



Information Policy & Compliance
bbc.co.uk/foi

E-mail: _____

1 May 2007

Dear _____

Re: Freedom of Information Act request – RFI2007000354

Thank you for your e-mail dated 3 April requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the Act"). The reference number for this request is RFI2007000354. You requested:

'Did the BBC in May 1982 broadcast information on the fusing of Argentine bombs used against RN ships which it ought not to have known and/or ought not to have broadcast? Or did the BBC merely repeat stories which had already come to it through the MoD filter? Were the accusations against the BBC – of the sort which eventually lodged in the memoirs of Admiral Woodward, the Carrier Group commander – the product of a genuine grievance or the result of the MoD covering its back after making the blunder?'

You may be interested in the following publication: House of Commons First Report from the Defence Committee, Session 1982-83; The Handling of Press and Public Information during the Falklands Conflict (published by HMSO 8th December 1982).

Article 78 (page xxxiv) states; 'The disclosure of the failure of Argentine bombs to explode after impact is a different story. In this case, the Ministry of Defence in London briefed defence correspondents about the fact that on 12 May HMS Glasgow was hit by a bomb which did not go off. Subsequently, on 22 May it was revealed that the initial attacks on the ships following the San Carlos landings two more ships had been hit by bombs that did not explode. After these releases had been widely reported, Admiral Woodward asked Task Force Headquarters whether these stories could be discontinued for the obvious reason that the Argentines might be encouraged to improve the fusing or arming mechanisms of their bombs. Although after 23 May the Ministry no longer mentioned unexploded bombs, and briefed correspondents not to discuss the question, there can be no doubt that the Argentines, if not already aware of their difficulties from their own pilots' reports, were fully alerted to the problem of their bombs failing to detonate. Fortunately, for the ships of the Task Force this problem, whether caused by faulty fusing or by a failure to arm, was never solved by the Argentines. In practice their success rate did not improve. In any event the Ministry concluded that it was probably the fact that the Argentines were forced to fly very low to avoid British surface-to-air missile defences that caused the failure to detonate rather than some other mechanically rectifiable cause.'



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

I have also enclosed 3 documents which may be of interest;

Disclosure document 1

Following the publication of Admiral Woodward's book, the Deputy Managing Director of the World Service responded to a letter received by the BBC regarding the reporting of events during the Falklands conflict and specifically about the unexploded bombs issue. I have redacted the name and address of the individual that originally wrote to the BBC under section 40 of the Act (breach of Data Protection).

Disclosure document 2

Copy of text for the News bulletin on the 23 May 1982 at 08:21 regarding unexploded bombs.

Disclosure document 3

Copy of text for the News bulletin on the 23 May 1982 at 09:10 regarding unexploded bombs.

I hope you find this information helpful.

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to an internal review by a BBC senior manager or legal adviser. Please contact us at the address above, explaining what you would like us to review and including your reference number. If you are not satisfied with the internal review, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner. The contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, telephone 01625 545 700 or see www.ico.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Pickard
Information and Compliance Manager

FROM THE DEPUTY MANAGING DIRECTOR

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION
BUSH HOUSE
PO BOX 76, STRAND
LONDON WC2B 4PH
TELEPHONE: 071 257 2058/2069
TELEX: 265781
FAX: 071 379 6841

14th February, 1992

Dear Commander!

Thank you very much for your letter of 6th February asking about World Service coverage of the Falklands War. The subject has certainly been placed on the agenda again following publication of Admiral Woodward's new book and I am glad to have an opportunity to set the record straight.

Our position at the time was clear: the information we were reporting was freely available from official sources and was being widely relayed by journalists from London across the world. It really wasn't an option to have withheld information that was in the public domain, and with today's technology, instantly available to Argentine journalists and broadcasters. In fact if we had kept back certain announcements, the only people not to have known what was being reported by the international media would have been our own servicemen.

Nevertheless one can only sympathise with their sensitivity at the time. In battle conditions, it may sometimes have appeared to them that the World Service had overstepped the mark when in reality it was merely reporting official announcements. But ten years after the war, I do think that any remaining criticism of the BBC should be based on more than those perceptions.

You ask specifically about the source of our 23rd May report about Argentinian unexploded bombs which Admiral Woodward refers to in his book. I have checked the text of our news bulletin about this and I can indeed confirm that it was based on an MoD statement.

Lieutenant-Commander

.../2

- 2 -
14th February 1992

Thank you again for taking the trouble to write.

Yours sincerely

David Witherow

[David Witherow]

Lieutenant-Commander

Released by the BBC under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

FDS Micro

C029

01

0821 23-05-82

=SECOND SNAP ADD FALKLANDS CORRECTED=

The Ministry of Defence statement also said that following Argentine air attacks on Friday, two unexploded bombs on one ship had been successfully defused, and a third had been dealt with on another ship. Repairs had been carried out on all ships damaged in the attacks. The statement also updated the figures for casualties caused when the frigate, HMS Ardent, was sunk by the Argentines. It said twenty-two men were missing, presumed dead, and more than thirty re injured.

REASON: Last word should be "injured" not "missing".

MoD statement via BH

IDH

END

EP.

C035

01

0910 23-05-82

=0900 FALKLANDS TWO=

The Ministry of Defence statement said two men were missing, presumed dead, from other warships in the attacking force, with twenty-five others injured. Three Royal Marines died after Argentine troops brought down two Gazelle helicopters, and one Harrier pilot was missing. Earlier, the Argentines said they had brought down a Sea Harrier involved in attacks near Port Darwin. The Ministry said that two unexploded bombs which had lodged on one warship in Friday's attack had now been successfully defused, and a third had been dealt with on another ship. Repairs had been carried out on all the ships damaged in the attacks.

RW snaps 0821, 0825; Argentine Harrier
downing 0330.

AK (MORE) (10) SB