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ABR05 – DISCUSSION BETWEEN SECRETARY OF STATE PYM AND GOVERNOR HUNT (fco 7/4490)

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RECORD OF A DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND
MR R M HUNT CMG, GOVERNOR OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS, AT
12 NOON ON MONDAY 5 APRIL 1982

PRESENT

The Rt Hon The Lord Carrington KCMG MC
Mr R M Hunt CMG
Mr J B Ure CMG MVO
Mr B J B Fall
Mr H D MacPherson, SAMD

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1. Mr Hunt began by giving an account of events in the Falklands on 2 April. In the early hours of the morning he had gone on the radio and declared a state of emergency. He had arranged for Argentine subjects to be rounded up as it was known that they were providing very accurate information about lookouts. The Forrest, a ship chartered to the marines, had been monitoring the area by radar and at 5.15 had reported radar blips. Mr Hunt then sent the message that enemy ships had been seen and the invasion was commencing. This was the message which had failed to get through. Cable and Wireless had informed him that they were having trouble with their emergency circuit. Mr Hunt replied that the message must get through somehow. This was the last contact with Cable and Wireless.

2. Bangs were then heard from the marine base at Moody Brook. This has been evacuated at midnight. It had been expected that the Argentines would land at the beach near the air-field, but they had in fact dropped a snatch squad, apparently by helicopter, at Muller's Creek further down the coast line, and from there sent one squad to the marine base and one to the Government House. The intention apparently had been to capture the Governor. Shortly after the bangs from Moody Brook the attack on Government House began. A couple of Marine squads were brought back from the beaches to join in the defence there. Spirited resistance had been made and

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Mr Hunt believed that there had been more Argentine casualties than had been announced. By 6 or 6.30 however the Argentines were really peppering the place. They came within 20 or 15 yards. Three of them were shot coming into the garden. They then withdrew and the shooting eased off but when the defence forces tried to expand their defence perimeter they found they were pinned down. An Argentine company of 120 men were attacking and were joined by the other company which had originally gone to Moody Brook.

3. Other groups of marines attacked the main Argentine force who were landing by Ducks and Amphibious vehicles at the beach near the air field. Marines with machine guns had been posted at a steeply shelving beach where it was thought that the Argentines were most likely to deploy their landing craft but the invading forces had used amphibious vehicles at a nearby beach. The marines however harassed them on the airport road and knocked out an armoured personnel carrier.

4. At Government House a marine major attacked an outhouse and took prisoner three Argentines. Another marine section arrived from town and there were then 30 or 40 marines in defence. It had been agreed not to fight in Port Stanley because of possible civilian casualties. The Argentines now had 30 mm cannon available to them on armoured vehicles. After consultation with the marines, it was decided that as the Government House force were pinned down and could be knocked out by the cannon, it was not possible to offer further useful resistance. Mr Hunt telephoned the LADE airways officer Vice Comodor Hector Gilobert. Vice Comodor Gilobert said he had no knowledge of the operation, although he had heard the noise of firing. Mr Hunt persuaded him to go from his house to Government House with a white flag to act as emissary. This he bravely did although his own troops shot at him as he reached Government House. He and Mr Hunt's Chief Secretary then walked from Government House to the Town Hall where they

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encountered armoured personnel carriers. Mr Hunt then issued a radio announcement, and the Argentine Admiral who was Commander of the invading forces then came to Government House.

5. The Admiral offered to shake hands, which Mr Hunt refused. Mr Hunt informed him that he had landed illegally and ordered him to depart. The Admiral said that as the Argentines had very much superior forces it would only involve needless casualties on both sides and amongst civilians if there was further resistance. He complimented the marines for having fought bravely. The British side pointed out that the Argentines had three very badly wounded casualties and that if a ceasefire were to be declared they could be taken to hospital. One of the wounded died on the way to the hospital.

6. The Governor appointed by the Argentines was an army general who arrived about an hour later, at approximately 10.30. The general wished Mr Hunt to come to him but Mr Hunt replied that the general should come to Government House. Finally, Vice Comodor Gilobert said that if Mr Hunt would not accompany him to the Argentine General, an escort would be sent to take him. Rather than submit to a military escort, Mr Hunt accompanied Vice Comodor Gilobert. Mr Hunt refused to shake hands with the Argentine general who was angered by this. The Argentine said that it was ungentlemanly to refuse to shake hands. Mr Hunt had replied that it was not civilised to carry out an invasion.

7. Lord Carrington intervened to say that this was an exchange of which Mr Hunt should tell the press. Lord Carrington asked whether Mr Hunt had been treated badly

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at any time. Mr Hunt replied that he had not been treated badly and that the only unseemly behaviour had come from an intelligence officer who had demanded the combinations of the safe. Mr Hunt had refused. He commented to Lord Carrington that the safe was in any case empty. Lord Carrington asked if there had been a great many Argentine soldiers on the Island by the time of the meeting with the general. Mr Hunt said there were about 400 or 500 around Government House and many more in other areas. The Argentine marines were being replaced by army personnel.

8. Lord Carrington asked if it had been possible to make a hole in the airfield. Mr Hunt said it has not been possible to do so although many obstacles had been placed on it. The Argentines had later been flying in C130 aircraft. Mr Hunt commented that the British marines had not been impressed by the standard of the Argentine soldiery except for the initial snatch squad which had been the spear head of the operation.

9. The meeting then ended shortly before 12.30 pm as Mr Hunt had an appointment with the Prime Minister.

cc PS
PS/LPS
PS/Mr Luce
PS/PUS
Mr Giffard
Mr Ure
Emergency Unit
SAMD
Defence Department
UND
PUSD

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