

Departamento de Malvinas, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur

Considerando que este pequeño aporte puede ser de gran ayuda para todos aquellos que tengan interés en este sector geográfico, que por otra parte integra el problema de soberanía que mantenemos con el Reino Unido, y por ende de nuestros intereses en la Antártida, retomamos – como lo habíamos hecho con anterioridad – con la transcripción textual de las noticias aparecidas en el periódico **MercoPress - South Atlantic News Agency** (<http://mercopress.com/>), abarcando todos los temas que - a criterio de la suscripta – puedan tener relación tanto con el tema antártico como con las Islas Malvinas

María Elena Baquedano

Departamento de Malvinas, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur

MERCOPRESS.

Monday, January 4th 2010 - 07:56 UTC

Argentina recalls events of 1833 and reiterates Malvinas claim

On the 177th anniversary of the “illegitimate occupation” by the United Kingdom of the Malvinas Islands, Argentina “repudiates” events of 3 January 1833 and calls on the UK to comply with the mandate of the international community and find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Liberation monument dedicated to the British troops that recovered the Falklands in June 1982
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An official communiqué from the Foreign Affairs Ministry released Sunday in Buenos Aires states that Argentina considers “incomprehensible the British negative to address the heart of the matter and to find a peaceful and definitive solution to the sovereignty controversy”, according to the international community mandate.

The communiqué reiterates once again the “permanent and sincere” willingness of Argentina to resume negotiations to find “a definitive solution to the dispute” and once for all put an end to the “anachronic colonial situation incompatible with the evolution of the modern world”.

The Argentine government also insists on its disappointment because the UK persists “in the reiteration of unilateral actions” in the Malvinas islands.

According to the Argentine version of January 1833 events “British troops in an act of force invaded” the Malvinas Islands, “an action which Argentina protested immediately and was never consented”, underlines the communiqué, similar to those it systematically releases every January 3.

In April 1982 the Argentine military dictatorship invaded the Falklands/Malvinas but 74 days later were repelled by a British Task Force sent by then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to recover the Falklands.

The British position has been that the Islanders have the right to self determination and as long as they wish to remain British, they will remain British, discarding all sovereignty talks.

Tuesday, January 5th 2010 - 12:24 UTC

Argentine General: demining a humanitarian and ethical imperative

“Argentina is free of all type of mines, with the exception of those planted in the Malvinas Islands which motivated Argentina to request and obtain a ten year de-mining extension, because Argentina currently does not have access to the Islands illegitimately occupied by the United Kingdom”.

Martin Balza, former head of the Argentine Army and a Malvinas veteran
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The statement belongs to Argentine ambassador in Colombia, former commander of the Argentine Army and Falklands/Malvinas veteran General Martin Balza who last month participated in the 2nd Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention held at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, and wrote a column under the heading of "Antipersonnel mines and ethical duty" for a Buenos Aires daily.

Besides this short lopsided initial presentation of the issue, General Balza mentions some terrifying statistics about anti-personnel mines which annually victimize 25.000 people through death, mutilation or terrible laceration, mostly civilians and which can remain buried active for over half a century.

The meeting was held in Colombia, South America because it has displaced Cambodia as the country which suffers most victims from this cruel weapon "created more than to kill, to mutilate and seriously injure because of its direct demoralizing impact on other combatants and later for any government is far costlier in economic and social terms than a dead soldier".

"Mine sweeping, clearing the fields of mines is a humanitarian and ethical imperative for governments" states Balza but unfortunately "several countries and illegal organizations do not see it this way" and this is particularly cruel because in the majority of cases mine planting is not done with the necessary registries and demarcation plans.

"Planting a mine can cost 2 US dollars but de-activating it soars to 800 US dollars".

Balza points out that many of the mine manufacturing companies are the same that obtain very profitable contracts for de-mining, and mentions among the main world producers three members from the UN Security Council: United States, China and Russia.

The conference with the participation of 154 countries was held ten years after the Ottawa Treaty to ban antipersonnel mines became effective in 1999 and Colombia was chosen because of the dramatic situation it is suffering.

In 31 of the 32 Colombian provinces there are extensive mined fields, with no demarcations, signalling, maps, records or blueprints of their existence, planted by an on-going insurgence movement. It is estimated it will take decades to clear antipersonnel mines in Colombia since the "criminal process" continues.

Between 1990 and October 2009, 8.100 Colombians have been victims of antipersonnel mines, over 400 annually. In 2009 the number was 550, of which 450 with ghastly injuries and 100 killed, with a considerable number of them less suspecting and most curious children and innocent civilians.

General Balza, who forgets to mention in his column that the thousands of antipersonnel mines still in the Falklands were planted by the retreating Argentine forces in 1982 underlines that "the suffering and valour of the victims and survivors of antipersonnel mines' explosions must be a boost for those responsible under International Humanitarian Law, particularly taking into consideration that most victims belong to the weakest and most vulnerable".

Tuesday, January 5th 2010 - 12:56 UTC

PM Brown admits he is the underdog in the forthcoming general election

UK Gordon Brown has admitted he is the underdog in the forthcoming general election battle - but insisted he is ready to "fight" for Britain. The Prime Minister said voters faced a "big choice" between the Tories promise of "austerity" and Labour's plans to encourage "aspiration".

Brown: everything I have ever won in my life I have had to fight for... Brown: everything I have ever won in my life I have had to fight for...

He also rejected claims that he was engaging in class warfare against David Cameron, and dismissed suggestions of splits in Labour's top team. The comments, in an interview for BBC1's Andrew Marr Show, effectively fired the starting gun on an election campaign that could last five months.

Asked whether he regarded himself as the underdog in the contest, Mr Brown replied: "I think when you are behind in the polls you have got to regard yourself as the fighter. Everything I have ever won in my life I have had to fight for..."

"People will see they have a choice to make and the choice is between someone who is ready to fight for every aspect of Britain's future, and will not stop fighting."

Mr Brown seemed to let slip that the crunch ballot would not take place in the first few months of this year, saying he "believed" there would be a Budget in the spring.

And he turned his fire on the Tories, insisting Mr Cameron had hoped to win without his own policies being scrutinised. "I think the Conservatives wanted an election that was essentially a referendum," he said.

The PM sought to make light of his barb in the Commons that Mr Cameron had dreamed up his inheritance tax policy "on the playing fields of Eton".

"It was a Commons joke. Quite an effective one, I hope," Mr Brown said. "I don't attack him for being a toff. I attack him for having the wrong views".

Wednesday, January 6th 2010 - 08:55 UTC

Busted with salmon farming, Chilean community tries marine tourism

Quellón, a small Chiloé Island community in the south of Chile that once was entirely dedicated to the salmon industry, is hoping growing interest in marine tourism will bring

the local economy back to life. The bottom fell out of Quellón's economy last year when the salmon industry went under, leaving half the community out of work.

Whale sighting among the options considered by a town of 25.000 that lost 10.000 jobs in two years

The community — the last stop on the PanAmerican highway, on the southeast edge of Chiloé Island (Region X) — is a prime location for tourism. The surrounding waterways flow out into the Pacific, home to a large population of marine life, including giant blue whales. Hotels and tour companies are already starting to pop up in the area and the local government says a development plan to promote entrepreneurship and tourism is in the works.

Until recently, Chile was the world's second largest exporter of cultivated salmon, but the industry has been deeply impacted by an outbreak of the Infectious Salmon Anemia (ISA) disease in 2007. That, combined with the effect of Marea Roja (or Red Tide, a harmful excess of algae) and the recent global economic crisis, has hit Quellón and surrounding communities even harder than those on the mainland.

"If anything, the crisis helped us to see that tourism is a viable option," says Ana Maria Jaramillo, who came back to the area after living 30 years in the United States.

Quellón Mayor Ivan Haro estimates 10,000 jobs have been lost over the past two years. Around 2,500 people have registered with the Municipal Employment Bureau, waiting for work, and an additional 4,300 people have left the city — home to only 25,000.

Trade association SalmonChile predicted that 2010 will be the salmon industry's worse year, with about half the production of 2008. Marine Harvest, the world's largest producer of farmed salmon, was one of the first companies to announce job cuts, in 2008, and since there have been thousands of layoffs in the industry. By Eva Salinas - Santiago Times

Wednesday, January 6th 2010 - 03:15 UTC

Major earthquake east of South Georgia & South Sandwich

A major 6.7-magnitude earthquake struck the southern Atlantic Ocean early on Tuesday east of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, a sparsely populated British territory, according to a US monitor.

Wildlife and scientists are the few inhabitants of those remote islands Wildlife and scientists are the few inhabitants of those remote islands

The quake struck at 3:55 am (local time) in waters 685 kilometres east of Bristol Island, part of a chain inhabited mainly by scientists on a series of bases, the US Geological Survey (USGS) reported.

The earthquake, about 2,800 kilometres east of the Falkland Islands, occurred at a depth of 10 kilometres, according to USGS.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre issued an alert stating there was no threat of a destructive widespread tsunami, but warned "there is the small possibility of a local or regional tsunami that could affect coasts" near the epicentre.

Wednesday, January 6th 2010 - 13:04 UTC

Air Tahiti confirms MOD contract for Falklands' airbridge

French Polynesia's flag carrier has signed a deal with the British Defense Ministry to fly military personnel from England to the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic, according to Radio New Zealand International.

The French Polynesia flag carrier has five Airbus A340-300 The French Polynesia flag carrier has five Airbus A340-300

The head of Air Tahiti Nui, Christian Vernaudon, said Wednesday one of its Airbus planes with its crew has been leased to fly the military personnel this month. He told local radio

in Tahiti that this type of activity is possible because the airline has five Airbus planes at its disposal.

Vernaudon said contracts of this type have already been signed worth almost 10 million US dollars.

In London a military spokesperson said that the MOD contractor is meeting its contractual commitment in providing the South Atlantic Airbridge service following the collapse of FlyGlobespan and it is hoped that a permanent arrangement will be in place soon.

The present interim arrangements are: Air Tahiti Nui is contracted for the flights between the UK to Falkland Islands on 6th, 10th and 13th of January and Titan will undertake the task on the 17th January.

The spokesperson says that competition to provide the flights between the 20th January and the end of February is ongoing at present.

Air Tahiti Nui has headquarters in Papeete and operates from Faa'a International Airport on the island of Tahiti. The company was founded in 1996 and commenced flight operations in 1998. The Government of French Polynesia is the major shareholder in the airline along with Tahitian private investors.

Air Tahiti Nui is certified under the French Civil Aviation Authority and is designated by the IATA code "TN", numeric code "244", and the ICAO three-letter code "THT".

Air Tahiti Nui exclusively operates one of the youngest fleets of Airbus A340-300 aircraft in the world. These new generation aircraft, which seat 294 passengers, feature the quietest cabin in the sky while offering state-of-the-art technology and innovation.

Thursday, January 7th 2010 - 16:56 UTC

Japanese whalers and environmentalist ram vessels in the high seas

Anti-whaling activists have accused a Japanese vessel of ramming their high-tech speed boat during a confrontation in the Southern Ocean. Video of the incident appeared to show the Japanese ship severely damaging the *Ady Gil*, but all six crew were rescued.

Earlier the campaigners - who are trying to stop Japan's whaling fleet - said they threw chemicals onto the whaling boat to prevent it being used.

The whalers said the activists tried to tangle their propeller with a rope.

In recent years the two sides have regularly confronted each other in the waters around the Antarctic.

Sea Shepherd spokesman Paul Watson said the incident had turned the confrontations between the whalers and the activists into a "real whale war".

A statement on the Sea Shepherd website said a Japanese vessel that was accompanying the *Nisshin Maru* whaler "deliberately rammed" the *Ady Gil*, a high-tech speed boat that resembles a stealth bomber, shearing off its bow.

The crew of the *Ady Gil*, five from New Zealander and one from the Netherlands, were picked up unharmed by nearby Sea Shepherd vessel *Bob Barker* near Commonwealth Bay.

"The *Ady Gil* is believed to be sinking and chances of salvage are very grim," the Sea Shepherd statement said.

A video apparently shot from on board the Japanese vessel showed the two ships smashing into each other at speed. The *Ady Gil* was swamped by waves, its nose was torn off and damage could be seen to its side.

Japan's Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR), which conducts the country's whale hunt, accused Sea Shepherd of using the *Ady Gil* to attack its vessels.

They alleged the trimaran speedboat came dangerously close to the Nisshin Maru, trying to entangle its rudder and propeller with a rope and launching stink bombs at the vessel.

"The Sea Shepherd extremism is becoming more violent... Their actions are nothing but felonious behaviour," the (ICR) said in a statement.

Japan's fisheries agency said it was the fourth time this season that the anti-whaling activists had interfered with the whaling fleet's operations, Kyodo news agency reported.

The Sea Shepherd group sends boats to Antarctic waters each year to try to stop the Japanese whaling fleet hunting whales.

Japan abandoned commercial whaling in 1986 after agreeing to a global moratorium but international rules allow it to annually kill hundreds of whales under the auspices of a scientific research programme.

Conservationists say the whaling is a cover for the sale and consumption of whale meat. (BBC)

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Hurricane Irene blasts New York

Published in: Environment, Fisheries, International.

Thursday, January 7th 2010 - 17:05 UTC

Argentina opens "dirty war" files except those related to South Atlantic conflict

Argentina declassified and has made public all documents and information related to military activities for the period extending from 1976 to 1983 when the country was ruled by the Armed Forces, However decree 4/2010 excludes all information and documents related to the South Atlantic (Falklands/Malvinas) conflict and any other inter-state conflict".

The Navy's Mechanic School, a notorious death and torture centre during the "dirty war"
The Navy's Mechanic School, a notorious death and torture centre during the "dirty war"

The decree published Wednesday in the Official Gazette is aimed at clarifying human rights allegedly committed by the military during the so called "dirty war". Legislation from 2007, decree 44/07, had already exonerated from keeping secret information all those linked to intelligence services and who had been called by the courts to declare.

"The classified information and/or documents with restricted public access were not committed to the protection of legitimate interests of a democratic State but rather served as a means to hide the illegal actions of a de facto government", affirms the decree.

The decree adds that 25 years after the re-establishment of democracy in Argentina "it is not possible to continue to keep such information inaccessible under the argument that it would threaten state security" or in any other category of "security" that impedes from knowing recent Argentine history, curtailing the right of the community to learn about its past.

The decree adds that declassifying documents has become more necessary with the recent reopening of numerous human rights cases involving intelligence personnel from the military and police forces of the time.

Thousands of opponents to the military regime and political dissidents disappeared during the period extending from 1976 to 1983.

The South Atlantic conflict in 1982 and defeat of the Argentine military following the recovery of the Falkland Islands by the British Task Force helped to accelerate the downfall of the Argentine de facto regime and return of democracy in 1983.

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(BBC)

Friday, January 8th 2010 - 20:45 UTC

Falkland Islands: Drilling preparations step up a gear onshore

AS the semi-submersible drilling rig Ocean Guardian, contracted by Desire Petroleum from Diamond Drilling, continues to make its way south, a number of oil operators are scheduled to visit the Falklands to meet with government officials this month.

Ocean Guardian oil rig left Las Palmas on her way to the Falklands Ocean Guardian oil rig left Las Palmas on her way to the Falklands

Desire Petroleum's Chairman Stephen Phipps, Chief Executive Officer Dr Ian Duncan and Finance Director Eddie Wisniewski are due to arrive next week for a round of meetings with government officials and others. They will be accompanied by Ben Romney from Buchanan (Desire's PR consultancy) and Robert Watts, a journalist from the oil industry magazine Upstream.

Three representatives from Rockhopper Exploration are also scheduled to arrive next weekend.

The Ocean Guardian, under tow by the Maersk Traveller, is still on schedule to arrive in early February; Desire's Falklands representative Lewis Clifton confirmed this week.

A second Maersk anchor handling tug supply vessel is due to arrive late this month, and the third rig support ship, a platform supply vessel, will complete the offshore drilling support package, he said.

The pace dockside is about to pick up with the first of two cargo ships, Thor Leader, carrying oil equipment from UK, arriving next week. The second cargo ship, Honest Rays, arrives on January 15. Mr Clifton said discharge operations would be undertaken 24 hours a day until the 14,000 tons of equipment onboard were sorted and stored, pending the arrival of the Ocean Guardian.

Onshore specialised support personnel will begin arriving in Stanley during the next few days. Mr Clifton said up to 12 personnel would be based in Stanley for the duration of the drilling programme.

As with oil rig workers, these personnel will rotate 28 days on and 28 days off.

The shore support personnel will be largely based out of the integrated pipe yard and laydown facility being constructed at Coastel Road by Byron McKay Port Services, of which Mr Clifton is a director. The facility will include modularised office and warehouse accommodation, and the silo plants (muds and cement bulk storage), although other private sector facilities will also be utilised.

