

These questions are attributable

70A

Questions to Ian
McDonald

MOD PRESS BRIEFING 22.4.82 HELD AT 1200 HRS IN HISTORIC ROOM 27

- Q. Where will they be staged?
- A. I am not able to go into that.
- Q. Is the Norland going to be fitted with armament?
- A. I will have to check.
- Q. How many Chinooks will be going?
- A. I am unable to give specific number.
- Q. It seems odd that the men should embark and then sit on board?
- A. This was decision taken but I am not sure why it was done that way.
- Q. Are you able to tell us whether Intrepid has left.
- A. It has not left yet.
- Q. Has she to come back to port before leaving the Task Force?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Did Admiral Woodward speak of an air blockade being enforced?
- A. The Task Force will see one of its roles as ensuring that they have the capability to deal with Argentinian Air Forces, and if you like to call that a blockade then those, as I understand it, are the words that the Task Force Commander used.
- Q. Can you explain the apparent change of state which will happen from midnight tonight?
- A. I cannot give very professional detail but as the Task Force gets nearer to what may be operational areas, various procedures are tightened up and this must apply across a wide range of duties on ship. It is midnight Fri night.
- Q. Does action stations mean you are fighting?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Admiral Woodward saw it as his function to enforce an air blockade - is it being backed by the Government?
- A. An air blockade can be interpreted in many ways and I am not being drawn into which interpretation would be appropriate.
- Q. If Argentine warships and naval auxiliaries are being treated as hostile inside the MEZ, what would be the position of the Argentine aircraft in the air space above that MEZ when the Task Force arrives?
- A. I refer you to the last sentence of the announcement - any steps considered necessary for self-defence will be taken.
- Q. If an aircraft was flying in supplies, would that be classed as self-defence?
- A. In the circumstances of the time a judgement would be made in the light of

the general statement contained in that last sentence.

Q. According to the Rules of Engagement, he would not fire first?

A. Cannot comment on the Rules of Engagement.

Q. Is there going to be an air exclusion zone for it is likely that the Argentinians might continue air supplies without knowing the situation or whether they are going to be attacked?

A. The Government has not tied itself to the necessity of such an announcement.

Q. Can you comment on the two different statements from Admiral Woodward and John Notts. Admiral Woodward said they would have to attack first and John Nott said we would attack first?

A. Before commenting I really would have to look very closely at the full contexts of both statements.

Q. Will you get the verbatim transcription?

A. A much fuller story of the briefing is on its way to me.

Q. Can we have it for tomorrow's meeting?

A. I will do my best but cannot guarantee.

Q. Can we ring you in your office this afternoon?

A. If I have the answers I will ring them round.

Q. Should we believe Admiral Woodward's statement that the fleet was now 2500 miles from the Falkland Islands?

A. We have never commented on exactly where our nuclear submarines are.

Q. Have we any reason to believe we any British forces inside the MEZ at all?

A. We would not have imposed a zone without the capability to enforce it. We had, have and will have a capability to enforce the MEZ.

Q. Can you confirm that we may not have many ships in the area to enforce it?

A. I would not say they could conceivably be described as having the capability to enforce it.

Q. Why not just say that we have submarines in the area?

A. The fact is I can't.

Q. Can you tell us anything more about reports that the MEZ was breached at the weekend?

A. What I said yesterday still stands.

Q. Do you deny that it could have been another ship that breached the zone?

A. We have no reports.

Q. Is he quoting to the people on the ship military instructions from the Government or not?

A. I am not commenting.