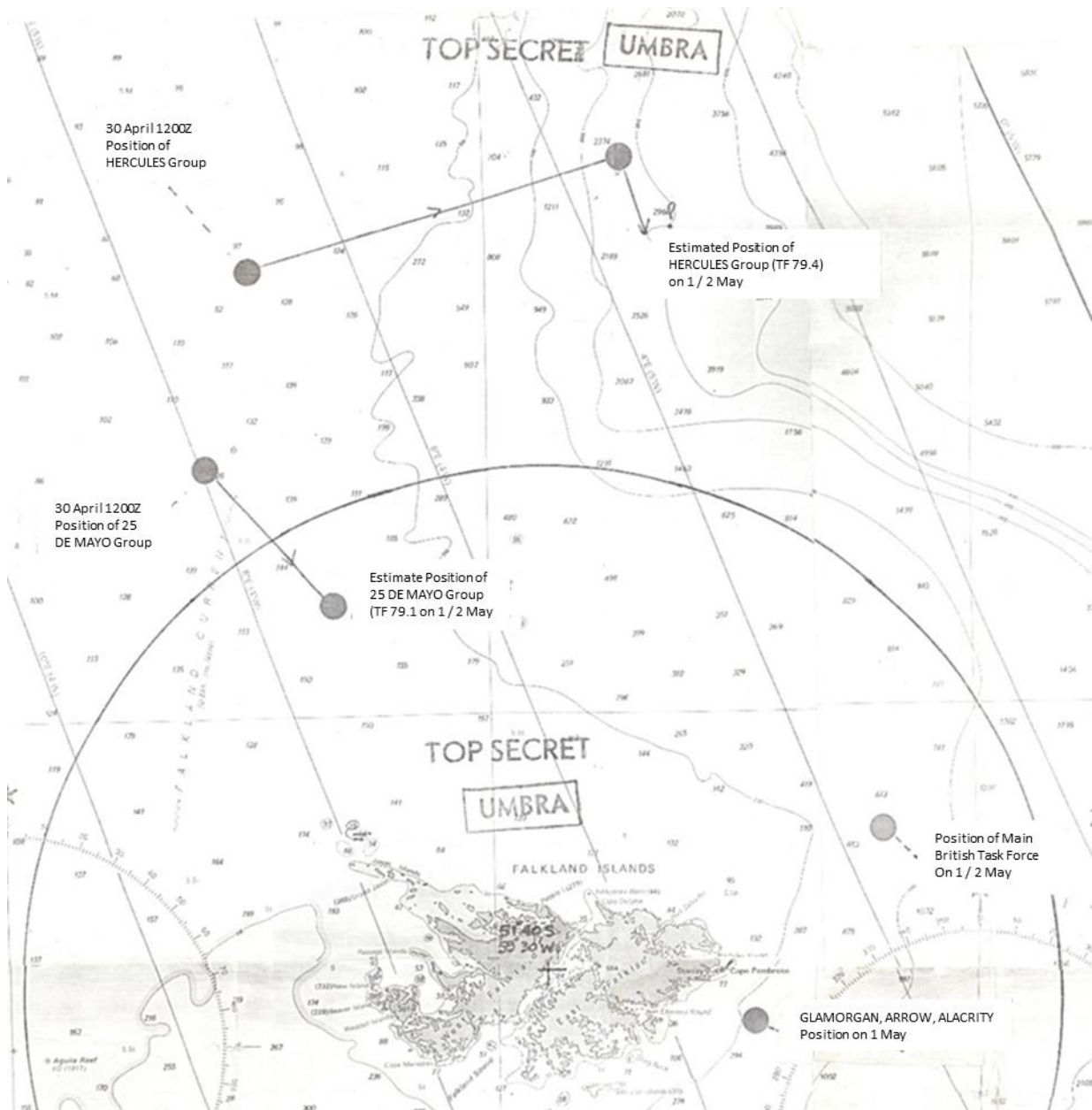


Fig 115  
Map from classified inquiry into the sinking of the General Belgrano depicts positions of  
TG 79.1 and TG 79.4



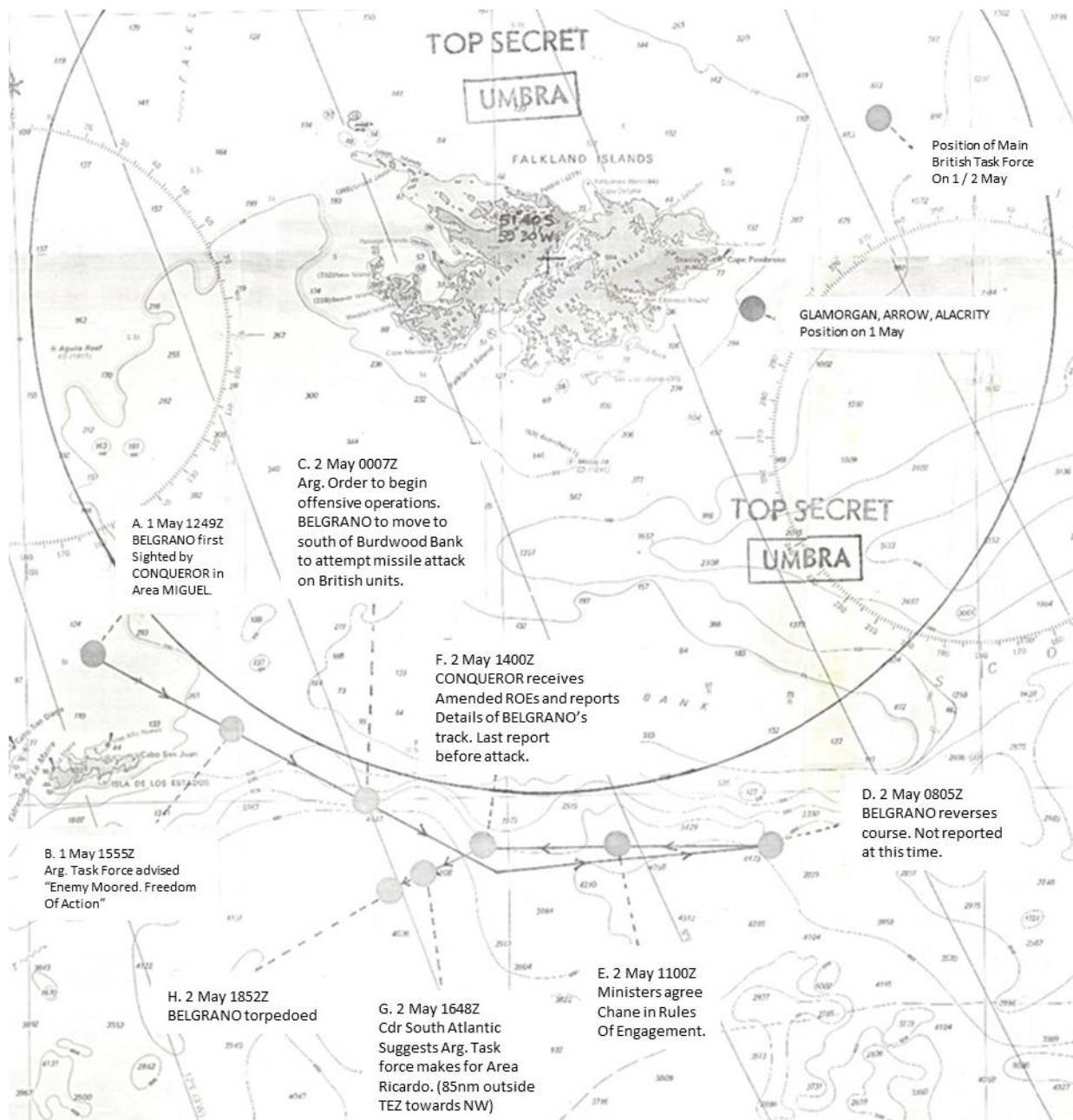


Fig 116

Map from inquiry into the sinking of the General Belgrano depicts positions of TG 79.3 and sequence of events timeline for 1 and 2 May

**LEGAL SITUATION**

Neither the United Kingdom nor Argentina declared war during the conflict. Combat was confined to the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and surrounding area. General Belgrano was sunk outside the 200 nautical mile (370 km) TEZ around the Falklands, delimited by the UK. Through a message passed via the Swiss Embassy in Buenos Aires to the Argentine government on 23 April, it was abundantly clear that the UK no longer considered the 200-mile TEZ as the limit of its military action.

