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Confidential Filing

Royal Navy Deployments

DEFENCE

January 1980

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
Jan 1980							
10-10-85							
3-0-86							
21-10-87							
21-10-87							
29.12.89							

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CEPC.PM/87/059PRIME MINISTER*EDP
21 X.*Royal Navy Out of Area Task Group Deployment:*WITH COP?*

1. George Younger sent me a copy of his minute to you of 15 October outlining plans to deploy a Royal Navy Task Group to the Far East and Australia in 1988.

2. Although I am told that there are a few minor details on the programme still to be resolved by officials, I am in principle strongly in favour of the deployment. I hope that it will be as successful as the last exercise of this sort, "Global 86", from all points of view: diplomatic, naval and sales.

3. I am sending copies of this minute to OD colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
21 October 1987

② ~~WPC~~

C/Sr

Prime Minister

CDP
21/X.

ms

MO 25/15V

PRIME MINISTERROYAL NAVY DEPLOYMENT 'OUTBACK 88'

1. You will wish to be aware of plans to deploy a Royal Navy Task Group, led by HMS ARK ROYAL, to the Far East and Australia in 1988.
2. The last such deployment, 'Global 86', is generally agreed to have been a great success from the naval, diplomatic and sales points of view. Although another deployment next year is a little earlier than might usually have been expected, the Royal Navy has received an invitation to participate in an international naval review forming part of the Australian bicentennial celebrations, and I have considered this to be of sufficient importance to justify bringing forward the next deployment.
3. For financial and operational reasons, the scope of the deployment is to be more modest than last year. It is planned that the Task Group will consist of HMS ARK ROYAL, HMS EDINBURGH (a Type 42 Destroyer) and HMS SIRIUS (a Towed Array Leander class frigate), supported by three Royal Fleet Auxiliaries. HMS SIRIUS has been chosen because of the Australian connection, as it was a previous SIRIUS which led the original 'First Fleet' two centuries ago.
4. The timetable as proposed, which has been agreed between my officials and those of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, provides for visits to Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Hong Kong, China and Japan on the way out to Australia, with the Fleet Review in Sydney in September; while on the return leg, visits to India and Pakistan are being planned. In addition to these port visits, the programme has been built around the Five Powers Defence



Arrangement (FPDA) maritime exercise STARFISH from 21st to 29th July (involving SIRIUS); a major exercise with Brunei from 1st to 4th September; and a FPDA integrated air defence systems (IADS) exercise from 6th to 8th September (the last two involving ARK ROYAL and EDINBURGH). In preparing the programme, we have tried to achieve a balance between the diplomatic objective of showing the British flag in these parts of the world, the opportunity to promote defence sales in potentially lucrative countries, the chance to exercise with friendly navies en route, and the need to maintain the operational efficiency of the RN ships involved.

5. The programme as proposed avoids visits to countries where there could be difficulties over our policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence on board of nuclear weapons (there is not, therefore, a visit planned to New Zealand). We would expect to use where necessary the formulae that were arrived at last year permitting successful ship visits to China and Japan, whilst India has ceased to cause difficulties over this question.

6. I am sending copies of this minute to OD colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A.Y.

Ministry of Defence

15 October 1987

NOTE FCO
WILL NOT BE
RESPONDING

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File No

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

16 October 1985

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 15 October about plans to deploy a Royal Navy Task Group to Asia and the Pacific in 1986. Mrs. Thatcher has agreed to this proposal subject to the views of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

I am copying this letter to
Ien Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

TIMOTHY FLESHER

Richard Mottram Esq.,
Ministry of Defence.

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FM



copy (1)

MO 25/15V

*Prime Minister
Agree to proposed
deployment?
CDP
14/12*

Yes no

PRIME MINISTER

RN OUT OF AREA TASK GROUP DEPLOYMENT 1986

You will wish to be aware of plans to deploy a Royal Navy Task Group, led by the carrier HMS ILLUSTRIOUS, to Asia and the Pacific in 1986.

2. Periodic naval deployments beyond the NATO area are a significant element of our out-of-area strategy and have been referred to as such in successive Statements on the Defence Estimates. They help to maintain and display our out-of-area capability and to reinforce links with friendly armed forces. In 1986 a number of events come together to provide a useful opportunity to achieve these goals: a major US exercise in the Pacific in May, the Royal Australian Navy's 75th Anniversary Fleet Review in October, and a joint-Services out-of-area exercise that we are planning to conduct in Oman in November. A Task Group would be able to participate in all of these as well as a number of other exercises, in particular the annual exercises of the Five Power Defence Arrangements, our major defence commitment in the Far East. As well as these operational aspects, however, a deployment would provide



opportunities for defence export promotions and for goodwill visits to other important countries, both friendly and non-aligned.

3. The last deployment of this nature, led by HMS INVINCIBLE, occurred in 1983/4. It successfully achieved most of its goals, but you will recall that it ran into much-publicised difficulty, first when INVINCIBLE was unable to dry-dock in Australia for repairs, second when the Japanese effectively rejected a visit by the Group - in both cases the Governments concerned felt our policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons to be unacceptable for domestic reasons.

