

MF 8



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LC
Telephone 01-218 2111/3 (Direct Dial)
01-218 9000 (Switchboard)

Copy to:
PS/PUS
DUS(P)
AUS(D Staff)
Head of DS5
Head of DS11

MO 5/21

13th April 1982

Dear Mike,

FALKLANDS DEBATE

You asked this morning for a passage on the Defence aspects which could be included in the Prime Minister's speech for tomorrow's Debate. This is attached.

Yours sincerely
Nick Evans

(N H R EVANS)

M A Pattison Esq

My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced in this House on 7th April that a Maritime Exclusion Zone would be established around the Falkland Islands. This zone has now been in effect since early on Monday, 12th April and I can assure the House it will be rigidly enforced [as regards Argentine warships and naval auxiliaries.] The Argentine government should be under no illusion about our resolve. If they choose to challenge our authority in the Zone, known consequences will follow.

In the meantime, the naval Task Force is proceeding with all speed towards the South Atlantic. As My Rt Hon Friend told the House on 7th April, it is a formidable Force comprising as it does 2 aircraft carriers, 5 guided missile destroyers, 7 frigates, an assault ship with 5 landing ships, together with afloat support.

The composition of the Force and the speed with which it was assembled and put to sea provide tangible evidence of our determination. I can tell the House that morale on board the ships in the Task Force is extremely high. Ships' companies are being regularly put through their operational paces and the ships are exercising together en route. By the time the Force arrives off the Falklands, it will be at a very high state of fighting efficiency.

A number of ships have now been taken up from trade, either by charter or through requisition to augment and improve afloat logistic support. These include a number of tankers, roll-on-roll-off ferries, the Canberra for use as a troop ship, and the Uganda which will be available as a dedicated hospital ship. Recourse to the merchant marine is traditional in time of naval emergency and their response has been as wholehearted on this occasion as in the past.

Men and equipment continue to be flown out to Ascension Island to rendez-vous with the Task Force. These additional elements will enhance the fighting capability of the Task Force and the range of operations which could be undertaken. Nimrod Maritime Patrol Aircraft are now patrolling the South Atlantic in support of our naval deployments.

Sustaining a substantial Force at 8,000 miles distance from the UK is a considerable undertaking. But as the Ministry of Defence announced this morning additional measures are now in hand to provide extra capability for the Force over an extended period. In particular, the second assault ship, HMS INTREPID, is being made ready for sailing, if necessary. Arrangements are in hand to adapt a large container ship for the carriage of additional Sea and Ground attack Harriers (which in the latter case would be flown by the RAF); this will double the size of the Harrier force in the South Atlantic.

M.P.

ATLANTIC DEBATE

You asked this morning for a passage on the defence aspects which could be included in the five minutes speech for tomorrow's debate - this is attached.

?

My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced in this House on 7 April that a Maritime Exclusion Zone ^{would} ~~was to~~ be established around the Falkland Islands. This zone has now been in effect since early ~~last~~ ^{on} Monday, 12 April. ~~We have so far received no reports of any incidents.~~ ^{and} I can assure the House ^{it} ~~that the zone will be rigidly enforced~~ [as regards Argentine warships and naval auxiliaries.] The Argentine government should be under no illusion about our resolve. If they choose ^{to challenge} ~~to put us to the test,~~ ^{and challenge our right legal right to} ~~the responsibility will be theirs not ours.~~ ^{known consequences will follow.}

In the meantime, the naval Task Force is proceeding with all speed towards the South Atlantic. ~~The bulk of our ships are now off West Africa.~~ As My Rt Hon Friend told the House on 7 April, it is a formidable Force comprising as it does 2 aircraft carriers, 5 guided missile destroyers, 7 frigates, an assault ship with 5 landing ships, together with afloat support. ~~Other~~

The composition of the Force and the speed with which it was assembled and put to sea ^{aside} ~~are again~~ tangible evidence of our determination. ^{to see to it} ~~to see to it~~

~~that the Falkland Islands and their dependencies are returned to British administration as soon as possible.~~] I can tell the House that morale on board the ships in the Task Force is extremely high. Ships' companies are being regularly put through their operational paces and the ships are ~~carrying out joint training~~ ^{exercising together} en route. By the time the Force arrives off the Falklands, it will be at a very high state of fighting efficiency.

A number of ships have now been taken up from trade, either by charter or through requisition to augment and improve afloat logistic support. These include a number of tankers, roll-on-roll-off ferries, the Canberra for use as a troop ship, and the Uganda which will be available ~~full time~~ ^{dedicated} as a hospital ship. Recourse to the merchant marine ~~for this purpose~~ is traditional in time of naval emergency and their response has been ~~as~~ wholehearted on this occasion as in the past.

Men and equipment continue to be flown out to Ascension Island to rendez-vous with the Task Force. These additional elements will enhance the fighting capability of the Task Force and the range of operations which could be undertaken. § Nimrod Maritime

Patrol Aircraft are now patrolling the South Atlantic ~~area~~ in support of our naval deployments. ~~The cover they provide speeds the progress of the Task Force southwards.~~]

Sustaining a substantial Force at 8,000 miles distance from the UK is a considerable undertaking. Preparations are in hand to provide for the support of the Force over an extended period. In particular,

the second assault ship, HMS Intrepid, is being made ready for sailing if necessary. Arrangements ~~are~~ ^{are in hand} ~~have been~~ ^{concluded by} to adapt a large container ship for the carriage also being made to obtain a further vessel to take out

additional ~~Harriers~~ ^{Sea and Ground Harrier attach Harriers} to the Force; this would effectively double the size of the Harrier force in the South Atlantic.

measures

Ministry of Defense
capabilities

announced this morning additional are now in hand to provide extra
~~Preparations are in hand to provide for the support~~
~~of the Force over an extended period.~~

This will

would be flown by the RAF);