The message read;

*In announcing the establishment of a Maritime Exclusion Zone around the Falkland Islands, Her Majesty's Government made it clear that this measure was without prejudice to the right of the United Kingdom to take whatever additional measures may be needed in the exercise of its right of self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. In this connection Her Majesty's Government now wishes to make clear that any approach on the part of Argentine warships, including submarines, naval auxiliaries or military aircraft, which could amount to a threat to interfere with the mission of British Forces in the South Atlantic will encounter the appropriate response. All Argentine aircraft, including civil aircraft engaged in surveillance of these British forces, will be regarded as hostile and are liable to be dealt with accordingly.*

## AFTERMATH

Back on the mainland at Puerto Belgrano, Vice-Admiral Lombardo had followed every move and he ordered Rear-Admiral Allara to abandon the operation. The important factor at the time was that the British were not making a landing on the Falklands, and it was likely that their ships were now concentrated. The order was given to fly the A4-Q aircraft back and return the fleet to the mainland coast to await further developments. The Super Etendards at Río Grande attempted an attack that day, dispatching two Exocet-armed aircraft, but the necessary re-fuelling was not successful, and that operation was also abandoned. The opportunity for a major clash had passed for now. Lombardo later commented that Rear-Admiral Woodward would not have known that the Argentine ships were leaving the scene of potential action.

Ironically, the British manufacturers of the Sea Harrier had tried to sell some of these aircraft to the Argentine Navy when the 25 de Mayo was purchased from the Netherlands Navy in 1969 but had been unsuccessful. Sea Harriers could have taken off in the light winds that morning with almost full loads. That also, the might of the Argentine fleet, the carrier 25 de Mayo had a mechanical defect that limited its speed was deliberately held back from public knowledge due to an ongoing territory dispute with Chile over the Beagle channel. Harriers would have overcome the speed limitation.

The Falklands conflict also showed that it is inadvisable to use submarines for completing inconsequential troop and supply delivery. British helicopters attacked and disabled the submarine ARA Santa Fe while it was surfaced, and this resulted in the loss of half of Argentina's operational submarines for no gain. Submarines' strengths lie in its ability to operate undetected, to insert raiding parties, destroy enemy warships and submarines, undertake Periscope reconnaissance, minelaying, firing cruise missiles against land targets and as a strategic deterrent. Stealth cannot warn or deter enemy warships, making them ineffective at presence missions and at de-escalating tense political situations.

Belgrano had no indications that an enemy submarine was present until two torpedoes ripped open her hull. But once the Royal Navy had shown their hand of having an SSN in the area, it changed the course of the conflict. When submarines are unleashed on enemy shipping, the results can be decisive. The single submarine Conqueror launched a single salvo that sank a single ship, and in doing so heavily influenced Vice-Admiral Lombardo's decision to withdraw the Argentine fleet, and keep them within territorial waters for the rest of the conflict.

*"The integrated naval force had been deployed to carry out an attack on the British fleet in a coordinated operation with other naval groups," he wrote. "The heading away from the enemy fleet was only momentary, as the Admiral commander saw fit to wait for a more convenient time. The Belgrano and the other ships were a threat and a danger to the British."*

Admiral Enrique Molina Pico (Chief of the General Staff Argentine Navy 1993 - 1996) wrote in a letter to the Argentinian newspaper *La Nación* in May 2005, that the location of the Belgrano outside the Exclusion Zone *'did not mean that it was withdrawn from the war'*.



## THE MEDIA THREAT TO INTELLIGENCE

The first threat to British intelligence was a disclosure by Labour MP Ted Rowlands in the House of Commons on 3 April. After the invasion, GCHQ had expected a large amount of Sigint from Argentina, however, it soon dried up. Ted Rowlands had revealed to parliament that Britain's Sigint agency was listening to Argentina's communications. This led to Argentina rethinking their cypher security, changing their cyphers more regularly, resulting in their communications becoming harder to read, but not impossible. Whilst the full impact of this blunder can only be estimated, the time from intercept, processing and subsequent issue of reports had been extended, making the job harder for GCHQ to provide timely intelligence to the British Task Force.

On 18 April the SUNDAY TIMES published three articles which gave, in considerable detail, statements about the intelligence cover available in support for the operation and the Task Force, relating to both the substance of the intelligence and the method used to collect it, including Sigint. GCHQ R10 assessed the potential damage as very great, "totally irresponsible at best and treasonable at worst". Throughout the conflict media articles on both sides of the Atlantic continued to hint that Argentina's communications were being intercepted.

On 4 May ABC World News broadcast *"Intelligence sources say that British went after the General Belgrano because they knew exactly what the ship's mission was. From radio intercepts, they knew its orders were to go after elements of the British Fleet which at the time were operating just inside the 200-mile zone."*

TOP SECRET

UMBRA

Reference R/6666 /2002/10/1

25 May 1982

2304/14

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R for information - to see on file

THE FALKLANDS: SUNDAY TIMES INSIGHT ARTICLES 23 MAY 1982

1. The following comments are offered on the various Insight articles on the Falkland Islands in the Sunday Times on 23 May 1982.
2. Revelations regarding Sigint operations and successes, probably the most potentially damaging ever seen, included the following:
  - a. a report of British intelligence information, based largely on the interception of radio messages, saying that the Argentinians had taken elaborate precautions, since their initial invasion of the Falklands, to guard against sudden attack, deploying units of 100 men or more to watch over every conceivable landing site on East Falkland;
  - b. apparently verbatim quotations from intercepted (and presumably decrypted) messages between the Argentinian forces on the Falklands and the mainland, intercepted by Washington; one said that in the past week 125 men had influenza, 43 suffered from homesickness, 6-7 from shell-shock, and 10 from dislocated bones; another referred to an appalling shortage of clothing, with none of the troops having a change of dry clothing; another, asking for a detailed list of spares for radars and various air defence associated weapons, suggested that supplies were still getting in from the mainland;
  - c. the Sunday Times obtained from New York a copy of the Argentinian peace proposals submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations; these proposals were not officially promulgated by the UN, and could have come from Sigint sources;
  - d. reports that communications between the Falklands and mainland Argentina could have been jammed by the British Task Force, but that this would have deprived the British of vital information from their intercept; GCHQ was reported to have paid special attention to the Falklands, and was said to be well pleased last week by the amount and nature of the messages it was intercepting; some of the messages indicated a desperate need for spare parts for weaponry, especially for the Rhein Metall gun; one message from the mainland instructed the garrison commander to send back faulty radar parts for repair.
3. Reporting of this nature is totally irresponsible and displays a complete disregard of D Notice No 6 by the Editor of the Sunday Times. He cannot plead ignorance on this matter, as the new D Notices have only recently been issued. I have spoken to Admiral Ash, the Secretary of the D Notice Committee, who is aware of the article, and have told him that we regard the article as very damaging. He is willing to visit the Editor, but will wait for the reaction from the JIC meeting of 24 May 1982.