Mr Clifton said Byron McKay Port Services had secured an on-shore services support contract, and were working with AGR Petroleum Services - the oil operator's contractor - to provide the ship-shore-ship logistics support interface.

A number of local appointments have been made to support the contract terms. These include an aviation coordinator and a number of operatives, slings men, labourers and stevedores. A two week training programme for operatives was undertaken during early December under training guidance brought in from Aberdeen, said Mr Clifton, adding that security personnel would also be appointed for the duration of the drilling programme.

Helicopter support operations are to be provided by British International with an airframe due to arrive on the Ministry of Defence freighter next week. Mr Clifton said work was also progressing towards bringing back on line the helicopter refuelling facility at Cape Dolphin on East Falkland, which was set up during the last drilling round in 1998. However, unlike in 1998 when the Borgny Dolphin oil rig was visible off Cape Pembroke, the Ocean Guardian is unlikely to come into sight on arrival, said Mr Clifton.

Source: Penguin News

Friday, January 8th 2010 - 06:22 UTC

Waters dispute with Spain, Gibraltar's main challenge in 2009

Gibraltar Chief Minister Peter Caruana said this week that the biggest challenge of all in 2009 was that over the sovereignty of Gibraltar's waters represented by Spain's designation of areas of these as an EU environmental protection zone, and the EU Commission inclusion of it in the official EU list.

Chief Minister also underlined Minister Moratons visit, the first Spanish Foreign Minister ever to visit Gibraltar Chief Minister also underlined Minister Moratons visit, the first Spanish Foreign Minister ever to visit Gibraltar

In his New Year address, Caruana said that the Gibraltar Government had acted immediately to mount a legal challenge to this move in the European Court, as soon as it became aware of it. The UK itself had missed its deadline for bringing its own legal challenge, but has intervened in the case in support of Gibraltar.

"Under EU procedures there will soon be a new opportunity for the UK to bring its own, separate legal challenge, and it is absolutely vital that it does so because Spain and the EU Commission are challenging our right to bring our own action, and if they succeed then our legal case will fail before it even gets heard in court. UK and Gibraltar would be protected from this very serious position if the UK starts its own direct legal case. It must therefore do so" said Caruana.

He recalled that it had become necessary to protect Gibraltar's position arising from this matter in the context of the then forthcoming Ministerial meeting in Gibraltar of the Trilateral Forum, the agenda for which included co-operation in relation to those very same waters, in respect of both maritime matters and environmental protection.

"This specific objective was fully achieved by securing an acknowledgement from Spain in the formal communiqué that the designation of our waters has no implications for, and thus does not change the sovereignty, jurisdiction and control of the waters, which accordingly remain as they had been before the designation," he said.

Mr Caruana said that this language fully achieved the stated and intended objective of politically neutralising the possibility that the EU environmental designation by Spain of our waters had of itself advanced Spain's sovereignty position.

"While obviously not defeating her longstanding and misconceived claim over the waters, Spain's acknowledgement that the designation had not advanced its sovereignty position or prejudiced ours, enabled cooperation talks to proceed safely for us".

Regarding the Trilateral Forum, it continues to work well and to achieve good progress, said Caruana. He highlighted 2009 seeing Gibraltar hosting the Ministerial Meeting of the Forum, with the historic and welcome visit of Miguel Angel Moratinos, the first Spanish Foreign Minister ever to visit Gibraltar.

"There will regrettably always be adverse incidents because the parties still have serious disagreements on very important issues. Of course, every such incident is gleefully seized on by the Opposition to undermine the Forum and attempt to show that it has failed. But, there is no denying the Forum's success and value. Quite apart from the architecture of the Forum itself, the facts of success speak for themselves" concluded Gibraltar's Chief Minister.

Friday, January 8th 2010 - 13:03 UTC

PM Brown reaffirms Falklands' sovereignty and support for oil development

Prime Minister Gordon Brown in his New Year message reaffirmed UK sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and "the principle of self determination that underlies it", emphasizing there will be "no negotiations (with Argentina) on the Islands sovereignty unless and until such a time as the Islanders wish".

PM Brown: I met twice with President Cristina Kirchner in 2009 PM Brown: I met twice with President Cristina Kirchner in 2009

But Brown also praised Argentina, "a fellow G-20 member and important partner in efforts to address global concerns" for which "we will continue to pursue a strong bilateral agenda with Argentina".

The message reviews events of 2009 such as the new Falklands' constitution and the November elections "when an unprecedented and high voter turn-out resulted in a totally new Legislative Assembly".

Brown said he was particularly pleased with the success of the Argentine next of kin visits to the Falklands last October: "visitors were full of praise and gratitude for the welcome they received and for the sensitivity in which these humanitarian visits were handled"

The British Government continued support to the development of the Falklands' hydrocarbons sector was also reaffirmed by the Prime Minister although praising the cautious approach since there are no guarantees that commercially viable reserves will be found and it is right therefore "not to factor any revenues in the economic planning".

Follows the full text of the message:

2009 has been another year of significant change for the Falkland Islands.

Your democracy was further strengthened by your new constitution, and by the elections which took place in November when an impressively high voter turn-out resulted in an all-new Legislative Assembly. I wish the new Assembly Members well for their terms in office.

2009 also brought economic change and challenge for all of us. Nowhere has been immune. I know that this has been a difficult year for the Falklands' economy. Reduced fish catches have lead to a budget deficit. Such change demands a response and I welcome the work you are doing to develop a strategy to put the Falklands' economy on to a more diverse and sustainable footing.

Early 2010 will see the arrival in Falklands' waters of a drilling rig to continue hydrocarbons exploration. The British Government will continue to support the development of your hydrocarbons sector. But there is, of course, no guarantee that commercially viable reserves will be found and should there be any, extraction will be some years away. You are right, therefore, not to factor any revenues into your economic planning but the opportunities and risks, make careful preparations vital for this important work. The British Government will continue to work with you on this great agenda.

Argentine visitors have been able to visit the Falkland Islands throughout the year but I was particularly pleased that the visits of the Next of Kin of those who died in the Falklands' conflict went so well this October. I know that planning these visits was very difficult for a number of reasons but the visitors were full of praise and gratitude for the welcome they received and for the sensitivity in which these humanitarian visits were handled. The Next of Kin were able to pay their respects with dignity. And I should like to thank everyone involved for the hard work that went into ensuring that the visits were a success.

We will, of course, continue to encourage Argentina to co-operate on issues of mutual interest in the South Atlantic. Fisheries conservation is just one example where their co-operation would benefit all. We will also continue to pursue a strong, bilateral agenda with Argentina – a fellow G-20 member and important partner in efforts to address global concerns, such as the economic down-turn and, important, too, in addressing climate change. I met President Kirchner twice in 2009 to discuss such issues.

But as always in our discussions I made it clear that we have no doubts about United Kingdom's sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and that the principle of self determination underlies this. There can be and there will be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Islands unless and until such time as you wish.

Your new Legislative Assembly will face further challenges in the year to come but I am sure that your community spirit, resilience and strong democratic foundation will help you face these challenges and I wish all in the Falkland Islands a Happy Christmas and good health and good fortune for 2010.

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Source: Penguin News

Saturday, January 9th 2010 - 14:13 UTC

Argentine sovereign bond holdouts reject latest payment offer

Argentina's new debt-swap offer to US creditors is "unacceptable" and does not improve on a proposal it made five years ago, the president of the debt-holding group Argentina Task Force, Robert Shapiro, said on Thursday, quoted by French news agency AFP.

President Cristina Kirchner in December got Argentina's Congress to approve a settlement offer to creditors holding 20 billion US dollars in defaulted debt that would reimburse them for 45-75 percent of the money owed.

The offer, an attempt to close the chapter on Argentina's 2001 default worth some 95 billion dollars, could be presented shortly to the US Securities and Exchange Commission in New York, according to media reports.

Argentina is trying to sway creditors who have been holding out for more since the offer was first made five years ago.

"After five years, the Kirchners have come with an offer that is not better than the offer that created this crisis. It was unacceptable to a lot of lenders five years ago, and for most of them will be unacceptable again, I expect" said Shapiro.

Handled by three international banks including Barclays, Citi and Deutsche Bank, Argentina's offer, however, could interest investment funds that bought Argentine bonds at a discount after the 2001 crisis.

"For them the old offer is a good offer, in the sense they bought deeply discounted debt," Shapiro said.

The Argentina Task Force representing some 30 US national and state associations and thousands of small US investors is requesting the US Congress to approve a law banning countries that default on their debt from international financial markets indefinitely.

Shapiro did not comment on the current struggle between Kirchner and the head of Argentina's central bank who was fired Thursday by presidential decree and reinstated by an administrative court ruling.

Central Bank Martin Redrado refused to hand over 6.6 billion US dollars from Argentina's foreign currency reserves to pay off part of a 13 billion dollar payment of the national due this year, after the president ordered him to do so.

Saturday, January 9th 2010 - 13:48 UTC

Brazil anticipates second largest grain and oil seed crop in history

Brazil expects in 2010 the second largest grain and oil seed crop in history, closely linked to the success of soy beans, totalling 140 million tons, according to the latest release from the Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute, IBGE.

Soybean is the main cultivation Soybean is the main cultivation

The forecasted 140.7 million tons of this year represent a 5.2% increase over the 2009 crop which totalled 133.8 million tons.

Brazil's record harvest was in 2008 with 146 million tons.

According to IBGE the cultivated area will increase 2%, reaching 48.1 million hectares.

Soybean in the main crop with 65 million tons (up 14%) with a 5.8% increase in the area planted.

Corn on the other hand faces an "unfavourable scenario" given low market prices, and the crop should be in the range of 32.7 million tons, 3.2% less than in 2009.

Saturday, January 9th 2010 - 08:29 UTC

Anti-whaling activists call for criminal investigation into sinking of protest boat

Anti-whaling activists have asked the Dutch public prosecutor to launch a criminal investigation into a clash between protesters and Japanese whalers in Antarctic waters which led to the sinking of a protest boat.

The remains of the Ady Gil powerboat which sank in the Southern Ocean after having its bow sliced off by a Japanese whaler (Photo EFE) The remains of the Ady Gil powerboat which sank in the Southern Ocean after having its bow sliced off by a Japanese whaler (Photo EFE)

The hard-line Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, which has its mother ship registered in the Netherlands, said the carbon-fibre Ady Gil powerboat sank in the Southern Ocean on Friday after its bow was sliced off on Wednesday by a Japanese harpoon vessel.

Each side has blamed the other for the incident in which one crewman aboard the protest boat was injured.

Liesbeth Zegveld, lawyer for the activist group, said it appeared the ship that struck the boat had been sent out with the specific purpose to prevent the protesters, including Dutchman Laurens de Groot, from reaching the whaling ships.

"We filed a complaint for criminal prosecution with our prosecutor, requesting the start of an investigation into what we consider to be a crime -- piracy, actually -- committing violence on the high seas," Zegveld said.

"This particular ship that attacked the Ady Gil was at a close distance all the time since they left the Australian harbour" Zegveld added. "It was sent out and equipped for following and harassing the Ady Gil".

Australia voiced official concern about safety in the Southern Ocean on Friday, and Canberra said it was keeping open the option of an international legal challenge to Japanese whaling if diplomacy failed to reach an outcome.

Sea Shepherd Captain Paul Watson said the Japanese whalers ignored all distress calls after the boat was crippled, with the six crew picked up by a second Sea Shepherd boat nearby.

Zegveld said the fact that the group's mother ship, the Steve Irwin, is Dutch-registered, combined with the presence of a Dutch citizen among the six crew on board the boat, provided a legal basis for pursuing a criminal case in the Netherlands

The Ady Gil's six crew members were rescued after the collision by the crew of the Bob Barker, a former Norwegian whaler purchased and refitted with a 5 million USD donation to Sea Shepherd from television personality Bob Barker, host of TV's "The Price Is Right" for 35 years.

The Ady Gil was purchased with a 1 million USD donation by Ady Gil of Woodland Hills, co-owner of American Hi Definition Inc., one of Hollywood's leading providers of video production trucks, custom control rooms and camera systems to entertainment and corporate clients.

Wednesday, January 13th 2010 - 03:55 UTC

Islands pay tribute to "fierce champion of Falklands' tradition"

"Fierce Champion of Falklands traditions," Jane Cameron was remembered by her Falklands friends and her family at a Memorial Service held in Christ Church Cathedral in Stanley yesterday.

Jane was born in 1950 and lived with her partner Rob at the 'Old Bakery' in Stanley
Jane was born in 1950 and lived with her partner Rob at the 'Old Bakery' in Stanley

Granddaughter of a Falklands Colonial Secretary/Governor and sister to the Islands Government Representative in London, Sukey Cameron, Government Archivist Jane died of her injuries on Boxing Day, following a car accident near Trelew, Argentina on November 11.

'Beagle' project colleagues Petra Niegeman also died in the accident and the ship's doctor Charles Boissevain was seriously injured. Radio reporter Marten Minkema suffered minor injuries.

Jane, who was born in the Falkland Islands and studied in the United Kingdom, returned to her place of birth in 1989 where she took up the previously non-existent role of Government Archivist.

Describing the gargantuan task ahead of her, Jane's brother Donald Cameron told the congregation that his sister's work began with a mountain of cardboard boxes stored in Government House and the Secretariat and filled with dusty historic documents.

Over the next 20 years Jane became well known for her dedication to preserving the islands history in all of its forms including the preservation of buildings. Mr Cameron described an archivist as, "...part of the glue that holds the community together."

An anonymous political blogger summarised Jane's place in the islands with the words, "In other places there will deservedly be obituaries listing Jane's many and varied contributions to the Falkland Islands. Here I would simply like to say that I cannot believe that we shall never again see her bouncing down Ross Road at the wheel of her little red car, nor ever again experience either her withering glare of disapproval or the sparkly-eyed warmth of her wicked grin."

After the service brother and sister Donald and Sukey, and her husband Howard Pullen, stood outside the doors of the Cathedral and bravely greeted and offered comforting words to the many Islanders who attended.

During the memorial service Mr Cameron thanked people for their countless kindnesses, including the people of Trelew, and those who worked so hard to save her at the hospital where she was treated.

By Lisa Watson - SeAledPR - Stanley

Wednesday, January 13th 2010 - 21:38 UTC

Falkland Islands: Ocean Watch 'Around the Americas' scientists moor in Stanley

AROUND the Americas yacht Ocean Watch moored in Stanley on Monday as part of its 24,000 nautical mile journey aimed at collecting data sets in a bid to raise global awareness of the oceans.

The 64' steel cutter research platform carries a team of ten scientists whose project topics range from polar science and weather to jellyfish populations and the reflection solar energy.

Carol Peck of Falklands Conservation explained, "The Around the Americas voyage is a unique opportunity for scientists to collect new types of data and to test new methods and equipment and presents a unique chance for us in Stanley to learn more about their findings."

Ms Peck said, "The crew intend to record and catalogue their voyage and findings in a film and have been interviewing local people, scientists and fishing crew on their journey including from the Falklands.

The Around the America's voyage was launched on the premise that the continents of North America and South America are, in essence, large islands surrounded by a complex, fragile ocean environment at risk on countless fronts. A major objective of the 13-month, journey is to demonstrate the inter-connectedness of the seemingly independent continent-islands.

Ocean Watch set forth from Seattle on May 31 and their route can be discovered and their journey followed at www.aroundtheamericas.org- By Lisa Watson – SeAled PR - Stanley

Monday, January 18th 2010 - 13:31 UTC

US and NZ share the biggest wind farm in Antarctica

The biggest wind farm in ice covered Antarctica and which can generate enough electricity to power 500 homes, was formally switched on this weekend.

The plant can provide enough energy to light 500 homes The plant can provide enough energy to light 500 homes

The joint New Zealand-US project's three huge turbines will provide 11% of the power needed to run the two nations' science bases on Antarctica's Ross Sea coast, cutting greenhouse gas output, lowering fossil fuel use and reducing the risk of fuel spilling in the continent's pristine environment, officials said.

The 11 million US dollar wind farm is located on Crater Hill, half way between the United States' McMurdo Station and New Zealand's nearby Scott Base.

While the turbines have been operating well since December, the formal turn-on ceremony took place on Saturday, with New Zealand Foreign Minister Murray McCully and US Ambassador David Huebner officiating by video link with the site from New Zealand's northern city of Auckland.

Noting the two countries share a commitment to increasing the world's use of renewable energy resources, Mr McCully said it was "fitting we have worked so hard together to get this wind farm up and running in Antarctica, one of the world's most pristine and fragile environments".

The farm has a power output of about one megawatt and could cut annual diesel use at the bases by 460.000 litres and reduce annual carbon dioxide output by 1,370 tonnes, said Alan Seay, spokesman for New Zealand's Meridian Energy, which installed the turbines.