4. These issues have not gone away but Australia now looks much less of a problem following a tri-lateral Australia-UK-US agreement reached after the INVINCIBLE episode. The position of Japan is still not resolved though we are discussing possible arrangements with them. The present policy of Mr Lange's government in New Zealand makes a visit there impossible at the moment; and, while they are looking for a way out of the consequences of their policy with both ourselves and the Americans, the prospects are not promising. Lastly China blocked a US ship visit in May this year because of the nuclear weapons issue, and more recently we have heard that Rajiv Gandhi is considering a ban on visits to India by all vessels that might be carrying nuclear weapons, so RN visits to these countries may also be in question.



5. The exclusion of visits to Japan, New Zealand, China and India would not affect the main structure of the proposed programme as in the attached outline, around which a full and worthwhile deployment can in any event be moulded.

Nevertheless, these countries are important enough in their own right to be considered for inclusion in the programme if this became possible. Moreover, the press and the world at large, recalling the difficulties during the last deployment, are likely to focus attention at least initially on our handling of the nuclear weapons question and the countries involved in it. Indeed, the deployment itself may have influence on the issue which has to some extent snowballed since the 1983/84 deployment. While problems and bad publicity for another group deployment could perhaps worsen matters, not to go ahead would be to give up the issue as lost already. It would also forgo a possibly valuable chance to use the deployment itself to press some of the countries to change their policies in a way acceptable to us. The Australian arrangement reached after the INVINCIBLE docking saga in 1983 is an example, and there are some signs that the prospect of a deployment in 1986 is having a good effect in New Zealand and Japan.

6. The need for HMS ILLUSTRIOUS to sail round Cape Horn - she cannot pass through the Panama Canal - and so transit waters claimed by the Argentines could be a source of political friction. But the claim, for a territorial sea of 200 nautical miles, does not affect freedom of navigation or of air traffic.



We would therefore be able to justify, if necessary, the route taken, both on legal and practical grounds.

7. The Foreign Secretary and I are firmly of the view that we should go ahead with another deployment in 1986. We have drawn up a suitable programme and shall shortly start making arrangements with the countries involved. We have omitted the four difficult countries from this programme, but we have left room for visits to them if we can successfully press them in the meantime to change their policies in a way acceptable to us.

8. A copy of this minute goes to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

MSH
Ministry of Defence

15th October 1985

RN OUT OF AREA TASK GROUP DEPLOYMENT 1986: OUTLINE PROGRAMME1. Composition: 1 CVS (HMS ILLUSTRIOUS)

3 modern DD/FF

3 RFAs

2. Itinerary

April Depart UK

May Transit PANAMA CANAL (CVS via Cape Horn in company with
SOUTHLANT group)Visit SAN DIEGO in preparation for major exercise with
US Pacific Fleet

Elements visit VANCOUVER for EXPO 86

May/June Major exercise with US Pacific Fleet

June Visit HAWAII (post-exercise debrief and missile firings)

July (1 DD/FF only) Visit SOUTH KOREA; [JAPAN]; [CHINA]

Rejoin main Group at HONG KONG

[Exercise with Japanese MSDF?]

Visit HONG KONG, THAILAND, BRUNEI (RM exercise)

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August Visit SINGAPORE (assisted maintenance period)
 MALAYSIA
 FPDA exercises

September (DD/FF only) Visit INDONESIA, PAPUA-NEW GUINEA
 Rejoin main Group
 Visit BRISBANE
 Exercise with Australian [and New Zealand] Navies in
 Tasman Sea
 [Elements visit New Zealand]

October Visit SYDNEY (Fleet Review)
 Exercise with Australian Navy
 CVS + 1 DD/FF visits FREMANTLE; 2 DD/FF visit
 ADELAIDE for S. Australian 150th anniversary

November Visit [INDIA] PAKISTAN
 Participate in COA exercise off OMAN

December Transit SUEZ CANAL (in company with returning ARMILLA
 Patrol)
 Arrive in UK

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Defence



10 DOWNING STREET

Mr Whitmore.

How is Lord
L.A. now

The absence of the slightest hint
of regret from this unhelpful (+
misleading) note is particularly
striking. Would you care to
pursue further or to let it drop?

Yours

John Goo.

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1
Telephone 01-~~968 7092~~ 218 2111/3

MO 3/1

18th January 1980

Dear Sir,

SHORT-TERM ROYAL NAVY DEPLOYMENTS

You spoke to Jonathan Dawson here this morning about the stories in today's press of some Royal Navy deployments. It may be helpful if I confirm in this letter what he told you.

My Secretary of State agreed on Tuesday evening of this week that, subject to advance notification to FCO officials, three frigates from the Task Group currently deploying to the Western Atlantic and Caribbean should be moved into the Mediterranean and that HMS INTREPID should follow. Advance notification was accordingly given to FCO officials (and to the Cabinet Office), and defensive press briefing - I attach a copy of the question and answer brief - was agreed between FCO and MOD officials. You will note that the defensive press line was circumspect.