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Fig 117

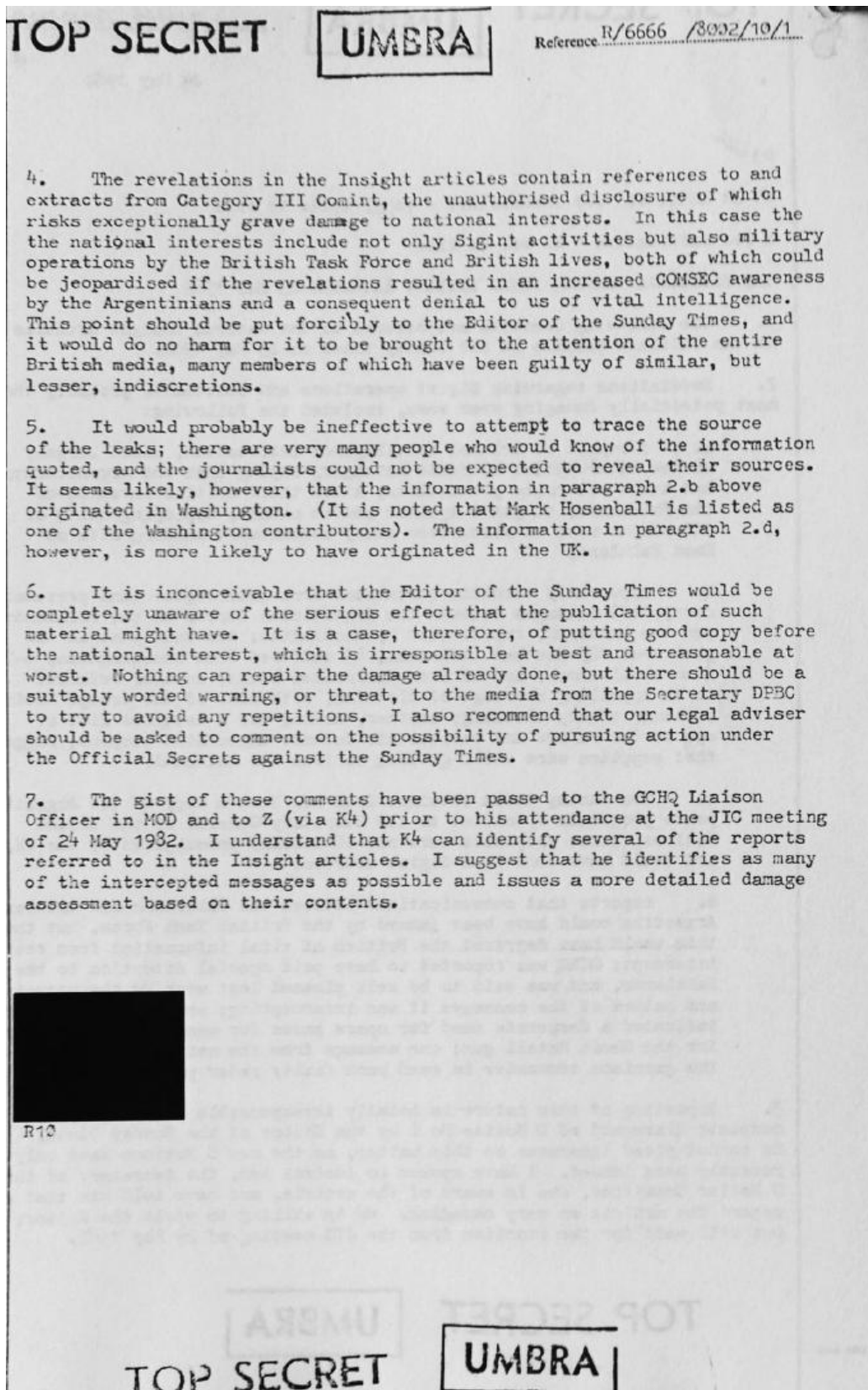


Fig 118

Figs 117 & 118: GCHQ R10 comments and impact assessment: Intelligence leaks via the media. Despite these challenges, Sigint continued to provide operational insight, including the Argentine commander's perception of British dominance land, sea and air, as of 29 May.



## SIGINT CONFIRMS BRITISH DOMINANCE; LAND, SEA AND AIR

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To be handled in accordance with IRSIG

1

3/AA/098965-82

SIGINT ALERT MARGAY

ARGENTINE

Spanish

K25X/NM1987/30/05/82

TAG ARA JOPS JOEF AR FL GB

FALKLAND ISLANDS DISPUTE: COMMANDER FALKLANDS GROUP LAMENTS THE  
INFERIORITY OF THE ARGENTINE FORCES

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Fig 119



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Fig 120

**TOP SECRET**

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3

3/AA/098965-82

FROM: COMMANDER FALKLANDS GROUP

TO: COMMANDER SOUTHERN AIR FORCE

INFO: COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE ARGENTINE AIR FORCE  
COMMANDER STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND

INTERNAL DTG: 2905821500

NO: ZVS 133/FC

PART I OF VI PARTS

I REPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TACTICAL SITUATION IN THE FALKLANDS  
THEATRE:

LAND SITUATION:

IN THE OPERATION ON DARWIN THE ENEMY DEMONSTRATED GREAT MOBILITY  
THROUGH ((THE USE OF)) HELICOPTERS, OVERWHELMING LAND FIRE POWER  
AND ANTI-AIR ((FIRE POWER)) THROUGH THE USE OF PORTABLE MISSILES, AS  
WELL AS EXCELLENT TRAINING AND OUTFITTING FOR NIGHT COMBAT, ACTING  
IN EXACT COORDINATION WITH SUPPORTING NAVAL FIRE, EMPLOYING IT AS  
BACK-UP AND RELIEF FOR THE TROOPS ENGAGED IN THE FRONT LINE.

PART II OF VI PARTS

OUR OWN FORCE OFFERED STRENUOUS RESISTANCE BUT PROBLEMS IN THE  
CONDUCT AND CONTROL OF OUR OWN TROOPS BECAME OBVIOUS. LACKING IN  
ADEQUATE COMMUNICATIONS AND SUFFICIENT TRAINING, THEY FELL INTO  
CONFUSION AND WERE UNABLE TO DERIVE ((ANY)) ADVANTAGE FROM THE  
PUCARA'S SUPPORTING FIRE WHICH FORCED TO THE ENEMY TO YIELD  
POSITIONS TEMPORARILY. THE SUPERIOR TRAINING AND OUTFITTING OF  
ENEMY TROOPS, THE GREAT CAPACITY OF THE HELICOPTERS FOR NIGHT-TIME  
MOBILITY AND NAVAL ARTILLERY SUPPORT, BECAME DECISIVE((I)) FACTORS  
DURING THE BATTLE AND REPRESENT THE MOST IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES WITH  
OUR OWN TROOPS' CAPABILITIES.