Each of the towers is designed to withstand wind gusts of up to 128 miles per hour.

Tuesday, January 19th 2010 - 10:47 UTC

Fourteen cruise vessels call in South Georgia during December

Fourteen cruise ships visited South Georgia Island during December, eight of which visited during the Christmas week from the 23rd to the 29th December, according to the latest release from South Georgia's News and Events.

"Hanseatic" managed a landing on December 24th for a Christmas service "Hanseatic" managed a landing on December 24th for a Christmas service

Though cruise ship "Hanseatic" managed a landing in the evening on the 24th to hold a Christmas service at Grytviken church, it was prevented from doing its main Grytviken landing on Christmas Day by winds with gusts well in excess of 100mph.

The several ships around South Georgia mainly sought shelter in the bays of the north-eastern coast during the worst of the storms and one ship reported a gust of 150 knots (165mph) at the head of Cumberland East Bay.

The BAS ship "RRS James Clark Ross" called in to KEP on December 17th to collect passengers and cargo. It later had problems freeing itself from two fouled anchors after sheltering from the storms in Stromness Bay.

Six yachts were visiting the Island in December, four private yachts and two on charter.

The yacht "Kiwiroa" arrived at Grytviken with a broken boom on December 23rd. An hour out from the port the yacht had suffered a sudden jibe, probably as a result of malfunctioning self-steering gear, which snapped the boom in half. They have been able to make temporary repairs and are now sightseeing around the Island.

Tuesday, January 19th 2010 - 10:43 UTC

Joint scientific research cruise with Spain in Uruguay's EEZ

Spain's research vessel "Miguel Oliver" set off from Montevideo for a joint scientific cruise with Uruguayan experts with the purpose of surveying Uruguay's Exclusive Economic

Zone, EEZ. The research includes chartering the area and surveying ocean conditions in the sea bed.

Miguel Oliver one of Spain's state of the art vessels in fisheries research Miguel Oliver one of Spain's state of the art vessels in fisheries research

The cruise is forecasted to last until February 12, entirely in Uruguay's EEZ and will be working in waters ranging in depth from 200 to 2.500 metres.

Uruguay is interested in collecting data on the oceanographic conditions of the vast zone, take samples of the sea bottom and benthonic fauna plus elaborate different models of food chain by having a cross cut of the micro-fauna extracted from sedimentary columns, according to the Uruguayan authorities from Fisheries Resources Department.

"Miguel Oliver" from Spain's Environment Ministry is considered one of the most modern of its kind and is equipped with a computer node, seismic surveying, integrated labs, the latest generation of echo-sounds with a seven kilometres range. Besides it carries two sub-aquatic remote controlled robots, RoySwordfish and Videoray. The first has cameras, extensible arm, acoustic positioning system which can determine the impact of trawling and other fishing activities on the seabed. Videoray is used to assess and record marine reserves, fish resources and reefs.

The scientific cruise is done in the framework of an agreement to research South-western Atlantic waters and seabed jointly addressed by Uruguay's Fisheries Resources Department, Uruguay's Navy Hydrograph Department and the Spanish Oceanographic Institute.

Spain as one of the world's leading fishing powers and with a vast expertise has been doing research cruises with different countries along the Pacific and Atlantic coast of South America.

Miguel Oliver is a single hull multi-disciplinary vessel with a gross tonnage of 2.480. Built in 2007 at the Astilleros Montajes Cies, Vigo, Spain she's 70 meters long and 12 wide. The

vessel houses three radars, three and six laboratories echo sounders, and a sophisticated navigation and positioning system, among other equipment.

Miguel Oliver is described as "the flagship of the Spanish fleet in search of fishing grounds".

Friday, January 22nd 2010 - 16:59 UTC

Ex-para returns to Falklands to raise funds for combat stress charity

A Scottish Falklands' veteran is to recreate the paratroops' famous march to Port Stanley in a bid to raise funds for an armed forces charity. Ex-para Tony Banks, who is from Dundee and has built up a £60m care home business, wants to raise more than £10,000 for Combat Stress.

Falklands' veteran Tony Banks took part in Channel 4's "The Secret Millionaire", living undercover in Liverpool with the homeless Falklands' veteran Tony Banks took part in Channel 4's "The Secret Millionaire", living undercover in Liverpool with the homeless

The charity helps veterans traumatised by their wartime experiences, including in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr Banks will return to the Islands for the first time since the war in 1982.

The 48-year-old millionaire and fellow Falklands' veteran, Wayne Rees, will trek across the island and meet with Islanders who were caught up in the conflict.

The 50-mile venture will also mark the sacrifices of the 255 British soldiers who died.

In October last year Mr Banks, the founder and chairman of the Forfar-based Balhousie Care Group, took part in Channel 4's "The Secret Millionaire", living undercover in Liverpool where he met Lee Sanger, a veteran of the Iraq War who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

At the end of his visit, Mr Banks donated £30,000 to Combat Stress.

Mr Banks said: "Those who serve in the armed forces never forget their wartime experiences and I watched several of my best friends die in the battles we fought in the South Atlantic.

"Fortunately I've been able to move on with my life but others have not been so fortunate.

"After filming 'The Secret Millionaire' I committed to support Combat Stress and do as much as I could to help them continue making a huge, positive difference to veterans suffering from mental illnesses like PTSD."

During their time in the Falklands their journey will include travelling over the Sussex Mountains, before descending to the site of the Battle of Goose Green where the 2nd Para Regiment experienced fierce fighting with Argentine forces.

Banks added: "More British veterans have died from suicide after the Falklands Conflict than during it, which underlines the vital work which Combat Stress carries out."

Trevor Royle, a Combat Stress trustee in Scotland and military historian, said: "At a time when the gulf between the armed forces and civilian society has widened, it's a tremendous boost to see supporters like Tony Banks doing so much to raise funds for Combat Stress and to help those ex-service personnel who have suffered as a result of their experiences."

The ex-para also wants to find the owner of a bugle which came into his possession while he was serving there. He said: "When I was working as a prison handler, I had to put the Argentines on to their boats, making sure they left with nothing more than their clothes.

"One chap standing in line was holding a trumpet.

"I felt bad but I couldn't let him take this away so I held on to it. Hopefully I'll have the chance to reunite it with its rightful owner."

To donate to the campaign in aid of the veterans' charity, log on to www.justgiving.com/TonyBanks

Friday, January 22nd 2010 - 04:36 UTC

Gibraltar government and private operators at Tourism Fair in Madrid

The Gibraltar Tourist Board is currently exhibiting at the 30th edition of FITUR (Feria Internacional de Turismo) in Madrid which officially opened this week. It is being held over four days until 24 January. The exhibition is targeted at tourism industry professionals for the first three days, and then opens to the general public for the final two days, at the weekend, and is always very well supported.

The Rock receives eight million visitors and 400.000 cruise passengers annually The Rock receives eight million visitors and 400.000 cruise passengers annually

A team from the Gibraltar Tourist Board is managing the Gibraltar stand providing a platform for the representatives of Gibraltar's travel and tourism industry to meet their clients or prospective clients. Co-exhibiting with the Gibraltar Tourist Board this year are: Andalus Lineas Aereas, Bland Group of Companies, Emile Youth Hostel, Gib Sun Club, Gibraltar Taxi Association, MH Bland Group of Companies, The O'Callaghan Elliott Hotel, Parodytur/ Parody Holidays and Transcoma Lines.

Precisely Transcoma Lines, the company operating maritime links with the Algeciras port after an interruption of 40 years, will be launching Thursday the recently introduced catamaran service at the Gibraltar stand in FITUR – the international tourism trade fair takes place in Madrid.

According to the company the first month of operation has been "a total success and enjoyed the support of public institutions and private companies on both sides."

Transcoma says this is an opportunity to introduce the passenger and metropolitan service to the global travel industry.

"Gibraltar receives almost eight million visitors and 400,000 cruise passengers each year. Our aim is to stimulate cross-border tourist activity in a decisive fashion and also offer a low cost public service – below six euros — for the Campo de Gibraltar area. We will also be introducing special rates and discounts for weekly and monthly travelling," said a spokesman.

Transcoma is also considering introducing a specific service for Spanish workers on the Rock and also, in response to requests from the Gibraltar authorities, a daily facility for Moroccans transiting through the Algeciras port to Tangier.

"Legal details are now under discussion and we are hopeful this will be confirmed over the next few months," added the company. (Gibraltar Chronicle).-

Saturday, January 23rd 2010 - 15:10 UTC

Commercial air link Gibraltar/Barcelona begins end of March

Andalus Lineas Aereas will renew its service from Gibraltar to Barcelona as from the end of March, exactly six months after it pulled the plug on the route because of low passenger numbers, reports the Gibraltar Chronicle.

Anadalus Lineas Aereas cancelled the route last September because of insufficient passengers Anadalus Lineas Aereas cancelled the route last September because of insufficient passengers

Although the airline has not made an official statement, a report in El Faro newspaper cited a company source saying flights would be daily except Saturdays.

The flights will operate at midday, in between the service to and from Madrid. The flights are already available for purchase on the company's website.

Ándalus cancelled the Barcelona route last September 28 and complained at the time that it had not received enough support from authorities in Gibraltar.

Following a public clash, government officials and the company's managers resolved their differences and agreed to push ahead with joint initiatives to market the airline's services from the Rock.

Monday, January 25th 2010 - 14:49 UTC

Chile and Argentina consolidate bilateral integration and cooperation

Chile announced that the "Integration and Cooperation" agreement with Argentina, which was stamped by Presidents Cristina Kirchner and Michelle Bachelet last October 30, became effective as of Friday January 22nd.

Presidents Bachelet and Cristina Kirchner signed the agreement last October Presidents Bachelet and Cristina Kirchner signed the agreement last October

The Chilean Foreign Affairs ministry release said that the document subscribed by the two presidents took place at the municipality of Maipú, "a historic and symbolic" location where the Liberators of the two countries, Bernardo O'Higgins and Jose de San Martín, sealed with a fraternal embrace, the independence of Chile".

"This instrument, complementary of the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1984" marks and arranges the many mechanisms and instances that make up the current bilateral relation network and project it to the future, "and becomes the reference framework that will rule bilateral relations during the coming decades", adds the release.

"The signing of the treaty ratifies the will of both countries to make relations more dynamic and enrich integration between both countries, which is one of the most solid and founded in the region".

The new accord contemplates strengthening and expanding bilateral relations in a wide range of issues, from trade to culture, from defence to international affairs.

The document basically replaces the Peace and Friendship treaty of 1984, which was the result of years of negotiations, and Vatican mediation, to deactivate a very serious conflict between Argentina and Chile as a consequence of the dispute over the Beagle Channel, in the extreme south of the continent.

The treaty also contemplates among other things, the creation of a task group to draft a free circulation system to facilitate the movement of people from both countries.

Regarding communications, the integrated control systems in the five frontier passes: Huemules, San Sebastián, Pehuenche, Dorotea and Austral Integration Austral, will be expanded to make the circulation of people and goods more agile.

Monday, January 25th 2010 - 14:35 UTC

Brazil hands to Argentina Colonel accused of human rights abuses

Brazil has extradited to Argentina a retired Uruguayan army colonel to face charges of human rights abuses dating back to military rule in the Southern cone countries during the 1970s.

The state-run news agency Agencia Brasil said Colonel Manuel Juan Cordero Piacentini was handed over to Argentine authorities Saturday.

Cordero is accused of taking part in the notorious Operation Condor. This was the plan supported by several South American military rulers to liquidate opponents.

The Uruguayan officer, who was arrested in Brazil two years ago, faces charges of kidnapping and murder in Argentina.

Cordero, who served as an intelligence officer in the Uruguayan army, was allegedly involved in the disappearance of an Argentine citizen.

His extradition was ordered on Tuesday but had been postponed as his lawyers argued his health was so poor he should remain in hospital.

However, following medical examinations, Cordero was driven by ambulance to the Brazilian border where he was handed over to the Argentine police.

He had unsuccessfully attempted to avoid extradition by insisting he was protected under a Brazilian law that grants amnesty to Brazilian soldiers who were acting under that country's military government.

Such an amnesty does not exist in Argentina and only partially in Uruguay.

Cordero was arrested in February in Brazil next to the border with Uruguay, where he had been living since 2004.

In a Montevideo weekly publication Cordero admitted that torture was sometimes necessary and had been practiced by Uruguayan forces under the military regime.

A few weeks later he left for Brazil since Uruguayan authorities wanted to question him on the interview's statements.

Meanwhile a German court in Nuremberg has issued an arrest warrant for Argentina's former de-facto president Jorge Videla for helping to cover up the death of a German citizen in 1978, at the height of the "Dirty War".

The Bayern prosecutor reopened the case in December and requested an order of arrest for Videla after the remains of Rolf Stawowiok were identified through genetic testing in early 2009.

The local Nuremberg court had closed the case in 2008 citing a lack of physical evidence as well as an Argentine court ruling declining to extradite Videla for the deaths of another two German citizens.

Stawowiok's remains were exhumed in 2004 and were found to have evidence of torture and bullets. Argentine authorities have said that Videla will remain in prison until he has served his prior sentence.

Videla has been in prison since 2008 while an investigation is underway for his role in the abduction of children born to political prisoners and forced disappearance victims during Argentina's Dirty War.

He is also under investigation for the deaths of 31 political prisoners. A court revoked the house arrest conditions he had been granted in 1998 when the investigation began. Previously, he had served five years from a life sentence for human rights violations committed during his term in power, until in 1990 he was pardoned by then-president Carlos Menem.

In 2006, a federal judge ruled that the presidential pardon was unconstitutional. Italy has also requested Videla's extradition to prosecute him for the deaths and forced disappearances of Italian citizens during the Dirty War.

In that period Videla was head of the military junta (1976-1981), and an estimated 30,000 civilians were killed or disappeared according to human rights groups' numbers. For Argentine authorities the number is close to 10.000.

Tuesday, January 26th 2010 - 16:16 UTC

Argentina rejects UK protest and territorial pretensions over the Falklands

Argentina officially rejected Monday the United Kingdom's protest against a bill which includes as Argentine territory the Falklands/Malvinas islands and other insular territories

in the South Atlantic, according to a release in Buenos Aires from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Jorge Taiana currently in China, but always alert to Malvinas issues

Argentina "rejects the British protest in all its terms, denies any British territorial pretension over the austral archipelagos and Antarctica, and reaffirms the legitimate sovereign rights of the Argentine Republic over the Malvinas, South Georgia, South Sandwich islands and adjoining maritime spaces, and over all of Argentine Antarctica", reads the official communiqué.

The document is in response to the Foreign Office "verbal note" delivered to the Argentine chargé d'affairs in London.

The legislation at the heart of the controversy is Bill 26.552, sanctioned and promulgated last December by the Argentine Executive which defines territories belonging to the province of Tierra del Fuego, Antarctica and South Atlantic Islands, and as in the "old national territory" includes the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich islands and Argentine Antarctica, some of which are in dispute with Great Britain..

The document was officially presented to Britain's Chargé d'affairs at the Buenos Aires embassy.

Argentina points out that Bill 26.552 is the result of the joint effort of several Congressional committees and the corresponding desks of the Foreign Affairs ministry.

Argentina affirms Britain occupied the Falklands/Malvinas in 1833, and has since been claiming the Islands including by force in 1982 when a British Task force was sent to expel the Argentine invasion after 74 days occupation.

Britain rejected the new ruling, saying it has "no doubt" about its own sovereignty over the region.

The UK Foreign Office Minister Chris Bryant said in a written statement to Parliament early January that: "the UK firmly rejects the enactment and promulgation, on December 9, of Argentine Law 26.552".

Since January 2009 the Falklands have a new constitution which besides granting greater autonomy in internal affairs, in its first chapter enshrines the people of the Falklands right to self-determination.

Wednesday, January 27th 2010 - 04:13 UTC

Falkland Islands Tourist Board Facebook page reaches 1,600 fans

The official Facebook page for the Falkland Islands has attracted over 1,600 fans in its first five months.

Jake Downing, General Manager of the Falkland Islands Tourist Board. Jake Downing, General Manager of the Falkland Islands Tourist Board.

The page was launched in September 2009 by the Falkland Islands Tourist Board, and aims to increase awareness of the Falklands as a holiday destination by getting people to talk about their love for the islands.

"Our target was to attract 500 members in our first 6 months, so we are absolutely delighted with the results" said Jake Downing, General Manager of the Falkland Islands Tourist Board.

Fifteen percent of the fans are based in the Falkland Islands and the remaining 85% are from 19 other countries around the world, the most common locations being the UK and the USA.

The page has generated some enthusiastic discussions and debates such as which is the islands' best pub and who the most memorable characters are. It also serves as a place

where prospective visitors can request advice and information, as well as being a place for people to share their photos and their memories about the islands.

