

MOD PRESS BRIEFING 28.4.82 AT 1200 HRS HELD IN HISTORIC ROOM 27

Q. Does the total exclusion zone apply to any aircraft of any nationality or any ship found in the zone?

A. Yes, that is any aircraft or ship without the due authority from the MOD.

Q. Does that include American ships or do we have a mechanism of warning?

A. The mechanism is that aviation and hydrographic authorities who are being given this statement are also being given points of contact in the MOD.

Q. What was the cause of death to the Argentine prisoner?

A. We are having a Board of Inquiry. I cannot comment any further as I do not have full details of the incident.

Q. Where exactly did it happen in South Georgia?

A. Grytviken.

Q. Have you any idea of the circumstances?

A. No. We have only recently learnt the name of the man!

Q. When did you learn of the incident?

A. I do not know exactly when but we notified the Brazilian Government this morning.

Q. Do you know the man's rank?

A. No.

Q. Was he civilian or military?

A. Military I understand.

Q. Has the airlift of supplies by Argentina continued every day?

A. There have been reports of it continuing.

Q. Are any other countries using the Port Stanley ^{field} airlift?

A. I have no knowledge of other countries using it.

Q. Have you any information on any foreign ships in Argentina or British ships in the area?

A. Not able to go into that area.

Q. Are you expecting any applications for authority to be in the exclusion zone?

A. If there are any applications they will be dealt with quickly.

Q. Does this close any regular sea lanes?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. So all ships and aircraft have to keep out by April 30?

A. All ships and aircraft are covered. The MEZ, as you know, did not cover all ships and did not cover any aircraft.

Q. Are the ships already in Port included?

A. All ships.

Q. Can you give us guidance with regards to the Argentine fleet and dispositions of any Soviet ships in the area?

A. I cannot help you with regard to any Russian ships. However, the general position of the Argentine fleet has not changed from the general description I gave of it two or three days ago, ie that the majority of the Argentine fleet had left port and were strung out along the mainland coast within 200 miles of the zone.

Q. Do you think the Argentine fleet would try to breach the new zone?

A. Anyone who is thinking of coming into the maritime exclusion zone as it is at present or the total exclusion zone as it will be soon, will, I presume, have thought very hard about the possible consequences.

Q. Can you confirm that the Task Force is on course and on time?

A. Yes it is.

Q. If a ship already in Port Stanley leaves will it be treated as hostile and after 48 hours will it also be treated as hostile if it is still there?

A. That must be so under the strict terms of the announcement.

Q. How do they communicate?

A. Where theres a will theres a way!

Q. Why are the hydrographic authorities involved?

A. We understand that it is through the hydrographic authorities that the appropriate notices can be pushed out locally to mariners.

Q. Can you confirm that you have given instructions to the Met Office not to tell anyone what the weather is doing?

A. No, that is not so. My understanding is that the normal weather forecasts and information will continue to be given from the Met Office. However, some specialised and highly technical forecasts will not be given. We work together as the Met Office is part of the MOD.

Q. So we could get forecasts of anywhere?

A. Yes, the service is worldwide.

Q. Do you expect to be requisitioning any other ships in the future?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. What exactly are the hydrographic authorities?

A. The Dept of Trade is in a better position to give that kind of information.

Q. Can you tell us about the prisoners on S Georgia -- have any arrangements been made?

A. Not yet. It is under consideration and we are getting names of the prisoners.

Q. Are there any more ship movements you can talk about?

A. Nothing except to say that they are going about their normal programme of business including NATO commitments.

Q. Is it true that the tanker we sold to Chile is now being used to refuel ships in the S Atlantic?

A. Yes, it is being used by the Royal Navy and that was agreed with Chile.

Q. Whose sailors are manning it?

A. Our sailors are manning it.

Q. Was it actually delivered to Chile?

A. It was in the process of being delivered.

Q. Are there any runway facilities at Chile?

A. Not going into the involvement or non-involvement of any countries.

Q. When was the last time a Russian intelligence ship was reported to be seen by the fleet?

A. We would expect there would be a more or less continuous surveillance in one form or another. That is quite normal. I cannot say exactly the last time one was seen.

Q. Has money exchanged hands and was the ship delivered to the Chilians?

A. I do not know whether money has exchanged hands. I do know that the sale is going forward but the delivery has been postponed with the agreement of the Chilians.

Q. Are there any Chilians on board?

A. There is a RN crew on board and I have no knowledge of any Chilians on board.

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HMS FALMOUTH CONDUCTING TRIALS

HMS Falmouth, the Rothesay (Type 12) Frigate which was in the Stand-By Squadron at Chatham, is now conducting sea-trials.

When these are completed she will operate in UK waters.

IF pressed: This underlines the value of a standby-squadron - ships can be re-activated when there is a requirement.

Try to avoid being drawn on NATO connection.

See also brief G9 : Standby Squadron.....PQ

S. Reed

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DPO

Source: Fleet PR

28 Apr 82