PART III OF VI PARTS

THE CONDUCT OF THE LAND ELEMENT, WITH AN ERRONEOUS CONCEPTION OF  
THE USE OF AIR EQUIPMENT, OVERESTIMATES THE LATTER'S CAPABILITIES  
AND RELIES EXCLUSIVELY ON THEM FOR THE ANNIHILATION OF THE ENEMY,  
WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE REDUCED PROFITABILITY OF DIRECT FIRE

**TOP SECRET**

Fig 121



**TOP SECRET**

To be handled in accordance with IRSIG

4

3/AA/098965-82

SUPPORT, WHICH BECOMES UNACCEPTABLE BECAUSE OF THE LOSSES SUFFERED WHEN IT IS CARRIED OUT.

**AIR SITUATION:**

THE ENEMY HAS ABSOLUTE AIR SUPERIORITY AND HAS SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED ITS QUANTITY OF PLANES. AT THE SAME TIME THERE ARE STRONG INDICATIONS THAT IN SAN CARLOS THEY WERE ((B% PREPARING))((II)) HARRIER PLANES WHICH WOULD THEN INCREASE THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER'S COMPLEMENT. APART FROM AIR DEFENCE THEY ARE CARRYING OUT CONSTANT HARASSMENT AND ATTACKS ON OUR POSITIONS, HAVING ACHIEVED THE DESTRUCTION OF AN IMPORTANT NUMBER OF PUCARA PLANES AND HELICOPTERS AND THEREFORE NULLIFIED OUR CAPACITY FOR SIGNIFICANT HELICOPTER TRANSPORT OPERATIONS.

**PART IV OF VI PARTS**

THE PROFITABILITY OF DIRECT FIRE SUPPORT GROWS LESS EVERY DAY, GIVEN THAT TO THE FRAILTY AND INEPTITUDE OF THE PUCARA PLANE FOR THIS THEATRE IS ADDED THE GREAT DENSITY OF ANTI-AIR WEAPONS, ESPECIALLY THE PORTABLE MISSILES POSSESSED BY THE ENEMY, A CONSIDERATION EQUALLY VALID FOR THOSE OPERATIONS WITH PLANES FROM THE MAINLAND. THE TREMENDOUS EFFORT MADE BY THE AIR FORCE IN DESTROYING NAVAL UNITS HAS NOT SUCCEEDED IN AFFECTING THE AIR SUPREMACY POSSESSED BY THE ENEMY WHICH ALLOWS HIM TO DEVELOP AIR AND HELICOPTER TRANSPORT OPERATIONS WITH ABSOLUTE FREEDOM OF ACTION.

**NAVAL SITUATION:**

THE ENEMY HAS BEEN GRANTED ABSOLUTE CONTROL OF THE SEA, WHICH PERMITS HIM TO REINFORCE AND SUPPLY THE BEACHHEAD DURING THE NIGHT, CARRY OUT NAVAL FIRE TO SOFTEN UP OUR POSITIONS OR SUPPORT LAND MANOEUVRES BY ITS OWN TROOPS, IMPLEMENT THE EFFECTIVE NAVAL BLOCKADE OF THIS HARBOUR, DESTROY WITHOUT OPPOSITION THE MERCHANT VESSELS STILL ASSIGNED, AND HAVE AVAILABLE AN EFFICIENT SYSTEM OF AIR-TACTICAL SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL WHICH PUTS OUR PLANES IN A SERIOUSLY INFERIOR POSITION.

**PART V OF VI PARTS**

THIS SITUATION, WHICH IT HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO MODIFY IN SPITE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF A HIGH NUMBER OF SURFACE UNITS THROUGH AIR ATTACKS, PUTS THE ENEMY IN UNSURPASSABLE CONDITIONS TO EXTEND THE OCCUPATION OF THE ISLANDS.

**TOP SECRET**

Fig 122

**TOP SECRET**

To be handled in accordance with IRSIG



5

3/AA/078965-82

## CONCLUSIONS:

FROM THE ABOVE IT IS ASSESSED THAT:

1) WHEN THE ENEMY DECIDES TO OPERATE AGAIN AGAINST OUR POSITIONS, HE WILL FIND A DEFENCE LACKING IN MOBILITY AND WITH RELATIVELY LESS FIRE POWER AND TRAINING, WHICH IT IS CONSIDERED WILL PREVIOUSLY HAVE BEEN SOFTENED UP BY INTENSE NAVAL FIRE AND AIR SUPPORT.

## PART VI OF VI PARTS

2) THE ENEMY MAINTAINS AN AIR SUPERIORITY WHICH IT HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO BREAK IN SPITE OF THE EFFORT MADE BY THE AIR FORCE. THE CAPABILITY TO CONTROL EQUIPMENT AND THE HIGH DENSITY OF ANTI-AIR WEAPONRY MAKE THE LOSSES SUFFERED IN THE ATTEMPTS MADE TO PROVIDE CLOSE SUPPORT FIRE UNACCEPTABLE.

3) THE ENEMY MAINTAINS ABSOLUTE SUPREMACY AT SEA, WITH ALL THE OPERATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL CONSEQUENCES WHICH THIS IMPLIES, ((AND)) A MODIFICATION OF THIS SITUATION IS NOT ANTICIPATED BECAUSE OF THE TOTAL ABSENCE OF OUR OWN NAVAL RESOURCES. THIS MESSAGE IS TOP SECRET.

FOOTNOTES: ((I)) 'DESEQUILIBRANTES' IN TEXT.

((II)) 'ARMANDO' IN TEXT.

**TOP SECRET**

Fig 123

Figs 119, 120, 121, 123: Commander Falkland Islands laments the inferiority of Argentine forces

Reporting of Argentine communications dated 13 May between elements on the islands to a mainland authority provided situational awareness that the Argentine forces could probably hold out for no longer than 24 - 48 hours *'The Corps was at it's limit' and 'a final decision would probably need to be taken soon'.*


		<h1 style="margin: 0;">SECRET</h1>			
To be handled in accordance with IRSIG					
		1	2/AA/090108-82		
		SIGINT ALERT MARGAY			
ARGENTINE					
Spanish		K25X/NM2772/14/06/82			
		TAG ARA JOPS JOEF AR FL GB			
ARGENTINE AIRFORCE CONVERSATIONS FROM FALKLANDS ON 13 JUNE INDICATE LIMIT OF ARGENTINE RESISTENCE ESTIMATED AT ONLY 24 TO 48 HOURS					
DISTRIBUTION P10 STD 16 copies		0 CAG WJ/620 0142156Z JUN 82			
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Fig 124