"It's wonderful to see so many people talking about the Falklands in such a positive and proud way. As word of mouth and personal recommendations are so important for people choosing their holiday destinations, you couldn't really ask for more", said Mr Downing. "The fans are essentially becoming 'walking brochures' for us".

One of the tourist board's objectives was to showcase the Falkland Islands to an audience from around the world by allowing fans to publish their photos. To date this has certainly been one of the page's great achievements, with an impressive level of photo sharing by the fans.

"The opportunities we have for marketing the Falkland Islands are changing fast and in today's economic climate it is vital that we continue to look at new and exciting ways to promote the islands," said Mr Downing. "The Facebook page has been a great success because it has given us the chance to encourage word-of-mouth promotion of the Falkland Islands at very little cost."

Thursday, January 28th 2010 - 05:32 UTC

Air Seychelles begins operating Brize Norton-Falklands Air Bridge

Seychelles President James Michel has welcomed the announcement by Air Seychelles that it has begun operations to the Falkland Islands as part of a contract with the UK Ministry of Defense.

The company has a long experience with Boeing 767s and flying to island locations The company has a long experience with Boeing 767s and flying to island locations

In a statement, President Michel noted that "The fact that Air Seychelles has won the contract for these services is a mark of the high standing of our national airline and the professionalism and dedication of its staff".

He also noted that in the increasingly competitive international airline market, it is encouraging that Air Seychelles is also seeking to adopt innovative business practices beyond its core business: "Innovation is key to Seychelles being ready for the future, and we congratulate Air Seychelles for taking the lead in this way".

Air Seychelles successfully bid for the contract after the UK Ministry of Defense had to seek a replacement for the previous operator who had to stop flying due to bankruptcy. Several other prestigious airlines bid for the contract, but Air Seychelles was successful due to its experience with Boeing 767s and flying to island locations. The length of the contract will be finalized in due course, but it is expected that the agreement will significantly improve revenue flows and therefore the airlines perspectives for 2010.

A press release from Air Seychelles said that one of the company's B767-300ER on Sunday 24 January 2010 commenced the South Atlantic Airbridge on behalf of the UK Ministry of Defense from RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire, England to Ascension Islands and then onto the Falkland Islands.

Both Ascension Islands (Wide Awake Airfield) and RAF Mount Pleasant in the Falklands are isolated airfields. Given that Mahe is also considered an isolated airfield with no nearby suitable alternate aerodromes the operational experience of Seychelles flag carrier has played heavily in the airlines favor in the selection process.

Likewise being one of the world's most experienced B767 operators with over 20 years extended range operations and having a meaningful fleet of aircraft, Air Seychelles was considered the best choice.

To enable this operation to be effectively conducted one of the airline's five B767's, a B767-300ER will be permanently based in the UK to carry out the twice weekly service to Ascension and onwards to the Falklands. Crews have been positioned in Ascension and the UK concludes Air Seychelles release. (APO).

Thursday, January 28th 2010 - 05:56 UTC

Argentine hoki fishery signs up for MSC certification

The hoki (*Macrurus novaezelandiae magellanicus*) trawl fishery operating in the Argentine Economic Exclusive Zone and adjacent waters entered full assessment to be considered for Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification. It is the second South American fishery to officially seek MSC certification of sustainability.

Hoki has become a leading fisheries export product for Argentina Hoki has become a leading fisheries export product for Argentina

Argentina's Under Secretariat of Fisheries and Aquaculture and the Federal Fisheries Council, CFP, oversee the fishery. The client group applying for MSC certification consists of five Argentine fishing companies which are responsible for more than 50% of the total Argentine hoki annual catch. These are Pespasa-pesantar, Estremar, San Arawa, Yuken and Grupo Valastro.

Primary products produced from Argentine hoki are frozen fish, filet and surimi. These are mostly exported to Japan, France, Germany, England and Spain.

Daniel Rivera, the representative of the client group, said: "We believe this is the right moment. The sustainable fishing conditions present a clear opportunity to achieve the final evaluation and certification of the hoki fishery, as well as support our commitment to continue expanding to other species."

MSC Americas Regional Director Kerry Coughlin commented: "We are pleased to welcome a second Argentine fishery into the assessment process for certification to the MSC standard. We are encouraged by the participation of South American fisheries like Argentine hoki that are expanding the MSC program into new regions of the world, paving the way for more fisheries in the region to similarly demonstrate their commitment with sustainable fishing."

Organización Internacional Agropecuaria (OIA) has been contracted by the fishery client group to conduct the independent, third-party assessment, which is expected to take 12 months to complete. OIA will convene a team of scientific experts to assess the fishery

against the three core principles of the MSC's standard for sustainable and well managed fisheries: sustainability of fish stock, its impact on the environment and the management system in place. (FIS/MP).-

Thursday, January 28th 2010 - 05:12 UTC

Falklands receives Queen's baton rally 2010 Delhi in mid February

On Monday 15th February, the Queen's Baton 2010 Delhi will arrive in the Falkland Islands from Ascension Island. The baton is currently in Botswana and will arrive via Tristan da Cunha and St Helena the 29th of its 71 Commonwealth destinations.

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The Queen's Baton Relay is the traditional curtain raiser to the Commonwealth Games and has been an inclusion in the programme since Cardiff in 1958, though this is only the second time it has visited all 71 Commonwealth nations.

The Queen's Baton Relay 2010 Delhi commenced from Buckingham Palace on Thursday 29 October 2009, with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II entrusting it to Abhinav Bindra, Indian Air Rifle Champion – the first of many thousands of Batonbearers to carry the baton around the globe.

Governor of the Falkland Islands, Alan Huckle and Member of the Legislative Assembly, Jan Cheek said "We are delighted that The Falkland Islands has been granted the honour of hosting the Queen's Baton 2010 Delhi, bringing with it the opportunity to highlight and promote the Falklands with substantial media attention"

The Queen's Baton will traverse the length and breadth of the Commonwealth covering 190,000 kilometres in 340 days. Whilst spreading the message of goodwill on its way to the "Friendly Games", the baton will spend 240 days travelling throughout Europe, Africa,

the Americas, the Caribbean, Oceania and Asia and the last 100 days on a national tour of India.

The Relay will conclude in Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium during the Opening Ceremony of the XIX Commonwealth Games on 3 October 2010. During the ceremony, the final Baton-bearer will hand the baton back to Her Majesty and her message will be read out, officially opening the Games.

The FIOGA Baton Relay Organiser, Steve Dent said "Planning is already well under way to celebrate the arrival of the Queen's Baton 2010 Delhi in the Falklands. We look forward to seeing as many people as possible join in the festivities and turn out to cheer on the relay's Batonbearers."

"A special welcome ceremony is planned on Tuesday 16th February at 6.00 pm to officially mark the arrival of the baton in The Falkland Islands, as the baton makes its way along the Government House drive, all are welcome to come along and cheer the Baton and its baton bearers."

This will be preceded by a relay through the streets of Stanley involving past and present athletes and community groups. The baton will also visit Volunteer Point, local schools and sporting facilities, the Mount Pleasant Complex, Goose Green, The North Camp and the West Falklands including an evening reception at Fox Bay.

FIOGA Chairman Mike Summers said "FIOGA hope that as many people and community and sporting groups as possible can become involved in the relay. The Relay route within Stanley is very short and there are lots of opportunities for groups, individuals, the young to the not so young".

Friday, January 29th 2010 - 03:05 UTC

Cambio? The Obama Administration in Latin America: A Disappointing Year in Perspective

In a memorandum written as Barack Obama assumed office in January 2009 COHA's Research Fellows Guy Hursthouse and Tomás Ayuso considered widespread Latin American expectations of a dramatic shift in approach from Washington under the new president, and outlined an agenda for change aimed at achieving those hopes as the result of a bold new direction for U.S. relations with the region. A year later, they offer their evaluation of developments to date and conclude that a clear and meaningful program of change has failed to materialize under Obama, his Secretary of State, and the leadership team to which he has looked for drafting his regional agendas. At best, their fractured approach to Latin American issues has delivered mixed results. Looking ahead, the authors ask, despite the continued backing Obama continues to enjoy from a resilient public that still refuses give up on him, can we expect the president's second year in office to deliver that coherent mixture of realism and idealism which has up to now proved elusive?

Barack Obama assumed the presidency twelve months ago amidst "strained hemispheric relations." Productive cooperation on a variety of shared regional concerns had been all but ignored by a Bush administration completely distracted by the Iraqi War and in favor of an approach characterized by confrontation, diplomatic bullying, and the continued pursuit of policies detrimental to the interests of both Latin America and the United States. Apparently recognizing this, Obama brought with him a promise to begin a "new chapter in the story of the Americas," in which the U.S. leader would follow an inclusive and relevant approach to regional diplomacy, coupled with a pledge to begin "matching rhetoric with deeds."

Writing as Obama took up office COHA called on the new administration to make good on these foundations and implement a program of change which would not only reverse eight years of failed initiatives under Bush, but also manage to address a series of new political and economic tasks that would have a positive impact on the hemisphere. However, as the presidential campaign wore on, Obama's own position on a number of key issues became disturbingly contradictory. He recognized "nearly 50 years of failure" on Cuba, while pledging to continue "holding back ... relaxation of the trade embargo" until certain preconditions were met. He supported continued provision of U.S. military aid under Plan Colombia despite its failed militarization of the War on Drugs, while ostensibly refusing to

back Bush's free trade agreement with Colombia because of the violent effects of that militarization. He also called for diplomatic engagement with Venezuela, only to sharply criticize its President, Hugo Chávez, for "[interrupting] progress in the region."

Voicing additional concern with Obama's appointment of a host of Bush and Clinton-era officials to key administration posts, COHA expressed doubt that the president's desire to bring change would match the region's hope for a break from past Cold War-inspired policies. Twelve months later, placing the unforeseen headache of the Honduran coup alongside the list of policy matters that were isolated for analysis last year, the authors will assess whether their original predictions were accurate, or whether Obama has in fact succeeded in delivering on his "new chapter."

The Honduran Crisis: Obama's New Multilateralism Tested

Honduran President Manuel Zelaya was ousted from power by the country's armed forces by order of the Honduran Supreme Court on June 28, 2009, in what Roberto Micheletti, who as acting President of the National Congress temporarily assumed the presidency, claimed was a move designed to preserve the country's democracy. The symptoms of Zelaya's approaching ejection had been noticeable for months, as the Honduran president clashed relentlessly with the other branches of government over his alleged illegal ambitions. This scuffling went unperceived by the Obama Administration and other foreign actors, even though just three weeks prior to the culmination of the country's institutional volatility, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was in San Pedro Sula for an OAS meeting.

Obama joined the rest of the world in condemning Zelaya's ousting as an illegal coup, but the administration's line on Honduras since then has been rather muddled. On the one hand it has remained consistent: no amount of semantic athleticism will change the fact that it was a coup, and that Zelaya remains the democratically elected leader of Honduras until his term ends tomorrow, on January 27, 2010. However, instead of recalcitrantly breaking off all ties with Honduras, like Venezuela and Argentina did, or blocking trade in the manner of Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, the U.S. afforded itself the ability to be flexible in its approach by viewing the coup as a longer event than simply a single flashpoint.

While countries usually critical of U.S. interventionism urged for more pressure from Washington, and a pitch that did not yaw, Obama was eager to avoid parallels with deeply unpopular past misadventures, especially since a few months prior to the coup he had declared the era of U.S. unilateralism in Latin America to be over. Perhaps hoping for the crisis to work itself out without any U.S. intrusion, Washington looked towards the highly pliable and unusually unrealistic Costa Rican President Oscar Arias to mediate and find a Central American solution to a Central American problem. However, the already dubious San Jose Accord, which sought to reinstate a powerless version of Zelaya and end the crisis in a peaceful manner, was promptly rejected by both Zelaya and Micheletti. Consequently, the U.S., the only country with any real leverage over Honduras, began to episodically freeze aid and suspend most visas for members of Micheletti's cabinet, while continuing to maintain its insistence on the reinstatement of Zelaya, until the deposed president surreptitiously reentered the country in September, and holed up in the Brazilian embassy, perhaps happy to call Washington's bluff.

The impasse caused by the obstinate personalities of both Zelaya and Micheletti, a Janus-minded OAS, and an unfocused Washington, dragged on until a few weeks before the November 29 elections, when the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Tom Shannon was sent to the country to broker an agreement. Nary a day after landing in Tegucigalpa, it was ultimately a diplomat from Washington and not San Jose or Brasilia who managed to force a deal out of Micheletti. The highly controversial elections – boycotted by the usual contingent of observers but declared by the U.S. to be fair and transparent – resulted in Porfirio Lobo Sosa's election.

The administration's ambivalence towards Micheletti and his coup regime, and its ultimate recognition of the elections, has caused many to see Obama as an echo of past imperial presidencies. However, not all the blame can be placed on the U.S.; Arias, Shannon and OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza all aired their concern during the crisis about a lack of political will to move forward. Micheletti's defiant comments even against the U.S. and Costa Rica, as well as against Venezuela made it easy to see who was culpable in that respect. Micheletti's obstinacy and caudillo-style leadership were hardly conducive to any productive diplomacy or conciliation of Zelaya; indeed, he ultimately reneged on even the agreement he signed with Shannon.

It is apparent that few outside of Honduras saw the coup coming, and this is certainly true of the Obama Administration. Nevertheless, its handling of the crisis was more considered than could be expected from past US governments. However, Obama's supposed embrace of partnership and cooperation in Latin America hit a bottleneck with the crisis presented by his wavering over Honduras; he will need to work harder over time to convince the region of his dedication to this policy, and demonstrate that he possesses principles and the wisdom to use them.

Colombia: Status Quo Prevails in Trade and Defense Policy

The other significant development in U.S.-Latin American relations during 2009 merely increased regional suspicion of the new administration in Washington. Dictated by the framework of the War on Terror, Washington's approach to Colombia under President Bush was simple: prioritize affording it the military assistance deemed necessary to fight the guerrilla insurgency and the problems related to narcotics production, and couple this with the pursuit of a free trade agreement. In theory this would lead to the bolstering of a strategic geopolitical foothold for the U.S. in an otherwise hostile South America. Despite bringing a more tolerant and relaxed rhetoric and attitude to the White House, Obama, much to his discredit, has appropriated wholesale this myopic and simplified approach in his own policy towards Colombia, which now bears little resemblance to the position he held as a principled senator.

In October, Obama boosted a military approach towards drug interdiction which has largely failed to quell overall violence or lower drug production, and has seen millions displaced, by signing a new deal on the U.S. use of Colombian air bases, and, in doing so, angered virtually every South American government.

Regional alarm was justified by the secrecy of the bilateral negotiations that produced the agreement, along with U.S. Air Force comments – undermining the official line that the bases will be used solely for internal operations – that the deal “provides a unique opportunity for full spectrum operations in a critical sub-region of our hemisphere where security and stability is under constant threat from narcotics-funded insurgencies, anti-US governments, endemic poverty and recurring natural disasters.” It is additionally worth

noting that the U.S. military designated the principal base in question, Palanquero, as off-limits for aid after 17 civilians were killed in a 1998 bombing carried out by troops stationed there, and only resumed such assistance in April 2008.

Moreover, having opposed Bush's U.S.-Colombian Free Trade Agreement (FTA) during his campaign when he expressed concerns about Colombia's record on anti-labor union violence, as president, Obama has since reversed his position. "I commended President Uribe on the progress that has been made on human rights in Colombia and dealing with the killings of labor leaders there," he said after meeting the Colombian leader at the White House in June. Subsequently, in September, the Obama administration okayed the State Department's annual certification of Colombia on human rights in order to facilitate continued military assistance.

As COHA reported in June, the administration has seemingly turned a blind eye to the human rights situation in Colombia in order to justify its policies. After reaching a low under Uribe in 2007, killings of trade unionists rose by 25% in 2008, to 49. Colombia's connected problem of impunity means that convictions in cases of anti-union attacks are virtually unheard of there. The Justice and Peace process continues under siege in the country, with right-wing paramilitary groups resurgent following Uribe's ineffective demilitarization program. The country's security service (DAS) was implicated last February in an illegal wiretapping scandal which involved some key pro-government politicians, and the military stands accused of "False Positives" practices, whereby soldiers murdered innocent civilians in order to meet targets for killing guerrilla insurgents.

U.S. and Colombian relations with Hugo Chávez's Venezuela were those most restively affected by the base agreement, which witnessed Chávez mobilizing his armed forces along the Colombian border and introducing a still-existing trade embargo. Rhetoric between Washington and Caracas has retained its vacillating nature, with Secretary of State Clinton saying before relations soured in the wake of the air base deal, "The prior administration tried to isolate [hostile governments], tried to support opposition to them, tried to ... turn them into international pariahs. It didn't work." On January 17, 2010, a week after his administration apparently changed its tone by meeting with U.S. embassy

officials to discuss Venezuelan spying claims, Chávez said, "it's possible that there could be an easing of tensions."

