



CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01-233 8319

From the Secretary of the Cabinet: Sir Robert Armstrong KCB, CVO

Ref. A08899

5 July 1982

BBC Falklands Special Programme

In your letter of 23 June to David Wright you said that the Home Secretary would like to wait for Sir Ian Trethowan's reply to my letter of 18 June before taking further the possibility of a meeting to discuss further steps.

--- We now have Trethowan's reply (copy attached). I have discussed this with the Departments and agencies concerned; Brian Cubbon has seen and can provide you with copies of the papers. In the light of that I propose that I should --- reply to Trethowan's letter as in the draft attached. It would then be up to him to decide whether he wanted to take up the invitation in the last paragraph. If he did, Frank Cooper and I would see him together; as Frank has suggested, we should take advantage of that opportunity not only to explain why this particular programme was unsatisfactory but also to take more general points on the increasing tendency of BBC programmes (like certain other media) to regard the specifics of intelligence collection as fair game for comment and speculation.

I am sending copies of this letter to Brian Cubbon, Frank Cooper and Antony Acland.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

(Ian Trethowan)

Sir Robert Armstrong, K.C.B., C.V.O.,
Secretary of the Cabinet,
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70 Whitehall,
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J F Halliday Esq

Sir Frank Cooper GCB CMG



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With the compliments of
Sir Robert Armstrong KCB, CVO
Secretary of the Cabinet

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from the Director-General

CABINET OFFICE
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23 JUN 1982
FILE INSTRUCTIONS
FILE No. _____

21st June 1982

cc Sir A. Juff
M. Broadall

by Sir Robert

I was very surprised to get your letter about the "Falklands Special" programme on BBC-1 on 15th June. We were not at all happy about several aspects of it ourselves, including the intelligence section, but for programme and journalistic reasons.

Throughout the Falklands crisis we have obviously been very much aware of the need to avoid broadcasting anything which might put the operations at risk. Before broadcasting the intelligence item on 15th June, Alan Protheroe consulted Bill Ash on the more sensitive points, and as a result of this and other enquiries it was our belief, and so remains, that we broadcast nothing which was not already available to the Argentines. Indeed, we have, throughout the conflict, been meticulous in our consultations when any sensitive material appeared likely to be broadcast.

I am sure you appreciate that "Panorama" is not, to put it mildly, the only source of information out of London available to the Junta.

Yours etc

(Ian Trethowan)

Sir Robert Armstrong, K.C.B., C.V.O.,
Secretary of the Cabinet,
Cabinet Office,
70 Whitehall,
London, SW1A 2AS.

DRAFT LETTER FROM SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG TO
SIR IAN TRETHOWAN, BBC BROADCASTING HOUSE,
LONDON, W1A 1AA

Thank you for your letter of 21 June.

I am sure that the BBC have been aware of the need to avoid broadcasting anything which might put operations at risk. I can only say that in this instance they have not succeeded in avoiding that risk. Nor did the Newsnight programme a couple of nights later. If I may say so, it is not just a question of broadcasting nothing which is not already available to the Argentine junta: the considerations at issue are a good deal more complex than that.

You say that Alan Protheroe consulted Bill Ash on the more sensitive points; my understanding is that consultation was confined to an inquiry how far Chilean involvement remained sensitive.

If you would like to pursue this further, I should be very happy to do so in discussion, if you would like to call in one day.

Copies go to:

R/S/Jan

Date:

6 July 1982