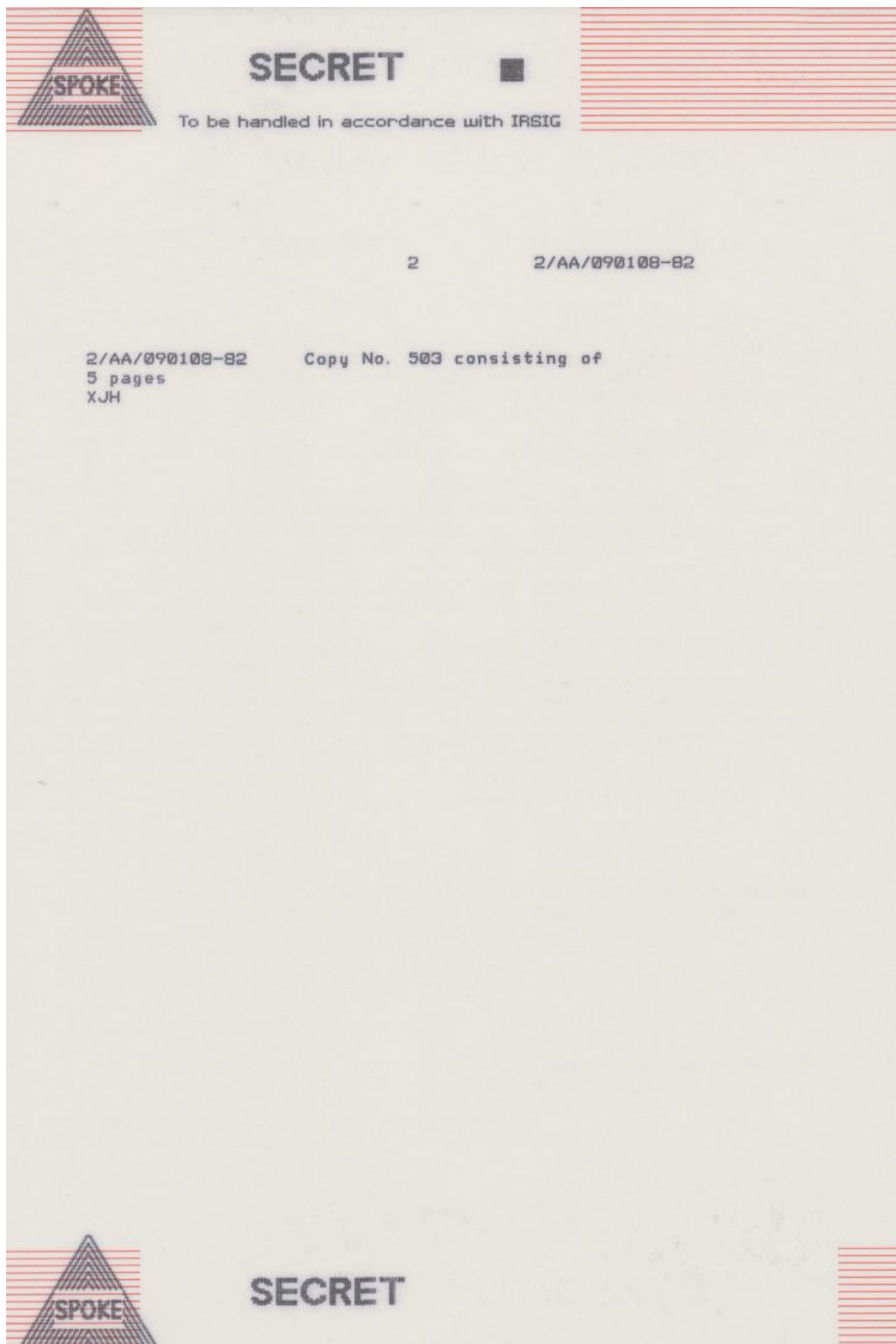


Fig 125



	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SECRET</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">To be handled in accordance with IRSIG</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">3                      2/AA/090108-82</p>		
<p>I. SUMMARY</p> <p>1. THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE MESSAGES BETWEEN UNIDENTIFIED ARGENTINE AIRFORCE ENTITIES ON THE FALKLANDS AND A SENIOR AUTHORITY ON THE MAINLAND DURING THE PERIOD 131515Z AND 131815Z JUNE. THEY ARE UNEVALUATED AND BASED ON FIELD TRANSLATIONS.</p> <p>2. THE MAIN POINTS OF INTEREST TO EMERGE WERE AS FOLLOWS:-</p> <p>A. 140 WOUNDED HAD BEEN SUSTAINED UP TO 1515Z.</p> <p>B. ARGENTINE FORCES WOULD EVACUATE IF ((ENEMY)) ARTILLERY CAME CLOSER THAN 6 KILOMETRES. BY 1810Z THE "CORPS" WAS REACHING ITS LIMIT AND THIS WAS ESTIMATED AT NO MORE THAN 24 TO 48 HOURS.</p> <p>C. THE FINAL BRITISH ATTACK WAS EXPECTED ON THE NIGHT OF 13-14 JUNE PROBABLY FOLLOWING THE USUAL 0200 HOURS (LOCAL) BOMBARDMENT.</p> <p>D. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BRITISH MOBILE BATTERIES WAS EMPHASIZED.</p> <p>E. AT 1807Z A HIGH LEVEL COMMANDER WAS INFORMED OF THE "REALITY OF THE SITUATION" - THAT COMMAND LEVELS ON THE ISLAND WERE NOT IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND THAT THE "FINAL DECISION" WAS PROBABLY TO BE TAKEN SOON.</p>		
<p>II. DETAILS</p> <p>ITEM 1</p> <p>GIST OF ACTIVITY.</p> <p>131515Z. 140 WOUNDED AS A RESULT OF ATTACKS BY GROUND FORCES, ARTILLERY AND AIRCRAFT DURING THE NIGHT AND MORNING OF 12/13 JUNE. THIS MORNING THE TROOPS WERE CALM. THE ARTILLERY IS PRACTICALLY ON TOP OF THEM FIRING AT THEM AND ON THE AIRPORT.</p> <p>ITEM 2</p> <p>131515Z. GIST OF ACTIVITY</p> <p>ALMIRANTE IRAZAR (WILL PROBABLY BE USED) FOR THE CASUALTIES. WE ARE PRACTICALLY AT OUR LIMIT. WE ARE ON THE POINT OF EVACUATING. THE ARTILLERY IS APPROX (6 KILOMETRES) AWAY, IF IT COMES CLOSER WE WILL EVACUATE.</p>		
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SECRET</b></p>	

Fig 126

**SECRET**

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2/AA/090108-82

## ITEM 3

131805Z. AT THIS MOMENT THE SITUATION IN WHICH WE ARE (1 WORD U/R) WE ARE DOING THE SAME REGARDING THE AIRFORCE. WE ALREADY ESTIMATE THAT THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT OBJECTIVE IN EMPLOYING THE AIRFORCE. WE CAME UNDER FIRE AT ABOUT 0900 THIS MORNING FROM AN ARTILLERY COMPANY. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO CONTAIN THE ENEMY BECAUSE OF ITS GREAT MOBILITY IN ALL ITS BATTERIES. THEIR EQUIPMENT IS OF HIGH PRECISION WHICH HAS NOT BEEN IMPAIRED DURING ITS SERVICE. EVERY IMPRESSION INDICATES THAT BY THE LAST HOURS OF THE AFTERNOON THE FIELD ARTILLERY WILL BE REDUCED BY THIRTY PERCENT.

## ITEM 4

131810Z. OUR FORWARD DEFENCES HAVE CLOSED THEIR POSITIONS WITH NO POSSIBILITY OF THE ENEMY (3 WORDS U/R). THEY BROUGHT IN A FRESH BATTALION AND WE ESTIMATE THAT TONIGHT WILL PRODUCE THE FINAL ATTACK. THE ENEMY IS APPROX 3-5 KILOMETRES FROM THE TOWN. OUR CORPS IS REACHING ITS LIMIT I ESTIMATE 24-48 HOURS NO MORE. (1 WORD U/R) THE AIRFORCE (1 WORD U/R) HAVE BEEN (1 WORD U/R) OBJECTIVES OVER THE TOWN WHICH HAS BEEN VERY DANGEROUS AND IT HAS NOT BEEN REDUCED (2 WORDS U/R) WHEN AT 0200 HOURS (AGAIN AS ALWAYS) WE RECEIVED BOMBARDMENT FROM THE FRIGATES AND DESTROYERS. WE ESTIMATE THAT THEY WILL RETURN AND MAKE THE THIRD ATTACK. CONSTANT BOMBARDMENT HAS BEEN DIRECTED TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH AGAINST THE POSITIONS.