The "hostile rhetorical shots" COHA warned the Obama Administration to stop firing at Chávez and his allies last January may have diminished, but they have been succeeded by equally worrisome actions. By continuing to pursue a free trade agreement with Bogotá, and continuing to advance the largely ineffective Plan Colombia in spite of the convincing body of evidence against President Uribe's credentials as a defender of human rights, and in the face of the concerns of virtually every South American government, President Obama has seriously damaged his claims to be bringing "change" to U.S.-Latin American relations.

Guantánamo Symbolizes Disappointment Over US Policy While Cuba Reform Stalls

On January 22, 2009, two days after his inauguration, President Obama ordered the U.S. detention center at Guantánamo Bay to be closed "no later than one year from now." Writing at the time, COHA welcomed the announcement, but warned the president that this was just the first step towards realizing "change." As events transpired, Obama proved unable to deliver on even this most modest of promises, admitting on November 18 that his deadline for the prisoners' departure would not be met. It will now likely be 2011 at the earliest before the administration has secured and equipped a new facility in Illinois to house the remaining detainees.

This lamentable disappointment has left only one significant change in U.S. policy towards Cuba under the Obama Administration. The president announced in April that U.S. citizens would be granted the right of unlimited travel to the island in order to see relatives, rather than being restricted to one visit every three years as they were under Bush, while simultaneously lifting the \$300-per-quarter cap on remittances.

Common to both of these flagship Cuba policies is the fact that they simply rescind measures put in place by President Bush's executive decrees. The centerpiece policy positions – restrictions on travel for most Americans, the decades-old trade embargo, and de facto occupation of the land at Guantánamo Bay – all remain in effect, despite Obama's

laudable assertion several years ago that the embargo, having “utterly failed in the effort to overthrow Castro,” should be lifted.

Bilateral discussions about immigration last July, talks in Havana on September 17 over the reinstatement of a direct postal service, and recent cooperation over the use of Cuban airspace for aid delivery in the wake of the January 12 Haitian earthquake, are all to be viewed as constructive steps. However, progress has slowed as a result of various recent developments, including the December 4 arrest of a U.S. contractor in Havana on espionage charges, and Washington placing Cuba on a list of states deemed by it to pose a “security risk” in the aftermath of the foiled Christmas Day airline bombing.

Were he seriously inclined to pursue “change” in this country’s relations with Cuba, Obama could do worse than begin by backing the efforts of the House Democrats who have considerable backing for a bill which would end the ban on travel to Cuba for all U.S. citizens, before addressing the formidable barrier to change posed by the Helms-Burton Act. However, it would appear that the president’s appetite for change has vanished. Obama continues to demand preconditions from Cuba on human rights issues – notably some action regarding its political prisoners – as a preliminary step toward any further meaningful relaxation of U.S. sanctions.

The case of Cuba provides an excellent illustration of the nature of Obama’s approach towards wider Latin American ties with this country. Rhetoric has somewhat softened, and diplomacy has become more accommodating and less paranoid. At the same time, though, significant policy change has not been forthcoming. This will likely continue to be the case for as long as the Obama White House ignores history and maintains the failed approach of enforcing preconditions for lifting its trade embargo which will continue to be refused by Havana.

Drug War: US Shirks, Mexico Bleeds

Drug-related violence in Mexico reached new peaks during 2009, with a staggering 7,800 homicides reported there, bringing to more than 16,000 the number of deaths that have been caused since President Felipe Calderon’s anti-trafficking offensive began in 2007. However, one of the unforeseen consequences of Mexico’s attempts to purge the major

cartels and criminal gangs from its territory has been an increase in common crime across Central America. Over the last year, most notably in Honduras and Guatemala, domestically-organized crime syndicates serving as proxies for Mexican cartels have openly targeted their home governments and their security forces.

The Honduran head of anti-drug trafficking operations, General Julian Aristides Gonzalez, was gunned down in Tegucigalpa in December after seizing several large compounds thought to be owned by the Sinaloa cartel. During the past year, Honduras has also earned the dubious distinction of having one of the highest murder rates in the world, at 53 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. Owing to its proximity to Mexico and the attraction offered to gangs of its environment of impunity and corruption, Guatemala has not fared much better. Most troubling has been the persistent intimidation carried out by the Zetas, the erstwhile armed wing of the Gulf Cartel, which is now a criminal enterprise in its own right. In March, its members threatened President Colom's life after he denounced their infiltration of the Guatemalan government and security apparatus.

One of the most significant stories at the time of Obama's inauguration, the drug war in Mexico and Central America has since been relegated to the back burner. Aid assigned to Mexico City under the terms of the Merida Initiative, the controversial U.S.-sponsored security pact intended to stem the influence of drug trafficking organizations in Mexico and Central America, has yet to materialize; to date, only 3 percent of the allotted \$1.4 billion has been released.

Secretary of State Clinton has argued that complications delaying the disbursement of funds are costing lives in the region. However, as Plan Colombia already has proved, the militarization of what essentially should be a domestic US health issue is now being viewed as a highly ineffective approach. Indeed, Calderon's military offensive has failed to end the cycle of violence which has gripped his country since 2007. High profile victories by the state against the cartels, such as the killing of Arturo Beltrán Leyva, and the arrests of Teodoro Garcia and Carlos Beltrán Leyva, have continued to be routinely followed by acts of even more violent reprisal and intimidation, and violent struggles are reflected in the brutal power vacuums they leave. Despite the optimistic claims of the U.S. and Mexican

governments, the Washington-backed drug war in Mexico is in no way reducing the strength, capability or brazenness of drug trade organizations.

Early in 2009, former Presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil, Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico and Cesar Gaviria of Colombia issued a plea to President Obama urging him to reconsider the present direction of the failing U.S.-led "drug war." States across the United States are legalizing medicinal marijuana, a considerable leap considering the draconian laws that existed over the past three decades, but stopping far short of decriminalizing or even legalizing general consumption. But while the various movements towards liberalizing drug consumption policies have also gained momentum in Mexico, Argentina and even Colombia, as long as the Obama Administration ignores such pleas and continues to target the vast majority of its resources at stemming the supply from abroad, the northbound traffic of narcotics will persist.

The Indomitable Brazil

Much like the rest of Latin America's engagement with Washington during 2009, the story of Brazil's rapport with the U.S., at the dawn of Barack Obama and coinciding with the twilight of Lula da Silva, has taken place in two acts, with the coup in Honduras representing the pivotal event. Prior to June 28, the leaders built on former President Bush's efforts to establish a strong, if shallow relationship between Brasilia and Washington. However, the institutional explosion witnessed in Honduras was the first in a series of notable ruptures between the governments, culminating with Lula referring to Obama as a "disappointment." Nevertheless, Lula is in the last year of his final term, and as sure as Brazil's global profile will continue to rise after he steps down, the Obama Administration's multipolar worldview must include the South American giant.

Brazil's intentions to become, if it is not already, a truly non-aligned superpower which can wield great influence on climate change negotiations, vie for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, seek to protect democracy in its sphere of influence and inject itself into the Middle East peace process, have been made perfectly clear in 2009. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's controversial state visit in November rubbed Washington the wrong way, but it is this very relationship of mutual respect, despite some divergent interests, that President Obama should seek out with Brazil. Natural allies who in fact

share many common concerns, the U.S. and Brazil have developed what could be the beginnings of a resilient rapport that can be expected to weather occasional differences and disagreements.

After a few tense months of public verbal sparring (and sometimes worse) regarding the Honduran crisis, the Colombian base controversy and the Ahmadinejad visit, President Obama has proposed to President Lula a joint U.S.-Canadian-Brazilian task force to provide aid, relief, security and rebuilding efforts in the wake of the recent devastation in Haiti. Brazil's existing peacekeeping enclave in that nation combined with about 20,000 US troops who will be deployed to the island will certainly prove invaluable. Despite their sporadic differences, the natural partnership between both countries ought to be further encouraged by their respective governments and should remain a high priority for Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Arturo Valenzuela and Obama's agenda for the region.

Assembling a Staff

Regarding personnel, the absence of key officials proved the biggest impediment to sound regional policy over the past twelve months, as Republican Senator Jim DeMint, unhappy with Obama's Honduras policy, blocked the confirmation of Valenzuela until November. The Georgetown professor eventually joined Obama's other Latin America appointees; Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Frank Mora, and Dan Restrepo, the director of Western Hemisphere affairs at the National Security Council. Valenzuela aside, some of the remaining figures are an unknown quantity, but taken as a team, their record up to now has been far from compelling.

Once confirmed, COHA celebrated Valenzuela's considerable experience of Latin American affairs, and his welcome pragmatic style that appears to fit Obama's measured diplomatic approach to the region. Nevertheless, Valenzuela, one of the authors of Plan Colombia under President Clinton, hardly seems the person to offer an alternative approach to that, and other failed policies of the Clinton and Bush administrations. Moreover, during his first official visit to the region in December, Valenzuela reportedly riled the Argentine government with comments about the country's unpaid debts, a concern of vulture funds, but few others. According to El País, Valenzuela spent the majority of his time meeting

opposition leaders, before talking to journalists about North American companies' "worry" over the country's "legal insecurity."

In keeping with the administration's overall approach, Secretary of State Clinton's tone has fluctuated between the status quo hard line and one of accommodating tolerance. Despite making comments that suggest an improvement in relations between the U.S. and its critics in the region, she subsequently has proffered advice – for example, that doing business with Iran is "a really bad idea" – which will have been wholly unwelcome.

Over the past year, Trade Representative Ron Kirk has buttressed his free trade credentials, unsurprisingly praising the Uribe government's "remarkable progress" on anti-union violence. Moreover, the administration has lost its valuable White House counsel Greg Craig, lauded by COHA last year as an inspired appointment, after recriminations over the lack of progress on Guantánamo, and the special envoy for the region Obama promised to appoint during his campaign has failed to materialize.

In spite of its apparent unwillingness to make bold policy changes, and its readiness to continue fractured relations with many of the region's governments inherited from Bush, the new administration appears to still retain a considerable measure of goodwill among the Latin American public. A poll conducted by Gallup between July and September found that 51 and 61 percent of respondents approved of the U.S. leadership and president's performances respectively. Moreover, 71 percent of respondents to the annual Latinobarómetro poll were happy with Obama.

By predominantly appointing Clinton administration veterans, Obama has ensured that his administration's approach to Latin America will, in policy terms, adhere almost entirely to an inherited status quo. While a full compliment of Obama appointees may well bring more coherence, Valenzuela's ill-timed Argentine gaffe hardly suggests a promising future, and Obama's public support will likely subside as disillusionment takes hold over a program that posits few surprises.

Slow Diplomatic Change Meets Policy Intransigence

The indications that Barack Obama's campaign trail contradictions and the administration appointments made both before and after his inauguration concerning the likely direction of his Western Hemisphere policy, were sufficient to instill concern among well informed policy groups and academic circles at the time, and those worries will not have subsided. Over the past twelve months, a pattern has emerged whereby the Obama Administration's rhetoric on U.S.-Latin American relations has been belied by the limited actions the president has to date been interested in taking.

While it ultimately failed to realize the aim of a multilateral solution to the crisis in Honduras, and in doing so invoked widespread criticism of its approach towards hemispheric affairs, the Obama Administration at least showed a willingness to sidestep unilateralism, only forced into single-handedly brokering a deal as a last resort. Since then, the administration's dealings with Brazil at least have proved that a good working relationship with Washington no longer has to be predicated on slavish adherence to the White House's world view. Under Bush, President Lula's recent engagement with Iran would almost certainly have seen Brasilia shunned, but Obama's subsequent cooperation with the Brazilian leader has provided evidence of change and maturity in that respect. In a similar vein, the Obama Administration has succeeded in toning down much of the belligerent rhetoric aimed at Hugo Chávez under Bush.

Nevertheless, when one looks at the administration's concrete policy actions to date, it is clear that the status quo continues to prevail. Shortly after Obama called for "a new era of engagement" in a speech at the UN in September, Hugo Chávez remarked astutely, "Sometimes one gets the sensation that there are two Obamas. One, who gave the speech, is good. The other makes decisions that are contradictory to his speech." Indeed, rhetoric and diplomacy are only one side of the coin.

It is telling that Obama's most significant policy measure up to now has been to sign a highly controversial military agreement with Colombia, signaling an intention to continue pursuing the same militarized approach to the War on Drugs which failed to yield significant results in reducing coca cultivation under Clinton or Bush. Higher up on the distribution chain, the Mexican anti-drug offensive is entering its third year with no end in sight. The Merida Initiative, which, most likely, will not quell the violence, has yet to take

off. Obama and members of his cabinet have begun to draw down their War on Drugs rhetoric, while simultaneously challenging the U.S.- supported structures that end up underpinning the Mexican cartels. These are but small steps in the right direction towards finally shelving the War for good, but the bottom line remains that until the U.S. addresses its own addiction problems, peace will not emerge in any of the countries caught in the corridors of drug trafficking.

In the meantime, the continued militarization of the drug war, coupled with an about-turn in favor of the U.S.-Colombian FTA, demonstrates that strategic geopolitical concerns remain at the forefront of Washington's collective thinking, to the detriment of the thousands of Colombian victims of human rights abuses, the millions of displaced in that country, and the thousands of dead in Central America. This represents a snub of fellow regional governments, despite the administration's rhetoric of diplomacy and concern.

The status quo approach to Cuba also has persisted under Obama, where despite reversing some of Bush's more damaging exercises, he has failed to push further, insisting on reciprocal action from Havana, an approach which has failed U.S. policy makers for almost 50 years.

Looking ahead, Obama is beginning his second year as president with a new hemispheric issue to contend with. The earthquake which devastated Haiti on January 12 drew swift pledges of financial aid and troops from Washington, but at the time of writing, recriminations are flying regarding the chaotic nature of the relief efforts. While it is too soon to judge the Obama Administration on its approach, Haiti will prove a good test of Washington's willingness to address seriously the consequences of another failed U.S. foreign policy arena and will undoubtedly inform an assessment of its regional policy six or twelve months from now.

Currently, the greatest hope for change comes not from the White House but from the House of Representatives, where Democrats have succeeded in holding up the Colombian FTA for almost three years, and are closing in on passing significant legislation which would lift the Cuban travel ban. The officials appointed by Obama to important administration positions have now been confirmed and, while doubt should be expressed

about the degree of change they are capable of initiating, they must be given a chance before judgment is passed. Likewise, Obama seems genuine in his attempts to alter the U.S.'s worldview, and time will provide a better picture of his success in forging a comprehensive multilateral approach to diplomacy as the region deals with challenges in Haiti and new issues arise. Nevertheless, while policy continues to move in the wrong direction on a number of fronts, regional disappointment surrounding the president's first year in office is entirely justified, with the question remaining whether the White House is capable of doing more for the region than tossing feel-good rhetoric at its multiple problems.

by COHA Research Fellows Guy Hursthouse and Tomás Ayuso

Friday, January 29th 2010 - 09:08 UTC

Released from glaciers Patagonia mountains are growing taller

Mountains along the southernmost swath of South America are growing taller at a record rate, say researchers, who attribute the growth to the accelerating loss of glaciers.

Mount Fitzroy could be a metre higher in 30 years Mount Fitzroy could be a metre higher in 30 years

The new GPS-based measurements from Patagonia's southern ice field show that between 2003 and 2006 the mountains grew at a rate of 39 millimetres per year. The discovery was reported in the latest issue of the journal "Earth and Planetary Science Letters".

"Before I saw this article I would have said the highest rate (of mountain growth) was at Glacier Bay, Alaska," said Bruce Molnia, a veteran glacier researcher and geologist with the US Geological Survey. In 2005, similar measurements at Glacier Bay found the mountains there rising at a rate of 32 millimetres per year.

Such an exceptional rate of mountain growth is being tied to the powerful tectonic forces building the mountains as well as what's called "isostatic rebound" of the crust when the

heavy weight of glaciers is removed. In other words, the mountainous crust of the Earth in Patagonia is literally springing up like a hammock that's being relieved of a load.

The cause of all that ice unloading? You guessed it: the warming climate.

"In Patagonia, glaciers are retreating faster now than they have ever retreated formerly," said Erik Ivins of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and a co-author on the Patagonia article.

Ivin's role in the study was to model the rise of those mountains, based on the known ice losses in Patagonia, and make a prediction of how fast the ranges would rise. He predicted they ought to grow by about 30 millimetres per year.

"It was surprisingly higher than we predicted," Ivins told Discovery News. What's more, this is no delayed reaction. "There is an immediate response with ice loss and ground rising -- at the speed of seismic waves."

