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MEETING OF INFORMATION GROUP ON THE FALKLANDS10 AM WEDNESDAY 5 MAY 1982

Present:

B Ingham - No 10
J Groves - Director General, COI
N Fenn - FCO
I McDonald - MoD (for part of meeting)
D Colvin - Cabinet Office
S Fuller - Presentation Unit
R Hatfield - Presentation Unit
B Mower - No 10.

Military

A Statement is expected at 3 pm from Mr Nott and the Ministry of Defence were not expecting to release further information before then. Subsequently they would need to decide in what way to release information about casualties. Meanwhile the fleet was continuing on its task and, as we had said, resolve remained unimpaired. The political appreciation was that the Conservatives were solid and hoped for Liberal/SDP continuing support. Labour opinion, however, was likely to become even more fragmented.

The Sheffield incident was seen to provide some support for the Nott argument for submarines as opposed to surface ships. The Sheffield was not fitted with Sea Wolf because it was the first of its class: later ships had it.

MoD were not expecting any pictures for a week but were urgently looking for any ways to speed delivery.

Mr Nott is going to Brussels this afternoon for a NATO Defence Ministers' meeting. He expects to give a Press Conference tomorrow before returning home in the early afternoon.

The Group agreed that strong opposition should be expressed to the proposed "operation Moonshine" proposal for Ascension Island.

Diplomatic

FCO explained the background to the current Haig talks, the advantages to our accepting the latest version and the probability that the Argentines would oppose it. The line to take for today: Following Mr Pym's Washington trip he sent a constructive response to the ideas from President Belaunde and Mr Haig. As is known, Haig and Henderson had two hours talks together yesterday: since then further exchanges have taken place and we are not without hope of useful progress. (It is inadvisable to talk about further British constructive proposals which would suggest too much UK involvement.) FCO added that the scheme originated with the Peruvians but Haig has effectively taken over the central role assuming that he would have a better chance of carrying it forward. The Peruvians are still providing the point of contact with Argentina.

CONFIDENTIAL

2.

FCO explained the UN Proposals which were given to Mr Pym in New York, an action specifically and publicly denied by the Secretary General. It has now, however, been confirmed that he did pass this on and the FCO will say today that: the Secretary General did give certain ideas to Mr Pym; we have been in touch with him about it and shall be in touch again. (While this can be kept in play it will prevent the whole issue going back to the Security Council.)

FCO will continue to express confidence in international opinion staying with us because of our inherent rights to oppose unprovoked aggression; in the case of the European Community in particular they will refer to the initial political decision of EC solidarity holding good. As far as the Irish initiative is concerned, they could be regarded as either wicked or stupid although we should be careful not to let our thoughts come through in reports.

The Chairman concluded by saying that his line for the day would be (i) that diplomatic activities are intense; (ii) but British resolve was unimpaired and the Task Force would continue in action.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at 10 am on Thursday 6 May 1982.

Brian Mower

BRIAN MOWER
5 May 1982