## ITEM 5

1807Z-1815Z  
FALKLANDS SIR, (GBRL), I WANT YOU TO KNOW THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION AT THE MOMENT.  
I DONT KNOW BECAUSE I HAVE NEVER BEEN TOLD IF ANY HIGH LEVEL DECISIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO PUT A LIMIT TO THIS OR WHAT THE LATEST ORDERS MAY BE FOR THE COMMANDER LAND FORCES FOR THIS AREA.  
GIVEN THE COMBAT SITUATION WE ARE RATHER SCATTERED AT THE COMMAND LEVEL AND HE IS IN A DIFFERENT COMMAND POST. ALSO THE ARTILLERY IS RIGHT ON TOP OF THE TOWN SO IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO KEEP IN TOUCH AT COMMAND LEVEL AND AS I DONT KNOW WHAT THE ORDERS ARE I WANT YOU SIR TO KNOW THIS AND THAT YOU SHOULD KNOW THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION.  
I DONT KNOW WHETHER THE FINAL DECISION IS TO BE TAKEN HERE OR THERE AND IS THEN TO BE TRANSMITTED HERE. MY

**SECRET**

Fig 127



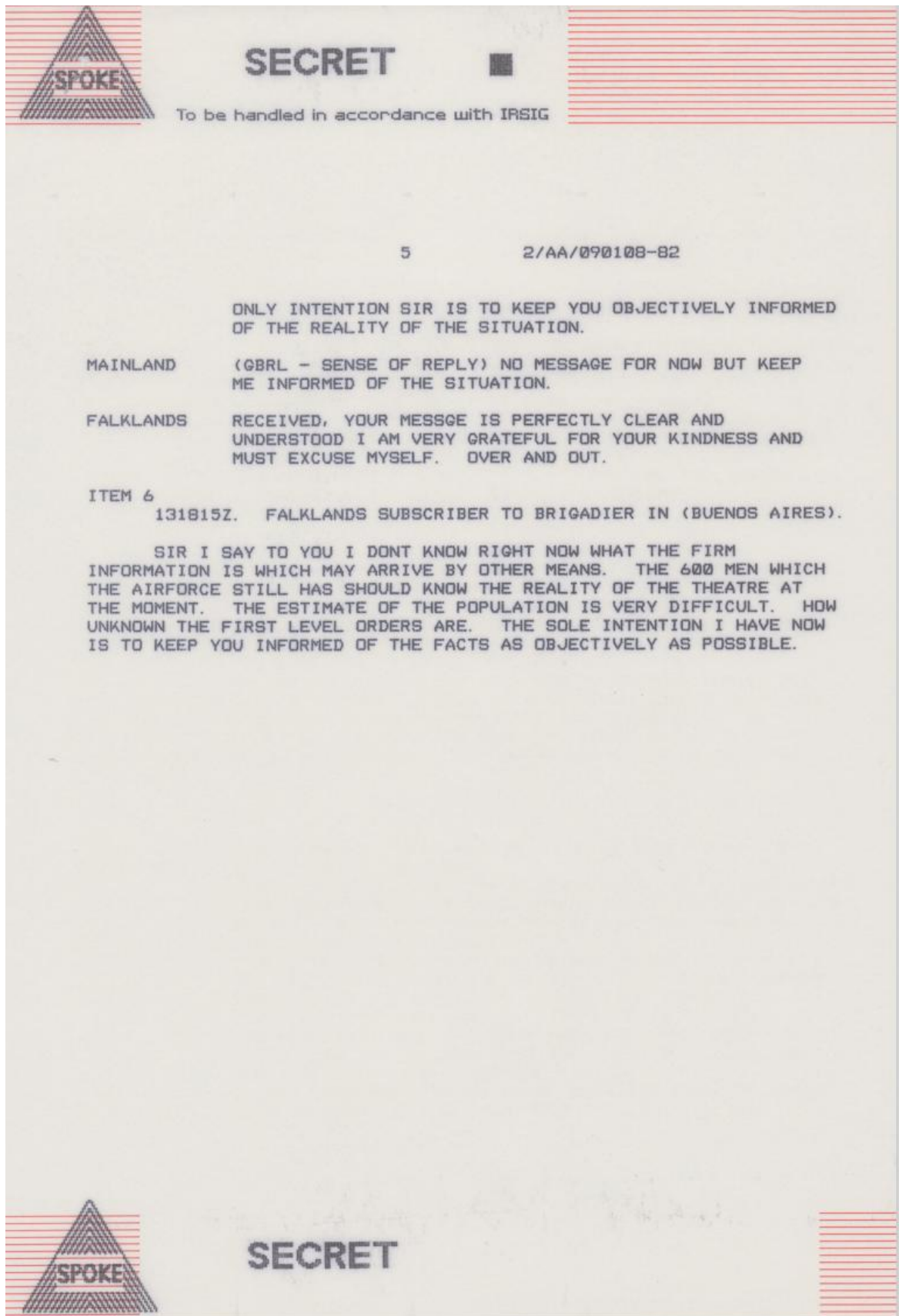


Fig 128

Figs 124, 125, 126, 127, 128: Sigint reporting Argentine forces can hold out no more than 24 - 48 hours

Many tributes were paid to the part played by intelligence with the most graphic statement coming from Admiral Sandy Woodward. Intelligence, he said, *'was worth 2 x SSNs and 6 x Frigates'*.



Fig 129

HMS Hermes arrives Portsmouth 21 July 1982 ©IWM

## CONTROVERSY

The sinking of the General Belgrano led to the death of 323 Argentine sailors, almost half of all Argentine casualties during the conflict, and sparked controversy, as the attack occurred outside the TEZ. In the UK, some commentators, including Labour MP Tam Dalyell, suggested that the action may have been motivated by political considerations, such as undermining peace talks or bolstering the Prime Minister's popularity among the British public. Some analysts argue that, from a military perspective, the sinking contributed to British naval superiority, which may have influenced the outcome of the conflict. What is not up for debate is that the decision to sink the General Belgrano was intelligence led and is currently the only case of a warship being torpedoed and sunk in action by a nuclear submarine.

**EXTRACT FROM MARGARET THATCHER *THE DOWNING STREET YEARS* (1993), pp214-16**

*"The next day, Sunday, which I spent at Chequers, was one of great - though often misunderstood - significance for the outcome of the Falklands War. As often on Sundays during the crisis, the members of the War Cabinet, Chiefs of Staff and officials came to Chequers for lunch and discussions. On this occasion there was a special matter on which I needed an urgent decision.*

*I called together Willie Whitelaw, John Nott, Cecil Parkinson, Michael Havers, Terry Lewin, Admiral Fieldhouse and Sir Antony Acland, the Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office. (Francis Pym was in America). Admiral Fieldhouse told us that one of our submarines, HMS Conqueror, had been shadowing the Argentine cruiser, General Belgrano. The Belgrano was escorted by two destroyers. The cruiser itself had substantial fire power provided by 6 inch guns with a range of 13 miles and anti-aircraft missiles. We were advised that she might have been fitted with Exocet anti-ship missiles, and her two destroyer escorts were known to be carrying them. The whole group was sailing on the edge of the Exclusion Zone. We had received intelligence about the aggressive intentions of the Argentine fleet. There had been extensive air attacks on our ships the previous day and Admiral Woodward, in command of the Task Force, had every reason to believe that a full-scale attack was developing. The Argentinian aircraft carrier, the 25 de Mayo, had been sighted some time earlier and we had agreed to change the rules of engagement to deal with the threat she posed. However, our submarine had lost contact with the carrier, which had slipped past it to the North. There was a strong possibility that Conqueror might also lose contact with the Belgrano group. Admiral Woodward had to come to a judgment about what to do with the Belgrano in the light of these circumstances. From all the information available, he concluded that the carrier and the Belgrano group were engaged in a classic pincer movement against the Task Force. It was clear to me what must be done to protect our forces, in the light of Admiral Woodward's concern and Admiral Fieldhouse's advice. We therefore decided that British forces should be able to attack any Argentine naval vessel on the same basis as agreed previously for the carrier.*

