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MAY04 – BORRADOR DE INFORME DEL SECRETARIO DE DEFENSA (prem 19/624)

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Emergency Room - This is what we believe Mr. Nott to have said this evening. It is not authoritative until confirmed by Hansard. 218-747

Speaker,

(a point order Mr Speaker - I would like to make a statement:

In my statement earlier today I said that we must expect further Argentine attacks on our forces. Mr Speaker, I deeply regret now to have to inform the House of such attacks.

In the course of its duties within the Total Exclusion Zone around the Falkland Islands, HMS SHEFFIELD, a Type 42 destroyer, was attacked and hit late this afternoon by an Argentine missile. The ship caught fire, which spread out of control. The order was then given to abandon ship.

There were accompanying vessels in the immediate area which picked up those who abandoned ship nearly all the ships company and the Captain are accounted for. However, I regret to say that initial indications are that 12 men are missing, and there are likely to be other casualties.

Communications with the operational area are difficult at present and this information must be treated as provisional until further reports are received.

Next of kin will of course be informed first, as soon as full details are received.

Further air operations were also conducted over the Falkland Islands today. In the course of Sea Harrier attacks, one of our aircraft was shot down. The pilot has been killed. His name will be announced after we have confirmation that his nex of kin have been informed. All the other Sea Harriers returned safely.

The Task Force is continuing with its operations as planned