

CONFIDENTIAL

24

088061/9.  
 20 March  
 A good read-up of  
 the recent "incident".

re Halsey }  
 re West } to see

D/DS5/3/34/82

DNOT  
 CGRM  
 DS 11 (Mr Powell)  
 FCO, SAMD (Mr Chase) ←

Copies to  
 Sec/VCNS  
 ACNS(O)

1/5 Hood  
 23/3  
 paper

SOUTH GEORGIA

As promised at my meeting this morning, I attach a draft submission to US of S(AF). I should be grateful for your clearance by 4 pm today.

23 March 1982

~~Mr. Nicholls~~  
 N H NICHOLLS  
 Head of DS 5

CONFIDENTIAL

D/DS5/3/5/71

PS/US of S(AF)

Copy to  
 AFS/S of S  
 PS/Minister(AF)  
 PSO/CDS  
 Sec/CNS  
 Sec/VCNS  
 ACNS(O)  
 AUS(D Staff)  
 AUS(NS)  
 DNOT  
 CGRM  
 D Ops (ROW)  
 Head of DS 8  
 Head of DS 11  
 DPR(N)

ILLEGAL LANDING ON SOUTH GEORGIA

1. I spoke to Mr Wiggin earlier today and obtained his agreement in principle to the use of HMS ENDURANCE and her embarked Royal Marines detachment to remove from Leith in South Georgia the remaining members of the party landed there over the week-end.
2. It might be helpful if I briefly recapitulate the background. A British Antarctic Survey field party based in Grytviken in South Georgia reported last Friday evening, 19 March, that the Argentinian Naval Auxiliary vessel BAHIA BUEN SUCESO had been observed in Leith harbour and that around 100 personnel, allegedly military as well as civilian, had been detected ashore. These were apparently employees of an Argentinian contractor named Davidoff, who had been given a contract by a Scottish firm to remove surplus equipment from the old whaling stations on the Island for scrap. The party had not been given permission to land and the Governor of the Falklands passed our instructions through the BAS base Commander to the party to leave, as well as to remove the Argentine flag that they had hoisted. This was apparently the second time within three months that Davidoff had violated immigration regulations.
3. Our Ambassador in Buenos Aires was instructed to lodge an immediate protest with the Argentine authorities and the Argentinian charge in London was also called into the FCO. In parallel, US of S(AF) and Mr Richard Luce, the FCO Minister of State responsible for South American matters, agreed that HMS ENDURANCE, which was on the point of proceeding to Montevideo to effect the annual roulement of the Royal Marines Garrison at Stanley, should instead sail to South Georgia with as many Royal Marines as the Governor thought appropriate. She

/which

subsequently sailed at mid-day on Sunday, 21 March, with a Royal Marines platoon embarked. Her estimated time of arrival at Leith is 8 am (our time) tomorrow morning.

4. The Argentine authorities subsequently explained that the affair was entirely Davidoff's responsibility and that it did not represent a deliberate intention by the Argentine Government to raise the political temperature. They said that the vessel had been chartered to Davidoff and that there were no Service personnel onboard. The Argentine Charge claimed yesterday that the vessel had sailed on Sunday from South Georgia, leaving equipment behind. As this statement coincided with reports from the BAS that the ship and the Argentine personnel had left, Ministers - in the MOD's case, Minister(AF) in the absence of US of S(AF) - agreed that HMS ENDURANCE should resume her normal duties.

5. However, it subsequently emerged that around ten Argentinians had been left behind at Leith together with a quantity of equipment. HMS ENDURANCE therefore stuck to her original course for South Georgia. The FCO feel very strongly that there is no option but to remove the remaining personnel from Leith together with as much of their equipment as possible. There is a feeling that the Argentines are probing our resolve to deal with infringements of this kind; US of S(AF) will no doubt know that a party of Argentines has been on South Thule, at the extreme south of the Falklands, since 1976, a fact that has previously attracted critical comment in the House of Commons.

6. When I spoke to US of S(AF) this morning, I promised a submission later in the day setting out the detailed Rules of Engagement to be given HMS ENDURANCE/when she arrives at Leith tomorrow morning.

7. On the ship's arrival on the scene, the Commanding Officer would inform the Argentine party that he had come to convey them back to Port Stanley, for onward passage to Argentina. After giving the party adequate time to get ready, he would invite them formally to embark onboard HMS ENDURANCE. The minimum physical force would be used in order to compel the Argentines to comply. In this context, the Commanding Officer would be reminded that the Argentine Government may seek to over-dramatise the way in which the incident is handled and of the need to ensure that nothing is done that might be seized on as evidence of over-zealousness. He will be told that personal arms may be carried if deemed necessary; there have been earlier reports that the original party landed at Leith carried firearms.

8. As for the party's equipment, every effort should be made to recover it, either to Grytviken or to Port Stanley. If this is not practicable, the equipment should be left in as secure a position as possible.

9. The Commanding Officer would be instructed to treat the party, whilst onboard, with all due courtesy; but if they were to refuse to cooperate, he would have authority, as a last resort, to place them in confinement. On arrival in Port Stanley, the party would be handed over to the civil power, who will make arrangements for their repatriation to Argentina, together with any equipment which might still be onboard.

10. It is possible that the BAHIA BUEN SUCESO may still be in the vicinity. Should she turn up before the party have been embarked, the Commanding Officer would be authorised to hand them over, together with their equipment, and satisfy himself that they have been taken off before returning to Port Stanley. Should the ship be encountered on the high seas, its Commanding Officer would be informed that the party were being taken to Port Stanley for repatriation to Argentina. This would both help ensure that the party did not double back to Leith; and would also avoid the risk of any accident being caused while members of the party were being trans-shipped or of equipment being lost about which the Argentines might subsequently complain.

11. I should be grateful for US of S(AF)'s agreement to arrange for instructions to be sent, through CINCFLEET, to the Commanding Officer of HMS ENDURANCE along the lines set out above. A submission is being made to FCO Ministers in parallel.

23 March 1982

N H NICHOLLS  
Head of DS 5