*Later we approved reinforcements for the Falklands which would be taken there in the QE2. It surprised me a little that the need for reinforcements had not been clear sooner. I asked whether it was really necessary or advisable to use this great ship and to put so many people in it, but as soon as I was told that it was necessary to get them there in time I gave my agreement. I was always concerned that we would not have sufficient men and equipment when the time came for the final battle and I was repeatedly struck by the fact that even such highly qualified professionals as advised us often under-estimated the requirements. We broke up still desperately worried that the aircraft carrier which could have done such damage to our vulnerable Task Force had not been found.*

*The necessary order conveying the change of rules of engagement was sent from Northwood to HMS Conqueror at 1.30 pm. In fact, it was not until after 5pm that Conqueror reported that she had received the order."*



*"A large amount of malicious and misleading nonsense was circulated at the time and long afterwards about the reasons why we sank the Belgrano. These allegations have been demonstrated to be without foundation. The decision to sink the Belgrano was taken for strictly military not political reasons: the claim that we were trying to undermine a promising peace initiative from Peru will not bear scrutiny. Those of us who took the decision at Chequers did not at that time know anything about the Peruvian proposals, which in any case closely resembled the Haig plan rejected by the Argentinians only days before.*

*There was a clear military threat which we could not responsibly ignore. Moreover, subsequent events more than justified what was done. As a result of the devastating loss of the Belgrano, the Argentinian Navy - above all the carrier - went back to port and stayed there. Thereafter it posed no serious threat to the success of the taskforce, though of course we were not to know that this would be so at the time. The sinking of the Belgrano turned out to be one of the most decisive military actions of the war.*

*However, the shocking loss of life caused us many problems because it provided a reason - or in some cases perhaps an excuse - for breaks in the ranks among the less committed of our allies: it also increased pressure on us at the UN. The Irish Government called for an immediate meeting of the Security Council, though after intense pressure from Tony Parsons and some from Javier Perez de Cuellar the UN Secretary General, they were eventually persuaded to suspend their request - not, however, before the Irish Defence Minister had described us as "the aggressor".*

*There was some wavering from the French and rather more from the West Germans, who pressed for a ceasefire and UN negotiations. Moreover, by the time of the sinking of the Belgrano, the diplomatic scene was already becoming more difficult and complicated.*

*I have already mentioned the peace plan which the President of Peru Fernando Belaunde Terry had put to Al Haig and which he in turn had put to Francis Pym in Washington on 1st and 2nd May, though we had no sight of it until later. With the sinking of the Belgrano, Mr Haig was once again bringing pressure to bear, urging on us diplomatic magnanimity and, expressing his belief that whatever the course of the military campaign there must be a negotiated outcome to avoid open-ended hostility and instability. To add to the confusion, the UN Secretary General was now seeking to launch a peace initiative of his own, much to the irritation of Mr Haig."*

## THE FALKLAND ISLAND REVIEW (THE FRANKS REPORT)

The Franks Report, officially the Falkland Island Review, was produced and presented by a Committee of Privy Counsellors to Parliament in January 1983. It reported on decisions taken by the UK Government in the run-up to the invasion. The Committee was led by The Rt Hon the Lord Franks, OM, GCMG, KCB, CBE.

Extracts are as follows;

There has understandably been much speculation about the causes of the Falkland Islands conflict and about whether it could have been foreseen and prevented. The truth of these matters are less simple than some commentators have asserted, and for an accurate and comprehensive account of the facts the Report needs to be read in full. In the detailed narrative of events and our comments on them we have answered explicitly or by implication many of the mistaken or misleading statements that have been made, but we think it right also to state for the record our view of some of the more important specific assertions which have been made, in order to clear up damaging misunderstandings.

Assertion: Ministers and officials secretly told Argentina that Britain was prepared to give up the Falkland Islands against the wishes of the Islanders.

Comment: We have found no evidence to support this allegation. On the contrary, Ministers and officials made clear to Argentina on numerous occasions that the wishes of the Falkland Islanders were paramount, and that any proposals to resolve the dispute would be subject to approval by Parliament.

Assertion: Clear warnings of the invasion from American intelligence sources were circulating more than a week beforehand.

Comment: No intelligence about the invasion was received from American sources, before it took place, by satellite or otherwise.

Assertions: (i) Two weeks before the invasion the Cabinet's Defence Committee rejected a proposal by Lord Carrington to send submarines to the area;  
(ii) The Government rejected advice from the Commander-in-Chief, Fleet, to send submarines soon after the landing on South Georgia on 19 March.

These assertions are untrue. We have described in detail the events of the weeks leading up to the invasion. The Defence Committee did not meet at that time. The first discussion between Ministers about sending nuclear-powered submarines took place on Monday 29 March 1982 when the Prime Minister and Lord Carrington decided that a nuclear-powered submarine should be sent to support HMS Endurance. No earlier military advice recommending the despatch of submarines was given to Ministers.

Assertions: (i) Captain Barker, the Captain of HMS Endurance, sent warnings that an invasion was imminent which were ignored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence.

(ii) The Secretary of State for Defence saw Captain Barker and ignored his advice.

Comment: These assertions are untrue. Captain Barker reported his concern about events within his knowledge, but none of his reports warned of an imminent invasion. Both the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office saw his reports and took them into account along with other intelligence material. Captain Barker confirmed to us that he never met Mr Nott.

Assertion: On 11 March 1982 an Argentine military plane landed at Port Stanley to reconnoitre the runway. The incident was reported by the Governor as suspicious.

Comment: The emergency landing on 7 March of an Argentine Air Force Hercules transport aircraft was reported factually by the Governor to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 12 March but not as suspicious. He has subsequently confirmed that the landing was preceded by a 'May Day' call and that, after the aircraft landed, fuel was seen leaking from it. The Argentine Air Force would already have had detailed knowledge of the strength of the runway in consequence of its responsibility for operating the flights between Port Stanley and Argentina and of authorised landings by Argentine Hercules aircraft at Port Stanley on several occasions in 1981.

Assertion: The Argentine Government made a bulk purchase of maps of the Falkland Islands in Britain before the invasion.

Comment: An investigation by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office found that no such bulk purchase was made. This has been confirmed by the agents for the sale of the hydrographic charts produced by the Royal Navy. It has also been confirmed by the agents for the sale of the 1966 map of the Falkland Islands published by the Directorate of Overseas Surveys, copies of which were left on the Islands by the Argentine forces.

Assertion: There were massive withdrawals of Argentine funds from London banks shortly before the invasion, of which the Government must have been aware.