The actual measurements of the rising mountains were done by a team of researchers led by Reinhard Dietrich of Institut für Planetare Geodäsie, Technische Universität Dresden, Germany.

Dietrich has alerted mountains climbers to the fact that 30 years from now the most famous peaks of Patagonia, like Mount Fitzroy, will be one meter higher. In other words, mountain climbers will need to take a few more steps to reach the summit. (Discovery News).-

Friday, January 29th 2010 - 11:45 UTC

New species moving into Chilean waters because of climate change

"I felt a rush and a little fear when I saw it," said Chilean surf champion Diego Medina after spotting what appeared to be a shark off the beaches of La Serena (Region IV). In

reality, the creature was one of the large swordfish species that recently migrated to Chile's shores as a consequence of warming water currents.

Swordfish, not native to Chile's coasts, are beginning to make an appearance due to climate change

The swordfish is just one of several species that have migrated from afar to Chile due to global climate change. Spanish marine experts have been tracking the sudden southward migration of swordfish from tropical seas since June 2009.

This summer has seen an unusually high number of unfamiliar wildlife sightings at many of Chile's beaches. Scientists blame El Nino, the environmental phenomenon that increases sea temperatures and consequently alters the sea's ecosystems.

Due to climate changes, "cold-inclined sea animals are arriving to our shores from waters that at one time were much cooler," said marine biologist Carlos Gaymer.

There is also an alarming case of jellyfish proliferation that has affected northern, central, and parts of southern Chile, added Gaymer. Earlier this month, swarms of jellyfish in Region X forced the closure of several Osorno beaches.

Large populations of sea turtles that normally do not inhabit Chile's coastline have also been making an appearance. "It's common to see an influx new species from distant areas when their previous environment is no longer habitable because of temperature increases," warned Universidad de Antofagasta marine researcher Carlos Guerra.

The oceans' warming is also taking its toll on local marine plant life. In some areas of Region V, biologists reported an overgrowth of "luche verde" algae, which has rendered many beaches dirty and foul-smelling.

Another explanation for the seaweed's proliferation is excessive industrial activity along Chile's coast, which creates more space for the growth of invasive species, said Andres Bello University aquaculture engineer Ana Maria Mora.

By Kamille Go - Santiago Times

Saturday, January 30th 2010 - 14:31 UTC

Russia and Antarctica

A historic discovery was made on January 28, 1820. A Russian navy expedition under the command of Faddei Bellingshausen and Mikhail Lazarev sighted the last of the remaining unexplored continents - Antarctica.

Consequently, Russians were the third and last nationality, after the Spaniards who discovered America and the Dutch who found Australia, to discover an unknown continent.

Today, Antarctica is interesting because it is legally "no one's," property, i.e. no one country owns its territory and it is not divided into any zones or sectors. It is accessible to all. The only question is how much longer this status will continue.

Antarctica is humanity's last unspoiled repository. Under the ice, under the continental shelf, there are enormous mineral resources and the surrounding seas are full of bio-resources. In addition, the glaciers of Antarctica contain 90% of the world's fresh water, the shortage of which becomes all the more acute with the growth in the world's population. Therefore, Antarctica is attracting more and more attention.

The recorded history of the continent started by its not being found for a long time, and once it was found, nobody wanted to live there. The voyage of the sloops Vostok and Mirny was the first high-latitude expedition sent to the southern seas after renowned English seafarer James Cook was unsuccessful in his attempts to find the southern continent. In the expeditions of 1768-1771 and 1772-1775, Cook was able to penetrate the southern polar circle ($66^{\circ} 33' 39''S$), but he said that further navigation to the south was impossible.

The Russian expedition was charged from the very beginning with penetrating as deep as possible to the south to finally answer the question of whether or not there was a

southern continent. On January 28, the coast of Antarctica was first sighted at the coordinates 69° 21' 28" S and 2° 14' 50" W. Then the Russian ships circumnavigated Antarctica, discovering many neighboring islands and mapping parts of the continent.

Earnest interest in Antarctica grew later, in the 20th century, after a number of expeditions into the interior of the continent, during which man first set foot on the South Pole (Amundsen's expedition of 1911-1912) and mapped the surface of the continent.

In the mid-20th century, many countries established scientific research stations in Antarctica. In 1961, a treaty went into effect stipulating the demilitarization of Antarctica and its use for exclusively peaceful purposes. The treaty's signatories officially relinquished territorial claims to the continent's land.

Nevertheless, this did not mean the end of plans to develop Antarctica's natural riches. Official territorial claims were merely shelved. With the passage of time, the resources of the south seas and the Antarctic continent itself have grown more interesting to many countries and a number of experts believe that the Antarctic Treaty's years in its present form are numbered, regardless of it having been recently renewed for another 50 years.

Although Antarctica itself is a demilitarized zone, armed conflicts did arise in its vicinity. It's worth mentioning the lengthy conflict between Chile and Argentina over an island near Cape Horn, as well as the overlapping territorial claims of these two countries in Antarctica, where both of them are expanding their presence and are moving towards organizing permanent settlements.

Another thing worth mentioning is the conflict between Argentina and the U.K. over the Falkland Islands. In and of themselves, the islands are not of significant interest, but they include and imply control of vast resource-rich areas of the ocean. In addition, along with the neighbouring islands controlled by the U.K., the Falklands are the de facto gateway to the Antarctic, which explains London's tenacity in maintaining sovereignty over them and the South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, as well as territorial claims regarding the South Shetland and South Orkney Islands under the Antarctic Treaty.

In turn, Argentina also insists on its rights to these territories, which include control of considerable tracts of continental shelf and sea. At present, the conflict is frozen; however, many analysts believe that it has a reasonable chance of flaring up again in the future.

Russia, the discoverer of Antarctica, is currently one of the most widely represented countries there. At present, Russia has five polar stations and one polar base, where a wide-ranging scientific research program is carried out. There are also plans to re-open three previously closed stations.

Russia is in favour of maintaining the status quo in Antarctica.

"In the interests of all countries, this is the only stance for the Antarctic Treaty's signatories - to avoid any action that would attempt to scuttle this agreement," said Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on the subject.

At present, the countries directly bordering the Antarctic region continue to pay lip service to the agreement; however, there are activists in Chile, Argentina and New Zealand that hold that their country has lawful rights to ownership of Antarctic territories and are working towards this goal.

It is possible that the fate of Antarctic territories will depend on the coordinated stance of major powers, including Russia. If such a coordinated stance is not achieved, then the carving up of Antarctica could become a reality in the next 20 to 30 years. Under such conditions, Russia will need weighty arguments to defend the status quo of Antarctica with other countries, or, if this is not possible, ensure its participation in the development of Antarctica's riches.

It is impossible to name a specific timeline for a possible "War for the Antarctic." But conjecture is possible based on the following factors - for example, the appearance of technology allowing rapid and cost effective supply of fresh water from Antarctic glaciers to arid and tropical regions; a new increase in oil prices and growing demand for crude, which will make oil extraction on the Antarctic shelf economically viable or an increase in

demand for food because of the growing global population, which would require fishing in the south seas, etc.

For the time being, there has been no such convergence of interests. But it is ever more likely.

Accordingly, expansion of Russia's presence in Antarctica and development of its polar infrastructure is absolutely justified. These actions will provide Russia with a base on which it can rely in defending its stance on Antarctica's status.

by Ilya Kramnik

The author is a RIA Novosti military commentator. The opinions expressed in this article are the author's and do not necessarily represent those of RIA Novosti

Sunday, January 31st 2010 - 14:22 UTC

Falkland Islands: BACTEC set to fly in another 15 deminers

DESPITE the very real progress being made by BACTEC (Battle Area Clearance and Training Equipment Consultants) on the demining of Surf Bay and Sapper Hill minefields, several factors have culminated in the need to bring a further group of deminers to the Falklands.

BACTEC has been chosen to clear 4 areas of the Falkland Islands of unexploded mines. BACTEC has been chosen to clear 4 areas of the Falkland Islands of unexploded mines.

Demining Programme manager Robin Swanson said the minimum metal mines were much harder to detect than anticipated and the weather had been worse than expected.

"Both these factors have slowed working rates, he said.

"Because of the hazardous nature of the work, the Zimbabweans cannot work faster and we cannot ignore the onset of winter in the May/June period.

"For all those reasons, BACTEC intends to deploy 15 more deminers during February.

"These reinforcements will come from the Lebanon and will be accommodated in Lookout Camp," said Mr Swanson.

He added, "We hope they will be welcomed in the same good spirit as the Zimbabweans."

There are currently 37 deminers working in the two areas near Stanley.

MORE than 432 mines have been found and destroyed to date at the Surf Bay and Sapper Hill minefields which were thought to originally contain some 1,300 Argentine mines in total.

The figure rises steadily each day. BACTEC has made huge progress, said Demining Programme Manager Robin Swanson, adding that it was particularly encouraging

that both the minefield records made by the Argentine Marine Engineers in 1982 had been accurate up to this point in the clearance process.

Those who have noticed search operations adjacent to the Stanley- Darwin Road near Sapper Hill should be reassured that BACTEC are not looking for mines there.

Mr Swanson said this area was never a minefield but it was the site of a cluster munitions strike, most of which would have been cleared up in 1982.

"Operations being conducted there are searching for sub-surface unexploded sub-munitions that may still remain, and so far two BL 755s have been located under the surface and destroyed," he said. Mr Swanson thanked the community for their patience and adhering to the traffic management.

"We really appreciate the continued understanding," he said. "We would also like to acknowledge and thank those in the local community who hosted the BACTEC Zimbabweans over the Christmas period, in particular Sue Buckett, Alison Ward and Jackie Earnshaw, but we know many others have shown great generosity too."

The demining officers are keen to collect further information about all the minefields.

Anyone who was around in 1982 that has information about any marked suspect area, particularly those in Goose Green, Fox Bay, Port Howard, Port Fitzroy and the Murrell Peninsular, can contact Robin Swanson.

"What may appear to be insignificant information to you may well all add to the corporate memory so please get in touch," said Mr Swanson. (Penguin News)

Suggested Stories

- * Aug 30th 2011 HMS York during one of her several tours of the South Atlantic
Falklands' veteran HMS York under command of possibly her last captain

- * Aug 29th 2011 "I think it is in very poor taste and people will feel quite angry", said MP Andrew Rosindell

MPs criticize "offensive" comedy on Lady Thatcher and 'Falklands' obsession'

- * Aug 29th 2011 Swimmer Sorrel Pompert-Robertson, 14, last June competed at the Nat-West Island Games on the Isle of Wight (Photo FIOGA)

Five Falklands' athletes to compete at Commonwealth Youth Games

- * Aug 26th 2011 The view from Grytviken, capital of South Georgia
Argentine Claims on the South Atlantic Remote Islands

Published in: Politics, Falkland Islands.

11 comments Feed

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1 marco (#) Feb 01st, 2010 - 01:59 am Report abuse

I apologise for this mess on behalf of all Argentina and those 'indoctrinated' people who believe our governments bullsh*t. We should read our history, we are all immigrants from Galicia, Italy etc .. We were not even a country when people were inhabiting the Falklands. Argentina did not exist, when we decided to shoot and kill the indiginous people of South America, chopping their ears off for a small bounty to prove the kill. Now Argentina does exist we can't even run your own corrupt country!

The Falkland Islanders are very happy people, getting on with life and making lots of close friends in Chile, Uruguay and Brazil. The economy is booming and us idiots do not realise how much the world resents our childish games. Through our ingnorance we are missing out on great love and friendship with the British people. We can learn so much from them. ¡Nuestra pérdida!

2 jorge (#) Feb 01st, 2010 - 02:32 pm Report abuse

Another anti-kirchner fan of TN.

I read the history of my country. I have nothing to do with Galicia or Italy. My mother is chilean and my father is descendent from guaranies. There were people here when spaniards came you know!. Almost 40% of the population has nothing to do with europeans. Why don't you take a look at Jujuy, Salta, Formosa, Corrientes, Catamarca, Chaco or Santiago del Estero. Now, if you are from B.A., you always tend to believe all argentinians are like you wich is not correct.

P.D. Si Confesore te dice que no va a llover, salí con paraguas!!!!

3 J.A. Roberts (#) Feb 01st, 2010 - 04:45 pm Report abuse

"Almost 40% of the population has nothing to do with europeans."

That means 60% do, so a majority of Argentina's people descend from colonists from Galicia, Genoa etc...

4 jorge (#) Feb 01st, 2010 - 07:53 pm Report abuse

....."That means 60% do, so a majority of Argentina's people descend from colonists from Galicia, Genoa etc".....

Now you are such an expert on maths. Congratulations!

And the owner comment 4, stop talking at the mirror!

5 tetin (#) Feb 01st, 2010 - 10:53 pm Report abuse

British Foreign Executives think of Malvinas' participation to Argentina

because they have compunction on Simon Bolivar's independences movement, once had their provocations and collaborations against Spaniards....!!

6 J.A. Roberts (#) Feb 02nd, 2010 - 04:49 pm Report abuse

It's incredible what maths can do Jorge. It demonstrates how absurd your argument that F Islanders are implanted colonists and therefore not a "people" is.

7 jorge (#) Feb 05th, 2010 - 12:04 am Report abuse

....."It's incredible what maths can do Jorge".....

-I know. I'm studying ingeniering.

....."It demonstrates how absurd your argument that F Islanders are implanted colonists and therefore not a "people" is.".....

-Absurd??? I don't think so.

Islanders are people, but implanted people!

8 argie (#) Feb 05th, 2010 - 01:39 pm Report abuse

I would humbly suggest that islanders try to contact those Argentine officers and other troops that were on the islands in the 1982 conflict, whose addresses, phone numbers and/or emails they may have now, and ask them about possible, so far unaccounted for, mine sites. Now that all mothers' tears dried up, it is indeed likely that these former enemies give them some useful information. Cheers.

9 J.A. Roberts (#) Feb 05th, 2010 - 04:31 pm Report abuse

Jorge, I'm glad we agree the Falkland Islanders are a "people".

Where they came from (just like where most Argentines came from) is irrelevant.

10 argie (#) Feb 05th, 2010 - 07:44 pm Report abuse

Comments over this note are not related to its contents but are rather discussions over more or less true historical facts instead. A childish attitude of both sides.

11 islander (#) Feb 06th, 2010 - 09:24 pm Report abuse

Argies, all the minefields are marked off. The problem is there are only accurate maps for those laid by professional Argentine Army Engineers. Many areas contain mines that were literally scattered about and put under the ground all over the place by untrained conscript soldiers - some Arg army officers just gave them boxes of mines and told them to go and put them anywhere - so they did! even before the British landed back at San Carlos there were several cases of Arg Conscript soldiers blowing their legs off on mines laid by their fellow soldiers a few yards away who did not say nor really knew where they put them!

After the surrender in 1982 a group of Arg Engineers VOLUNTEERED to stay behind and help the British mark the areas they had mined - thanks to these men (they stayed on for several days) there are now accurate maps of some of the fields. 2 of these areas are being cleared now - and the maps are good and accurate. The problem will be in clearing the unmapped irregular fields - these may be impossible.

FEBRUARY.

Monday, February 1st 2010 - 05:54 UTC

Lady Thatcher's 28 eggs a week diet in anticipation of 1979 election

Lady Thatcher was eating up to 28 eggs a week as part of a high-protein diet in the run-up to the 1979 general election, newly-released files suggest. Intended to help her shed 9 kilos in two weeks, the diet is outlined in a note found in a diary from that year.

Thatcher Foundation files indicate the Iron Lady had expected to be elected PM two years before Thatcher Foundation files indicate the Iron Lady had expected to be elected PM two years before

"I think she was looking to get in trim for the cameras," says Chris Collins of the Thatcher Foundation.

The foundation's files also show Lady Thatcher expected to become PM two years before her 1979 election win. The papers released relate to the first year of her premiership. Mr Collins suggests the diet note "has to be pre-election".

The yellowing note was found inside her 1979 black leather Economist magazine pocket diary.

Lady Thatcher's belief she would defeat the beleaguered Labour administration can be seen in a hand-written letter from August 1977.

Ahead of a US trip to meet members of President Jimmy Carter's administration, she asked management consultants to update her on the "latest industrial and financial matters".

"It is most important that we get the structure and strategy right and I have already come to the conclusion that I shall have to take most of the major decisions myself," she wrote.

But despite earning the nickname the "Iron Lady", the documents show how, once in power, she rebuffed appeals from the US for the "strongest possible remonstrance or action" to the Iranian hostage crisis.

Among the 23,198 pages from Lady Thatcher's personal and political files is a 14 November 1979 cable from President Carter suggesting the UK might consider reducing the number of diplomatic staff in the country.

In her response a week later, Lady Thatcher said the UK had withdrawn some staff "but we have not hitherto believed it wise to make a political point of any reduction, partly because we doubt whether the Iranians would be much impressed and partly because of the risk of retaliatory action against those remaining".

