

C.S.

SECRET

WAR/W2H/6#4

1942.

No.

5/10/42.

2

Rear-Admiral, South
America Division.

SUBJECT.

1941.

9th December.

REPORT ON VISIT OF REAR ADMIRAL COMMANDING
SOUTH AMERICA DIVISION TO FALKLAND ISLANDS.

Previous Paper.

MINUTES.

1-3 Letter from R.A.S.A., 9/12/41.

PA

Subsequent Paper.

3

Office of Rear Admiral Commanding
South America Division,

9th December 1941.

No.0311B

Your Excellency,

I have the honour to forward a copy of my letter No. 0311B of 8th December 1941 addressed to the Secretary of the Admiralty and the Commander in Chief, South Atlantic reporting my recent visit to the Falkland Islands in H.M.S. BIRMINGHAM.

I have the honour to be,

Your Excellency's

obedient servant.



REAR ADMIRAL.

His Excellency the Governor
of the Falkland Islands,
Government House,
Port Stanley.

SECRET

COPY. 2

Office of Rear Admiral Commanding
South America Division.
c/o C.P.C. London.

8th December 1941.

No. 03118.

The Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic.

(Copies to:- The Secretary of the Admiralty, (No. 172/03118),
The Naval Officer-in-Charge, Falkland Islands).

FALKLAND ISLANDS.

H.M.S. BIRMINGHAM, wearing my flag, visited the Falkland Islands between 21st and 25th November 1941.

DEFENCE.

2. A meeting of the Defence Committee was held at Government House on 22nd November.

The Committee expressed appreciation of the measures which had already been taken to improve the defences of the island; the new 4" gun had been mounted on the slopes of Mount Low, and tested; the 5" supercharged ammunition for the old Mark VII guns had been received, and 2 more Bren guns had arrived.

3. It was the opinion of the Committee, with which I am in complete agreement, that the future scale of defences envisaged by Admiralty signal, timed 2008 of 7th October, (para. (e)), which included the provision of 2 modern 45° 5" guns, would prove an ample deterrent to any enemy likely to threaten the base facilities by bombardment.

4. While fully realising the difficulties of providing further equipment, it is, however, hoped that it may eventually be found possible:-

(a) To provide some old flying boats for air reconnaissance and for offensive action against raiders' spotting aircraft. My signal timed 1342 of 5th March para. (c) refers.

(b) To supply some long range A.A. weapon. The defence of the area previously relied on the 12-pounder guns of BALTAVIA AND PHILONEL, but since these ships have both now left, machine guns form the only protection against aerial attack.

(c) With the very small infantry force available, effective defence against a hostile landing must depend on the power to move this force rapidly to the threatened point. Over the rough and trackless local country, this can only be done if caterpillar-tracked transport is available. It is hoped, therefore, that at least five Bren carriers may be sent out when they become available.

FALKLAND ISLANDS W/T STATION.

5. The Receiving Station, although not yet complete in certain details, is in operation. This together with the Marconi transmitters and increased staff, has resulted in a marked improvement in the general efficiency of the Station, and thus to W/T communications in Area "S".

In view, however, of the increased commitments of the Station, the total complement is still below that required for its satisfactory operation, and an additional transmitter is also required.

Full details are being reported separately.

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6. The accommodation at the transmitting station has been improved, and is now regarded as satisfactory. A new hut has been erected to accommodate the additional staff, and a Canteen has been opened.

W/T STATION.

7. The Station is now in operation and working satisfactorily.

It is considered, however, that more suitable arrangements could have been made for the power supply, and a separate report is being forwarded.

OIL FUEL DEPOT.

8. The external "bund" and new pipe-line are complete, and work is now in hand on the baffling sumps and weirs. Owing to the shortage of labour, it is doubtful whether "bunding" will be completed in less than 12 months.

The pumping machinery and plant, fire engine and all gear connected with it are in efficient working order.

The fire-party handled their gear with confidence; practices are held fortnightly with one or both machines, but in order to conserve stocks, foam is not used.

BARGE C. 505.

9. The keel of barge C. 505 was laid on 4th November 1941; the "A" strake is bolted in position and the lower strake centre line bulkheads are in course of erection.

The reverse frames, frames and floors are being fabricated prior to rivetting and are nearing completion.

RESERVE OF STORES

10. A reserve of victualling stores (provisions, clothing and mess traps) has been established consequent on the withdrawal of H.M.S. SALTAVIA. The provisions consist only of items difficult to obtain in South America, viz., rum, tea, frying oil, lime juice, dried peas and biscuits.

There is also a reserve of M.A.A.F.I. cigarettes and chocolate.

11. The "after action" and "bulky" naval stores have, with a few exceptions been completed to establishment. Those obtained from Montevideo in accordance with Admiralty message O711 of 30th April are satisfactory. Efforts are being made by the Admiralty contractor in Montevideo to obtain the remaining items.

DEFENCE ELECTRIC LIGHTS

12. The Defence Electric Lights have arrived but have not yet been erected. Except for the Electrical Artificer at the naval W/T station and possibly the Colonial Electrical Engineer in person there is no one capable of undertaking even their maintenance. The Electrical Engineer and Electrical Artificer can probably erect the lights in time, but no date for completion can be given. This serious situation merits consideration by the War and/or Colonial Offices with a view to the possible despatch of the necessary trained personnel.

LOCAL FLOTILLA.

13. H.M. Ships WILLIAM SCORSEBY and AFTERGLOW are in reasonably good condition, but require docking. Efforts will be made at carpening, but I am doubtful of its success.

H.M.S. ROYDUR urgently requires docking and refitting or replacement. This matter is being raised separately.

CONCLUSIONS.

14. Outside the primary consideration of weapons, the main problem in the Falkland Islands is shortage of labour, and the assignment of available labour to defence work in its proper priority. This could be much eased were it possible to send a number of Italian prisoners of War to the Islands for this or other work. This could only be done if special arrangements were made to house them by bringing portable huts or some similar arrangement.

15. A copy of this report is also being forwarded to His Excellency, the Governor of the Falkland Islands.

(Sd.) F. H. Pegram

REAR ADMIRAL.