Comment: We are satisfied that the Government had no information about such a movement of funds. The deposit liabilities of United Kingdom banks to overseas countries are reported to the Bank of England on a quarterly basis. The reporting date relevant to the period before the invasion was 31 March 1982, but, because of the complexity of the figures, they normally take several weeks to collect. Withdrawals by Argentine banks in March would therefore not have normally been reported until May. After the invasion the Bank of England asked banks for a special report, and this showed that around \$½ billion of the original \$1½ billion of Argentine funds were moved out of London in the period running up to the invasion, much of it on 1 and 2 April. Since the withdrawals were in dollars, there would have been no effect on the sterling exchange rate to alert the Bank of England.



Assertion: On 29 March 1982 the Uruguayan Government offered the British Government facilities for Falkland Islanders who wished to leave the Islands before the Argentine invasion.

Comment: Neither the Foreign and Commonwealth Office nor the British Embassy in Montevideo had knowledge at the time or thereafter of any such offer. The Uruguayan Government have also described this allegation as completely without foundation. They have confirmed that neither they nor their Navy had any foreknowledge of the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands.

## THE HUNT CONTINUES

Conqueror undertook a transit East of Argentina before returning to Faslane on 3 July. Chris Wreford-Brown completes his contribution with;

*"Towards the end of May, we were further informed that intelligence indicated that an Argentinian Type 42 destroyer was transiting northwards inside their territorial water. We were not allowed to attack Argentinian forces when they were within their territorial waters. However, we reacted tactically to this information by entering the Gulf of San Matias in the hope that the Destroyer might leave the (safe) territorial limits to cut the corners when transiting round the Gulf and thus provide an attack opportunity. We were sent further intelligence on 6th June suggesting that the destroyer's transit north might have been delayed by bad weather. We never made contact and left the Gulf on 7th June."*

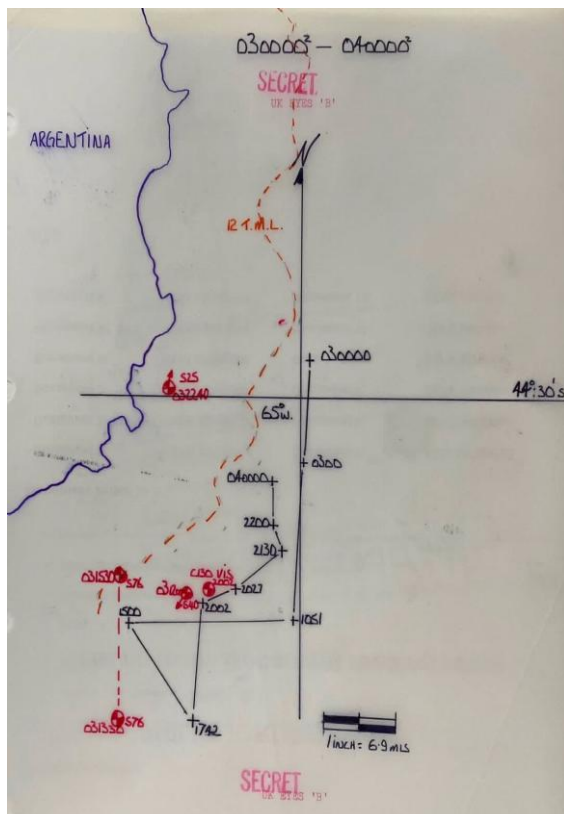


Fig 130

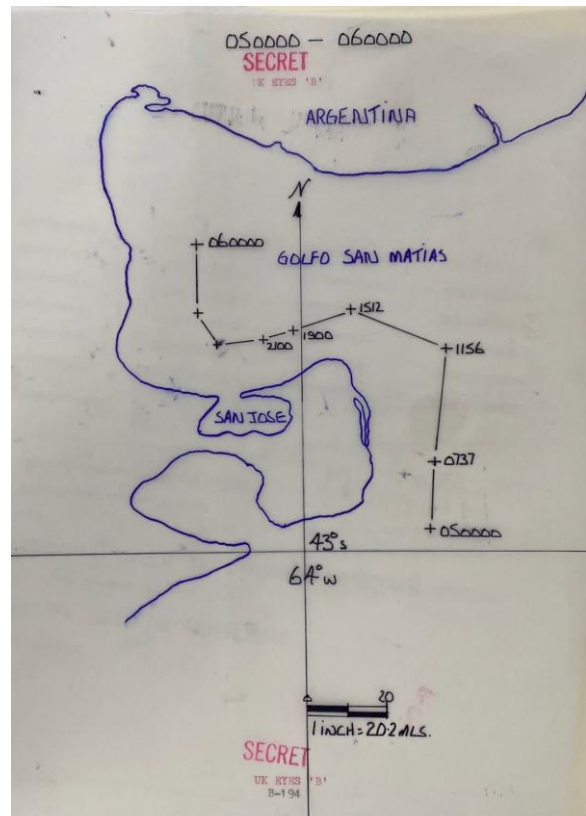
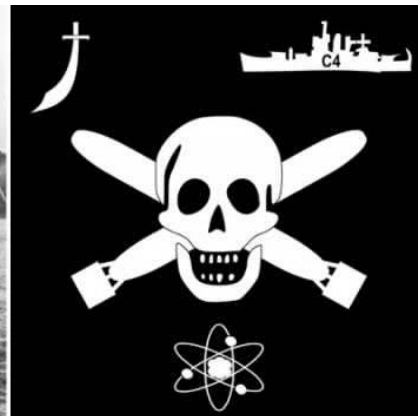


Fig 131

## CONQUEROR RETURNS



Fig: 132



Figs 132 (top) and Fig 133 (above) Submarine HMS Conqueror. Fig 134 Flag depicting the silhouette of 'General Belgrano' (can now be viewed at the submarine museum, Gosport)

HMS Conqueror returned to Faslane 3 July, flying a Jolly Roger adorned with torpedoes, a customary act of Royal Navy submarines after a kill. When asked about the incident later, Commander Wreford-Brown responded;

*"The Royal Navy spent thirteen years preparing me for such an occasion. It would have been regarded as extremely dreary if I had fouled it up."*

Despite how concerned Woodward was about the threat the Belgrano group posed to his task force, Conqueror had to wait twenty-five hours from first finding the cruiser before successfully receiving the change of the ROE from the Ministry of Defence that permitted an attack. If Belgrano had successfully attacked Woodward's carriers during that time, it is likely it would have altered the conflict's outcome. Additionally, the political ramifications would have been massive when the public learned that hundreds of British sailors died while Conqueror was waiting for permission to attack an enemy already in her sights.

**GLOSSARY**

A4-Q	Maritime variant of the A4 Skyhawk
ARA	Armada de la Republic Argentina
CINC FLEET	Commander-in-Chief-Fleet
CTG	Commander Task Group
CTF	Commander Task Force
EMCON	Emissions Control (selectively managing electromagnetic transmissions)
ESM	Electronic Support Measures
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters
LOP	Line Of Position
MACH	Speed of Sound
OOB	Order Of Battle
RFA	Royal Fleet Auxiliary
ROE	Rules Of Engagement
Sigint	Signals Intelligence
SSN	Ship Submersible Nuclear
STD	Special Task Detachment
TEZ	Total Exclusion Zone
TF	Task Force
TG	Task Group
UN	United Nations
UHF	Ultra High Frequency
VHF	Very High Frequency
VLF	Very Low Frequency



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Further details of GCHQ history please go to:

[www.gchq.gov.uk](http://www.gchq.gov.uk)

This publication has been produced to raise funds for the National Signal Intelligence and Security Trust and in memory of 255 British servicemen who lost their lives during the Falklands Conflict 1982.

Written by a member of GCHQ with kind assistance from Chris Wreford-Brown, CO HMS Conqueror.



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