In one of her most controversial interviews, for Woman's Own magazine in 1987, Lady Thatcher said there was "no such thing as society".

The sentiment is evidenced years earlier in draft notes for her maiden address to the October 1979 party conference and suggest it was a long-held opinion.

She wrote: "Morality is personal. There is no such thing as a collective conscience, collective kindness, collective gentleness, collective freedom. To talk of social justice, social responsibility, a new world order, may be easy and make us feel good, but it does not absolve each of us from personal responsibility."

In the end the comments were ignored by her speechwriters.

Many of the papers covering the May to December 1979 period are available online.

Notes on Lady Thatcher's first cabinet show there was a last-minute reshuffle.

Written in pencil, the first draft has Michael Heseltine down as energy secretary.

But the entry is scribbled out after an objection from the now Lord Heseltine and he is instead chosen as environment secretary.

And the papers show a Downing Street aide was rebuked after proposing Lady Thatcher's image might be used on a range of merchandise, five days after she came to power.

In a note, Gordon Reece said he was "inundated" with requests for postcards, tea cups and tea towels. Lady Thatcher was resolute and wrote at the bottom of his letter: "NO permission to be given at all on any goods of any kind. Don't mind a straight photograph". (BBC).-

Tuesday, February 2nd 2010 - 04:33 UTC

When Gibraltar was to be swapped for Spanish Ceuta

Just under 100 years ago and as the world was still embroiled in the horrors of WWI, Great Britain was considering a deal with Spain and France that would allow it to swap Gibraltar for Ceuta (Spanish territory in the north of Africa).

Then Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour felt that such an exchange would only be justified if military and naval advisors were in complete accord. Then Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour felt that such an exchange would only be justified if military and naval advisors were in complete accord.

According to files released in Britain the Royal Navy and fears over British public opinion won the day arguing in favour of the Gibraltar facilities at the harbour.

A secret Foreign Office report by 'Drogheda' analysed the history of Gibraltar's status and that of Ceuta. It also pondered the difficult problem of the international zone at Tangier.

It concluded that "the main difficulties in the way of arranging an exchange of Gibraltar and Ceuta, if such an exchange is desired by the naval and military authorities, will be firstly public opinion in England, and secondly, France".

One of the factors that were thought to support the idea was the new long range of guns. But it suggested that if Britain were to support the Spanish aspirations over Tangier, Spain

might find something to give France to wrap up the deal. But the report adds that UK would also have to acquire Melilla which had the advantage also of iron ore.

That report was dated April 1917 and a month later a 'Gibraltar Ceuta Committee' was already in place at the War Cabinet in London. A letter from LS Amery to Lord Curzon of May 10 1917 reports on the views of an informed Frenchman and argues that so long as relations are good with France territories like Ceuta would be defensible by Britain without massive forces.

There was then a significant exchange of views between British armed forces chiefs at that same Committee in December 1918.

A proposal from the Army Council to raise the matter at the Paris Peace Conference convened in January 1919 at Versailles just outside Paris was blocked. The Foreign Office said in reply that the then Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour felt that "the difficulty of negotiating such an exchange (of Gibraltar for Ceuta) would be great, and that to raise the question at the Peace Conference would, therefore, only be justified if the naval and military advisers of His Majesty's Government were in complete accord on the subject".

The purpose of the meeting in Paris was to establish the terms of the peace after World War I. Though nearly thirty nations participated, the representatives of Great Britain, France, the United States, and Italy became known as the 'Big Four'.

The General Staff at the War Office saw the swap as, on balance, desirable depending on alliances and Spain's neutrality. The Air Ministry was attracted to much greater airfield facilities possible in Ceuta. But the Admiralty was concerned not least because Morocco could house hostile forces.

"From the naval point of view the exchange of Gibraltar for Ceuta so far as can be seen at present would be a loss strategically and commercially."

"The only naval justification for such an exchange would be the completion of a harbour on the African coast affording as safe and extensive an anchorage as Gibraltar and an undertaking from Spain not to fortify Gibraltar."

But by June 1926 the idea had been well dropped but independently taken up by Spain itself. At a Cabinet meeting June 30 1926 chaired by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin the visit to London by King Alfonso of Spain later that day was discussed.

Sir Austen Chamberlain emphasised the importance of Spain remaining in the League of Nations. He said that King Alfonso raised the question of his desire for an exchange of Gibraltar for Ceuta "a matter on which King Alfonso had occasionally spoken to the military attaché." Another issue was the desire that Tangier be handed to Spain. Sir Austen declared that "neither proposal was practicable". (Gibraltar Chronicle).-

Wednesday, February 3rd 2010 - 12:06 UTC

Brazil props fisheries patrolling and management with 27 vessels

Brazil's Fisheries and Aquaculture Ministry is planning to invest the equivalent of 17 million US dollars in optimising fisheries patrolling during 2010.

Altemir Gregolin is optimistic about Brazil's fisheries potential Altemir Gregolin is optimistic about Brazil's fisheries potential

Minister of Fisheries Altemir Gregolin informed that in 2009 four new vessels had been incorporated to patrolling waters of the states of Santa Catarina, Rio Grande del Sur, Ceara and Para and another 23 units should be incorporated over the coming months. Of the 23 units, 9 are being built and the remaining 15 will be purchased.

Altemir Gregolin said that the increased fisheries patrolling is another phase of fisheries management strengthening in Brazil, the high point of which was last year when the

Special Secretariat of Aquaculture and Fisheries was made a ministry. In 2009, a new Fishing Law was promulgated, replacing one dating back to 1967.

Gregolin pointed out that the seafood sector Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Brazil including traditional fishing and aquaculture, totals 2.66 billion USD annually. Fisheries catches in Brazil are over a million tons and the sector, much of it still coastal and artisan employs 3.5 million people.

The fisheries Minister estimates that the seafood sector has a production potential of close to 20 million tons annually, but as fisheries patrolling and management is still lacking, major investments are still needed in infrastructure, such as fishing terminals and freezing plants.

"We must monitor the situation closely; we can't be careless. Should that happen, our natural resources would simply be exhausted" Gregolin warned in an interview with Revista Portos e Navios.

He also stressed that good results are often obtained from simple measures, citing the example of the sardine. In the 70s, annual sardine catches in Brazil totalled 220,000 tons but they dropped dramatically to 17.000 tonnes because of poor patrolling.

But in 2003, the Fisheries Secretariat, the Environment Ministry and the Brazilian Environment and Renewable Natural Resources Institute joined forces, extending the ban period from four to six months, which led to quick signs of recovery. Last year, sardine catches in Brazil totalled 100.000 tons. (FIS/MP).-

Wednesday, February 3rd 2010 - 05:14 UTC

Imminent start of oil drilling in Falklands triggers strong Argentine protest

Argentina summoned the British ambassador in Buenos Aires to deliver a formal protest regarding the imminent beginning of a hydrocarbons exploratory drilling season off-shore the Falkland Islands.

UK Ambassador Shan Morgan UK Ambassador Shan Morgan

A release from the Argentine Foreign Affairs ministry said that Tuesday afternoon the highest ranking officer from the UK embassy will be handed a "most vigorous protest" since the areas to the north of the Falklands, where the drilling will soon begin, are part of the Argentine continental platform and under "illegitimate British occupation".

The protest will be delivered to the British Chargé d'affairs, -- since ambassador Shan Morgan is overseas—by the ministry's cabinet chief Ambassador Alberto Dalotto.

During the summons Argentina will reiterate its "sovereignty rights over the Falklands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and adjoining maritime spaces, which are an integral part of its national territory".

An exploratory drilling rig, "Ocean Guardian" is currently on its way to the Falklands where it expects to begin operations some time towards the end of the month.

The rig has been contracted by Desire Petroleum Plc, but the three other companies licensed by the Falkland Islands government to explore for hydrocarbons off-shore,

Rockhopper Exploration Plc, Borders & Southern Petroleum Plc and Falkland Oil & Gas Ltd in association with BHP Billiton will be leasing the rig for their own exploration operations.

In his end of the year message to the Islanders Prime Minister Gordon Brown said there was no doubt about British sovereignty over the Falklands and promised full support to develop the Islands oil industry.

Wednesday, February 3rd 2010 - 09:32 UTC

British fishing industry furious with BBC documentary

The Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF) and the National Federation of Fishermen's Organizations (NFFO) are supporting an official complaint by industry body Seafish over a BBC program that portrayed the fishing industry in a damaging and "inaccurate" manner. The groups are demanding an apology from the BBC.

The program was described as "wilfully irresponsible and unscientific" The program was described as "wilfully irresponsible and unscientific"

Seafish sent a formal letter backed by SFF and NFFO to the BBC complaining about the poor editorial standards in the TV program "Britain's really disgusting food: fish."

Seafish said the show chose "cheap sensationalism" over scientific facts and insists on receiving an apology for the "wilfully irresponsible and unscientific program."

The documentary focused on claims by Greenpeace that most major fish stocks are being driven depleted, which fishing interests are dismissing as "propaganda" for organisation, The Press and Journal reports.

But the BBC has defended the show by saying it "gave a broad picture of some of the ethical issues involved in the global fishing industry."

SFF and NFFO expressed dismay at the continual claim in the program that "some scientists believe there will be 'no fish left in the sea in 50 years time.'" The industry claims that the scientist who originally made the assertion in 2006 – Professor Boris Worm of Dalhousie University, Canada – has since rescinded this hypothesis and that it is not popular among most mainstream scientists.

"This was an extremely damaging program to the UK fishing industry where the true facts were simply ignored. It seems that the program makers thought of a title and then made an episode to fit around their own narrow agenda," SFF and NFFO said in a joint statement.

"Seafood is one of the healthiest and most natural foods around and its consumption should be promoted, not denigrated. The program makers totally failed to acknowledge the huge strides made by the UK fishing industry in recent years to ensure a sustainable future," it continued.

The industry's efforts have allowed the first signs of recovery of cod in the North Sea and a growing number of UK fisheries are becoming certified by the Marine Stewardship Council, (MSC) for sustainability and good management. But the show didn't include these facts, the statement said.

"Our fishermen have a difficult and dangerous enough job as it is by bringing to our plates sustainable, nutritious and tasty seafood, without having to face a totally unwarranted onslaught of this sort," it added. (FIS/MP).-

Thursday, February 4th 2010 - 15:56 UTC

UK rejects Argentine protest; supports Falklands' hydrocarbons industry

Britain rejected on Wednesday a protest from Argentina over recent decisions from several companies licensed by the Falkland Islands government, to begin drilling in waters surrounding the South Atlantic islands.

The "Ocean Guardian" oil rig currently off the Brazilian coast is expected in the Falklands sometimes mid February The "Ocean Guardian" oil rig currently off the Brazilian coast is expected in the Falklands sometimes mid February

"The Falkland Islands government is entitled to develop a hydrocarbons industry in its waters and there is a long-standing policy to support this," said a spokesperson for the UK Embassy in Buenos Aires, who wouldn't be named citing government policy.

The spokesperson added that "We have no doubt about our sovereignty over the Falklands Islands and the surrounding maritime area."

Argentina on Tuesday summoned U.K. embassy officials to issue its "most energetic protest against the imminent start of drilling" near the Falklands, the Foreign Ministry said in an e-mailed statement

"The Foreign Ministry reiterates its sovereign rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the sea surrounding them, which form a part of its national territory," Argentina's Foreign Ministry said in the statement.

Desire Petroleum has contracted an oil drill "Ocean Guardian", en route from the North Sea and currently sailing off the coast of Brazil, which will be used to drill several of the company's planned wells plus a few more for the other companies involved in hydrocarbons exploration in Falklands' waters.

The companies besides Desire are Falkland Oil and Gas in association with giant BHP Billiton; Rockhopper Exploration and Borders and Southern Petroleum.

The "Ocean Guardian" is scheduled to arrive at Stanley sometime in the third week of February. She is being towed by the Maersk Traveler, a tug ship owned by Copenhagen-based AP Moller Maersk - A/S.

However the British spokesperson watered down the situation by saying that for London, "Argentina is an important partner" with which they have a close and productive relation in a wide range of bilateral and multilateral issues, including the global economic situation, --particularly as members of the G20 group--, human rights, climate change, sustainable development and combating arms proliferation.

"Furthermore we wish to cooperate with Argentina in the South Atlantic in common interest issues such as fisheries. We will continue to work to develop that relation" said the UK embassy spokesperson in Buenos Aires.

Argentina has repeatedly protested efforts to explore for energy deposits off the Falklands. In 2007, then President Nestor Kirchner voided a 1995 oil and gas exploration agreement with the UK that had been suspended for five years.

According to press reports in Buenos Aires the oil exploration drilling dispute could end “at the International Court of The Hague” because otherwise Argentina would be accepting British competence over continental platform areas which she claims a part of its territory.

Thursday, February 4th 2010 - 17:25 UTC

UK readies for a major Strategic Defence review debate

A Green Paper posing fundamental questions for the future of the United Kingdom’s defence has been published Wednesday by the MoD, paving the way for a post-election (May) Strategic Defence Review (SDR).

According to the Green Paper the UK can not defend itself inside – or on – its borders alone.

This Green Paper on the SDR is the product of broad consultation within the Defence community. It has been informed over six months by members of the Defence Advisory Forum, including opposition politicians, former military personnel and academics.

The Green Paper analyses the complex and uncertain future for which the Government must plan, sets out some essential principles for defence going forward, and identifies key questions that the SDR must address, including:

- What contribution should the Armed Forces make in ensuring security within the UK?
- How could the UK more effectively employ the Armed Forces in support of wider efforts to prevent conflict and strengthen international stability?
- Do current international defence and security relationships require rebalancing in the longer term?
- Should UK integrate our forces with those of key allies and partners?

Since the last full SDR in 1998, the threats to British national security have changed dramatically. While defence priority currently is Afghanistan, UK must also prepare for the threats of the future. The Green Paper analyses the wide range of potential threats to the UK, including terrorism, nuclear states, cyber-warfare, resource scarcity and climate change. It also reflects on the lessons learned from experience in conflict, including in Iraq and Afghanistan.

When confronted by this uncertain future, the Green Paper concludes that: the Armed Forces must become more flexible and adaptable, and better able to respond quickly as and when new threats emerge; the UK can not defend itself inside – or on – our borders alone.

As in Afghanistan, UK must continue to tackle national security threats at their source, and so action at home must be complemented by targeted action overseas;

- Our Armed Forces' vital role must be complemented by close relationships with our international partners. Our relations with our strategic allies, including in Europe as well as the US, will be ever more important;
- close cooperation across Government will be vital to maximising our impact. We must bring together defence, diplomatic and development efforts as part of an integrated civil-military approach.

Defence Secretary Bob Ainsworth said: "There is no more important function for Government than defence. This Green Paper will stimulate debate about the future of Britain's defence ahead of a Strategic Defence Review in the next Parliament. Afghanistan is the top priority today but we must also ensure that our Armed Forces are ready to confront the challenges of tomorrow.

The current and emerging threats we face are characterised by uncertainty and will require a more flexible response from an adaptable Armed Forces."

Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, said: "I welcome this Green paper. It is a first and a significant step on the road to the forthcoming Defence Review that will shape our security in the years ahead. The issues the Green Paper raises are of fundamental importance to all citizens of this country, and I look forward to a vigorous and widespread debate on them in the coming months."

"Whatever the future holds for our Armed Forces, it is essential that they continue to have the very best equipment supported by world class procurement processes. That is why the MoD is also publishing today a Strategy for Acquisition Reform. This builds on the recommendations of last year's independent Bernard Gray

Review into defence procurement and sets out steps to improve governance, risk management, transparency and cost control in order to deliver an efficient, well managed and high quality equipment programme for the future. Bernard Gray stated that lessons must be learned to improve long-term acquisition projects, he was also clear that his report did not relate to current operations. Our forces in Afghanistan are equipped through Urgent Operational Requirements and these continue to deliver the kit our forces need, when they need it".

Commenting on this new strategy, Minister for Strategic Defence Acquisition Reform, Lord Drayson said: "it is vital that defence acquisition is as efficient as possible. This is a strategy for major reform. At its centre is a radical plan to increase the transparency of our equipment plan, to help ensure it can be kept affordable and achievable. By managing our plans and projects, better and strengthening our relationship with industry, we will improve the delivery of the battle-winning equipment that our Armed Forces deserve."

Friday, February 5th 2010 - 04:39 UTC

More companies line up to join the Falklands' oil rush

While there have been strong protests from the Argentine Government about the drilling program due to start in Falkland Islands waters this month, it has not deterred other

companies wanting to join Desire Petroleum, Rockhopper Exploration and Falklands Oil and Gas in the search for oil.

