

7) MOD PRESS STATEMENT - 9TH JUNE 1982

12.00 1475

We have been asked by the Americans - and we understand that Argentina has been asked as well - whether there is any further information we can give on the attacks on the US leased tanker Hercules yesterday.

The Master of the tanker referred to two attacks by high winged, four engined, propeller driven aircraft. We have already made clear that no British aircraft was involved in any way in this incident and that the Hercules which was in fact in ballast - that is empty - had not at any time been involved in supplying our Task Force.

It will have been noted however that as announced on 2nd June one of our own tankers was attacked by an Argentine C130 some days ago in the same general area. That attack was unsuccessful. The C130 is a high winged, four engined, propeller driven aircraft.

One other piece of information we have which is relevant is a message sent en clair, in English and on an international distress frequency - 2182 Kiloherertz. This message was picked up by our hospital ships UGANDA and HYDRA. It was preceded by the call sign of an Argentine radio station (we think in Ushuaia) and specifically addressed to Hercules with her call sign. This call sign fully identifies the vessel and means that there could have been no doubt as to the nature of the ship or her nationality. The message which was repeated for 30 minutes is as follows:

"Steer course 270 west to make Argentine port. If cannot make Argentine port you will be attacked in 15 minutes time".

The second attack as reported by the Master of Hercules took place shortly after this message.