My Secretary of State approved these short-term changes in Naval deployments in order not to constrain the ability of Ministers collectively to consider whether, in the light of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's report on his current overseas tour, any major redeployments would be appropriate for foreign policy reasons. The move also helped to sustain Western force levels in the Mediterranean which had been reduced considerably following the decision of the United States to move the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS NIMITZ and supporting warships to the Indian Ocean.

/ We ...

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

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We have no knowledge here (no background press briefings on the subject having been requested or given) how the stories in today's press could have arisen - the story in the Guardian in particular seems entirely speculative.

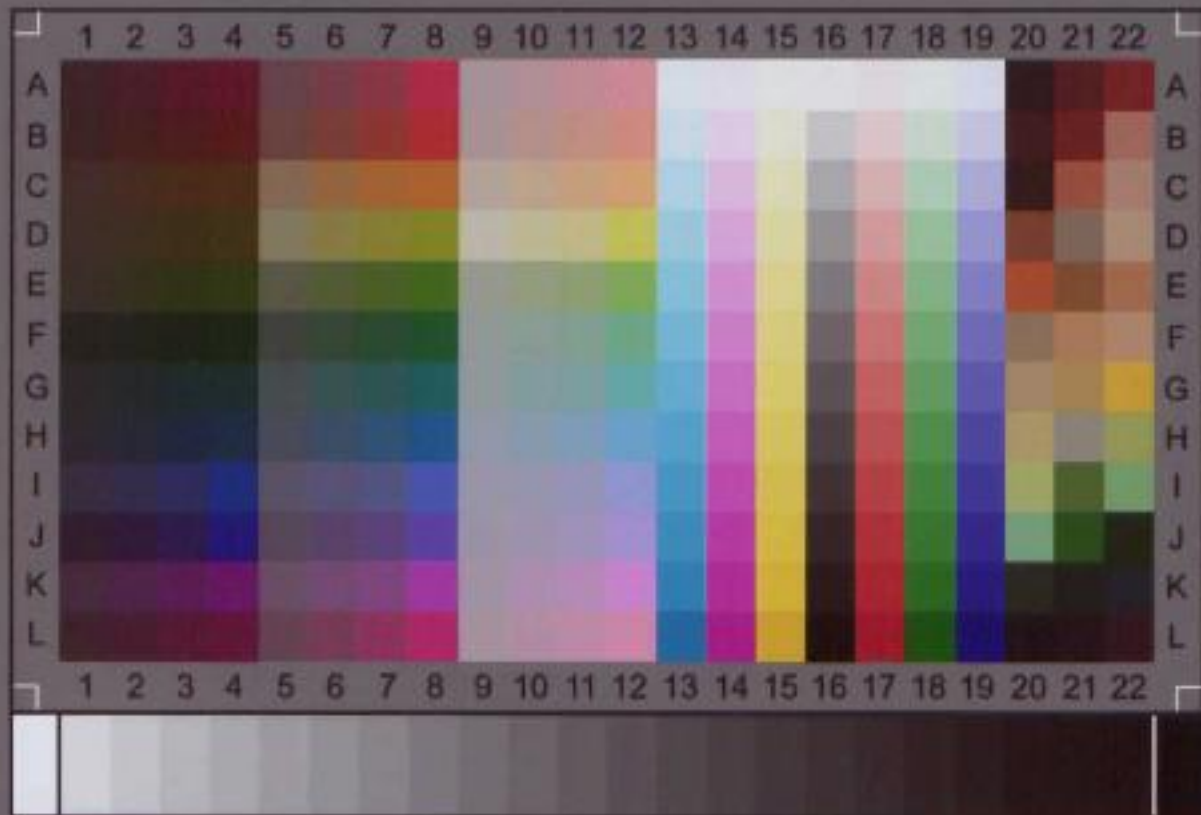
I am sending copies of this letter to George Walden (FCO) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,
Brian Norbury

(B M NORBURY)

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- Q.1 Where are the ships going?
A.1 They are deploying in the Mediterranean.
- Q2. Which ships are going there?
A.2 Three frigates plus afloat support. HMS INTREPID, currently the Dartmouth training ship will also deploy there with afloat support.
- Q.3 Why are they going to the Mediterranean?
A.3 They will be conducting training and will probably pay a number of visits to ports. [if pressed: we do not discuss operational details]
- Q.4 Are they intended to replace the NIMITZ group?
A.4 This is a national deployment; [if pressed: their presence will clearly help in maintaining the level of Western forces in the Mediterranean]
- Q.5 Why were these ships reprogrammed at short notice?
A.5 We often change plans; our aim is to be as flexible as possible.
- Q.6 Are these ships preparing to deploy to the Gulf?
A.6 We have no immediate plans to visit the Gulf.
- Q.7 But didn't Lord Carrington say that the Gulf was a strategically important area, and refer to a possible RN presence?
A.7 The Gulf is of course strategically important to the West and we pay ship visits to Gulf ports from time to time. I cannot, however, comment on what Lord Carrington is reported to have said [if pressed: you must ask the FCO]
- Q.8 What about our future plans for visits to the Gulf area?
A.8 I cannot speculate.



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