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ABR22 – MoD MEMO – SELECTIVE CALL OUT OF RESERVISTS (cab 148/211)

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CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

Sub Committee on the South Atlantic and the
Falkland Islands

FALKLANDS - SELECTIVE CALL OUT OF RESERVISTS

Memorandum by Secretary of State for Defence

1. I would like to be ready shortly if necessary to call out progressively some members of the special class of the Royal Fleet Reserve (RFR), as well as a few recently retired rating pensioners - around 300 in all, though more may be needed later. I have powers to do this for the RFR under Sections 11(1) and 26 of the Reserve Forces Act 1980 "when warlike operations are in preparation or progress"; and for the pensioners under Sections 26 and 30 of the Act "whenever any emergency arises which in (my) opinion renders it advisable". I must, however, report the recall of the RFR to Parliament.
2. These Royal Fleet Reservists are likely to be needed to provide secure communications in any further ships requisitioned for service with the Task Force together with a core of experienced operations branch ratings if additional warships are brought forward for active service. All sources of regular manpower with the necessary skills and experience - short of halting all training or using for demanding operational roles ratings who have only just completed their initial training - have been exhausted; these include the WRNS and any suitably trained men of the other two Services. There is now no reserve of regulars to meet any additional requirements for these special categories, or to replace the sick or casualties. The special class of the RFR are all men who left the RN and RM within the last twelve months and who will therefore require no re-training. Service in the RFR for three years after the completion of nine years' regular service is part of their regular engagement. Their civilian jobs will be fully protected by law. At least five days are needed to effect their recall. Following recall the men will be entitled to all the conditions of service of regulars, and will serve in their previous rank.

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3. The pensioners, who will be in their early 40s and who also have a liability for recall, will be required mainly for instructional duties in order to release regulars for other tasks.
4. In addition to reporting the recall of the RFR to Parliament I would announce these measures in a written statement to the House. I would emphasise that they are not a first stage in a general mobilisation, but a highly selective call-out of a few ex-regulars with special skills and very recent experience. I do not believe the announcement will have any impact on the world-wide perception of our handling of the Falklands crisis.
5. I will not take these measures any sooner than I have to and I will keep the numbers to the minimum (the cost of recalling 300 reservists for six months' service would be of the order of £1½m). But when the need arises I will have to move quickly.
6. At present I see no need to call out any RN or RM officer reservists. If, however, this becomes necessary in due course I may also have to seek the appropriate powers at short notice.
7. I should be glad of my colleagues' agreement.

JN

Ministry of Defence

22nd April 1982

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