Desire Petroleum CEO Ian Duncan next to oil exploration material stocked in the Falklands. (Photo: Upstream).- Desire Petroleum CEO Ian Duncan next to oil exploration material stocked in the Falklands. (Photo: Upstream).-

At an extraordinary meeting of the Falklands' government Executive Council on Wednesday, new applications for seismic and geophysical surveys were considered and Governor Alan Huckle was advised to seek approval for both.

Director of Mineral Resources, Phyl Rendell said an application had been received from a company considering seismic survey work for an oil company with production licences in the Islands.

To allow a vessel to survey here, the company requires an exploration licence and the Governor was advised to seek approval for the award of a licence.

A further application from a geophysical survey company to carry out a speculative seismic survey in unlicensed acreage was also considered.

Mrs Rendell said this application was encouraging and demonstrated the willingness of companies to invest in additional data acquisition.

Details are yet to be agreed on the scale of the survey, but meanwhile Governor Huckle was advised to seek consent to award an exploration licence and thus allow the survey to proceed.

In both cases the proposed surveying is outside the fisheries area that is potentially active in coming months, said Mrs Rendell. (Penguin News)

Friday, February 5th 2010 - 04:53 UTC

Argentina threatens UK and Falklands oil companies with legal actions

Argentina reiterated on Thursday warnings to the United Kingdom over the “illegality” and juridical consequences of having awarded oil exploration licences in the Falkland Islands, under British control but which Argentina claims as part of its territory.

Palacio San Martín, Argentina’s Foreign Affairs ministry
Palacio San Martín, Argentina’s Foreign Affairs ministry

“Argentina again warns the UK about the illegality and consequences of this new unilateral action, extensive to all private actors involved, that they will be liable of future legal demands in the maximum tribunals, for the potential exploration and exploitation of Argentine resources”, pointed out reliable sources from the Argentine Foreign Affairs office quoted by the Buenos Aires media.

Last Tuesday the Argentine Foreign Affairs ministry summoned the British embassy Chargé d’affaires to express its “most energetic protest” because of the imminent beginning of exploratory drilling operations in waters to the north of the Falkland Islands.

At the time some of the Buenos Aires press mentioned that Argentina could be considering taking the resources dispute case to the International Court of The Hague, but no government official ratified or rectified the news.

“It’s not accidental that the oil companies involved are British, that is to say, the only ones that can really believe the chimera that the UK is peddling about the alleged legality of these commercial operations”, added official Argentine sources.

More over “there is no possibility at all of the military hypothesis claimed by the UK merely to disguise the illegality of its actions and deviate attention from the fact they are contrary, --by refusing to sit and negotiate a solution to the sovereignty dispute over the Islands--, to what was laid out by the international community. Attributing Argentina some kind of provocation can only be interpreted as a risky intimidation message to say the least”.

Finally "the British occupation makes the area, an area subject to a sovereignty dispute, which the United Nations recognizes as such and therefore, --as underlined by the UN--, none of the sides involved should modify the situation until the heart of the matter is solved, which is precisely contrary to what the United Kingdom is doing".

The official Foreign Office longstanding policy, --and as such reiterated to Argentina-- is that "the UK has no doubt over sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and surrounding maritime areas" and equally important "the Falklands government is entitled to develop a hydrocarbons industry within its waters" and the UK will support such a development.

Meantime the exploratory oil rig "Ocean Guardian", according to its contractor Desire Petroleum should be arriving in Falklands' water by February 14.

The area where Desire's exploratory drilling will take place has been publicized and circulated among mariners, shipping companies, agents and all fishing companies.

"Ocean Guardian" is towed Maersk Traveller and is navigating with two support vessels, Maersk Pacer and Toisa Invincible".

Saturday, February 6th 2010 - 01:58 UTC

Falklands say oil development is to ensure sustainable economic future

The Falkland Islands government said that hydrocarbons exploration is an important element to achieve a sustainable economic future for the Islands and quoted from British PM Gordon Brown New Year message when he said that there are "no doubts about UK sovereignty over the Falklands " and the principle of self determination.

British PM Brown has not doubt about the Falklands sovereignty British PM Brown has not doubt about the Falklands sovereignty

The Friday release from the Falklands' government comes in the midst of a strong, escalating exchange between Buenos Aires and London over the imminent beginning of 2010 drilling operations, sometime in mid February when a contracted oil rig arrives to Falklands' waters.

"The Falkland Islands Government is encouraged by the investment being made to establish whether there are commercial quantities of hydrocarbons in the Falklands. However, any potential revenues from exploitation will not feature in the Islands' economic planning unless and until commercially viable reserves are discovered", said the release.

The oil rig "Ocean Guardian" contracted by Desire Petroleum to drill north of the Falklands will also be drilling wells for Rockhopper Exploration and Falklands Oil and Gas Ltd in association with BHP Billiton.

The Falklands Executive Council in an extraordinary meeting last Wednesday revealed it had^o received new applications for seismic and geophysical surveys from other companies interested in the Islands hydrocarbons potential. The applications were considered and Falklands Governor Alan Huckle was advised to seek approval for them.

The release further on underlines Britain's support of the development of the Falklands' hydrocarbons industry and quotes PM Brown's praise to the Islands' government for their cautious and responsible attitude in not factoring any oil revenues in economic planning "since there is no guarantee of commercially viable reserves".

But the opportunities and risks are there and "the British Government will continue to work with you on this agenda".

The release ends recalling PM Brown's statement that there are "no doubts about United Kingdom's sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and that the principle of self determination underlies this."

The full Falkland Islands Government Oil Statement, 5 February 2010 follows.

"One of the primary goals of the Falkland Islands Government is to achieve a sustainable economic future for the Islands. Encouraging hydrocarbons exploration remains an important element of that goal.

The operators drilling wells in the 2010 drilling phase have been required to gain comprehensive approval taking into consideration environmental, health and safety and technical issues. The Falkland Islands Government is encouraged by the investment being made to establish whether there are commercial quantities of hydrocarbons in the Falklands. However, any potential revenues from exploitation will not feature in the Islands' economic planning unless and until commercially viable reserves are discovered.

In his New Year's message to the Islands, the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown reinforced our view. He said: "The British Government will continue to support the development of your hydrocarbons sector. But there is of course no guarantee that commercially viable reserves will be found. And, should there be any, extraction will be some years away. You are right therefore not to factor any revenues into your economic planning. But the opportunities – and the risks – make careful preparations vital for this important work. The British Government will continue to work with you on this agenda."

He went on to say that there are "no doubts about United Kingdom's sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and that the principle of self determination underlies this."

Saturday, February 6th 2010 - 08:53 UTC

Shackleton Antarctic gift for whisky lovers': century old recipe

Five crates of a century-old lost whisky belonging to Antarctic explorer Ernest Shackleton have been recovered by conservators. Three crates of the Mackinlay whisky, and a further two crates of brandy, were discovered beneath the hut, and used by Shackleton to launch his journey to the South Pole.

Five crates of whisky and brandy were found by the team underneath the floorboards of the explorer's hut.-

Now experts hope they can recreate the original recipe for the drink for modern whisky lovers. A team from the New Zealand Atlantic Heritage Trust has excavated five crates from beneath the hut at Cape Royds.

"We thought there were two crates possibly containing whisky under the 1908 building," said team leader Al Fastier.

"To our amazement we found five crates, three labeled as containing whisky and two labeled as containing brandy."

The team is now working out how best to retrieve the contents of the crates - but is confident at least some of the bottles inside are intact.

Shackleton's expedition in 1908 got closest to the South Pole at that time, although the return journey saw his four-strong team battling starvation. It saw him return to the UK a hero.

Richard Paterson, master blender with Whyte and Mackay - which provided the Mackinlay's whisky for Shackleton's expedition - said the recovery of the lost drink was 'a gift for whisky lovers'.

"Given the original recipe no longer exists this may be an open door into history," he said. "If the contents can be confirmed, safely extracted and analyzed, the original blend may be able to be replicated, allowing people to taste a true part of history and be part of what must be the whisky story of the century" said Paterson who is nicknamed "the Nose" due to his blending skills.

Whyte and Mackay has been assisting the New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust since they were informed of the discovery in November, providing advice as to how to preserve the integrity of the cases, the bottles and the whisky itself.

Saturday, February 6th 2010 - 11:49 UTC

Whaler, activist ship collide again off Antarctica

Anti-whaling activists have described how Japanese whaling ships circled their protest vessel "like sharks" before ramming it off Antarctica.

Sea Shepherd founder, Captain Paul Watson, said the Japanese harpoon ship rammed the conservationists' ship the Bob Barker and tore a 90cm gash in the hull above the water line.

The incident happened about 300 kilometres off Cape Darnley, in the Australian Antarctic Territory, about 3pm (AEDT) on Saturday.

No-one was injured in the incident.

Capt Watson said the collision was "entirely intentional" on the part of the Japanese.

"Four Japanese ships circled the Bob Barker like sharks," he told AAP by satellite phone.

"Then one of them, the Yushin Maru 3, did a quick turn and rammed a three-foot gash in the hull.

"Luckily, the waters are calm at the moment and we have a welding crew working to fix it."

The anti-whaling vessel was blocking the slipway of the Nisshin Maru, the Japanese whaling fleet's factory ship, when the collision occurred.

This is the second major clash between Japanese whalers and anti-whaling activists this year, after the Ady Gil sank following a collision with a Japanese whaling ship in the Southern Ocean on January 6.

Capt Watson called on the Australian government take action on illegal whaling.

"The Japanese are violating Australian laws on whaling and nothing is being done to stop them," he said.

Japanese Fisheries Agency official Takashi Mori said officials were trying to confirm details of a reported clash, The Associated Press reported.

Video shot from the Bob Barker and released by Sea Shepherd shows the two ships side by side moving quickly through the water, the AP said.

The ships come closer together and the Japanese ship then appears to turn away, but its stern swings sharply toward the Bob Barker.

The collision is obscured by spray, but a loud clanging noise can be heard before the vessels separate.

Capt Watson said the Yushin Maru 3 appeared to stop moving after the collision and had not been seen by the Bob Barker's crew to have moved since, suggesting it also may have been damaged. (NZPA)

Sunday, February 7th 2010 - 22:11 UTC

Falkland Islands de-mining pilot project and the challenge of full clearance

As a signatory to the Ottawa Convention, the United Kingdom is required under International Humanitarian Law to remove and destroy all anti-personnel landmines on its sovereign territory. About 20,000 landmines remain within clearly fenced and marked off areas on the Falkland Islands as a result of the 1982 conflict; while not all of these are anti-personnel mines, the United Kingdom is obliged to clear all the mined areas across both East and West Falklands under the Ottawa Convention.

De-mining expert working in Falklands' peaty soil in search of minimum metal mines
De-mining expert working in Falklands' peaty soil in search of minimum metal mines

Controlled explosions at Surf Bay Controlled explosions at Surf Bay

There have not been any civilian injuries associated with landmines or Unexploded Explosive Ordnance (UXO) since the conflict partly because of careful management of suspect areas but also because of a good mine education process in schools and the

media. The mined areas cover a very small percentage of the whole Falklands' land area (about 0.1%) and therefore overall they do not represent a significant humanitarian, social or economic threat to the islanders.

Following the results of the successful Joint UK-Argentine Feasibility Study which were finalised in 2007, the UK Government in close consultation with the Falkland Islands Government decided to start a pilot clearance project of four suspect areas; two near Stanley, one in Goose Green and one in Fox Bay East. These were chosen because they represented four very different types of terrain and mine/UXO threat. In addition the mined area at Surf Bay was selected because it was a well used area before the 1982 conflict and it contained about 1000 landmines, according to the minefield records; this represents some 5% of the overall remaining landmine threat. The National Mine Action Authority was formally set up in the United Kingdom during 2009.

The Falkland Island Demining Programme Office (FIDPO) was established in Stanley in early October 2009. It is designed to oversee the Project and provide the essential external Quality Assurance and Quality Control of the demining process. As a result of a detailed evaluation process, a Demining Contractor was selected for the pilot clearance project by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Following a period of the in-country training of their experienced de-miners that focused on the country specific challenges of terrain, weather and mine type, the Demining Contractor was granted partial accreditation by the FIDPO to start demining in Surf Bay and on Sapper Hill in early December 2009. The FIDPO and de-mining contractor are necessarily separate contracts to ensure there is no conflict of interest and quality control is not compromised.

The Surf Bay minefield (SA-008) contains anti-vehicle (SB81) and anti-personnel (SB33) landmines both of which have a small amount of detectable metal within them. These were manufactured in Italy and provided with a 20 year guarantee. So far, [458] out of the 1000 or so landmines have been located and destroyed and all appear to be in good working condition even after 27 years in the ground. The mines are blown up where they are found on a periodic basis. Most of the mines have been laid in panels of two or more rows of mines and most of these panels have already been located. The plan is to follow each of the mine rows using a manual layered excavation technique to reach down to 20

cm (the depth set by the contract) in order to extract all the landmines before clearing and checking the remainder of the area. Detection of these specific Italian landmines varies between 12 – 15 cm beneath the surface in both peat and sand using a metal detector.

The Sapper Hill minefield (SA-011) contains almost 200 anti-personnel mines (P4B) which have a very low metal content. These were manufactured in Spain and have proved the most difficult to detect because their only metal content is the 0.14 gram of steel in the spring. There is some lead foil in many of these mines but as not all of them still have this remaining, detection of this foil only is not an option. Adopting a manual full excavation technique (essentially digging up the ground) to reach the contract depth and following the mine rows has exposed [146] P4Bs to date and all appear to be in very good condition, both those in the peat and those on the surfaces that have been exposed to the weather. In addition to clearing the minefield itself, a search is being conducted between the Stanley-Darwin Road and the minefield to establish whether any unexploded devices remain under the surface as it was the site of a cluster munitions strike during the 1982 conflict. So far unexploded BL 755 cluster bomb devices have been located sub-surface and destroyed.

The landmine and UXO threat at both Goose Green and Fox Bay are less well defined and until technical surveys are conducted on those sites at the latter end of February 2010, it is not possible to comment on what will be required to clear those sites.

Concerns about the environmental impact of the project were raised before it began. The Planning Permission required that an acceptable ground remediation plan was submitted with the De-mining Clearance Plan and that steps were taken to educate the de-miners in the identification of rare plant species expected in the area. The Clearance Plans envisage dividing the cleared areas into three parts; one part being left to recover naturally; one part having the cut vegetation replaced so that seeds from the cuttings drop and germinate; and a further area is to be left for a different approach to be specified and agreed by the Environmental Planning Department. These additional planning requirements are not always associated with Mine Action programmes.

The project aims to be complete by the end of this austral summer. As a result of a very poor summer weather so far and the difficulty of detecting the minimum metal mines, further demining reinforcements (15) are being flown in to assist in reaching the project objectives. They are likely to be deployed to Goose Green and Fox Bay in late February after a period of in-country training.

Once this pilot phase is complete, the UK Government will have a much better understanding about the challenges of the remaining suspect areas. This phase of the clearance will inform future projects, not only about the technical and environmental challenges associated with clearance in the Falkland Islands but also about the logistic and support challenges of operating within a limited infrastructure some distance from the UK. For information e-mail info@fidpo.org

By Robin Swanson, Demining Programme Manager - Stanley

Monday, February 8th 2010 - 04:47 UTC

Gibraltar celebrates 25th anniversary of frontier opening with Spain

Gibraltar Chief Minister Peter Caruana declared that the Tripartite Forum (Gib., UK, Spain) must be consolidated as the vehicle for cross-border dialogue so that its existence is not dependent on a change of Government in either Spain or Gibraltar.

Gibraltar Chief Minister Peter Caruana Gibraltar Chief Minister Peter Caruana

In an interview with the news agency EFE, on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the frontier opening in 1985, Mr Caruana said he would much prefer it if the respective (Spanish) oppositions – PP and GSLP – were to support the creation of the forum in principle,

so that if there were to be a change of government “in either one or the other or in the two places,” this would not have adverse consequences for it.

The alternative to the Forum, he declared, is "condemning us all to another 300 years of disagreement."

He also described the frontier opening of 1985 as one of the "great and most significant events that Gibraltar and the Campo have experienced in their respective development processes."

Mr Caruana said the Forum was seen as a point of contact by those who wished to achieve normalisation in the relationship, without it meaning any of the sides giving up its "position or aspirations as a nation or as a people".

The Chief Minister noted the fundamental objections against the Forum held by both the PP and the GSLP, arguing that their opposition to it was "political" and was not related to "whatever progress may or may not be achieved as a result of it".

"As far as they are concerned, the steps that are taken in day to day relations and benefits that accrue from this, for the citizens and for cross-border institutional relations is of no consequence."

In related news the first Gibraltar Chief Justice was officially sworn in at a ceremony at The Convent. Anthony Dudley, 43, was appointed last week and further judicial appointments are expected to be announced shortly in relation to the Puisne judges.

Gibraltar Governor Sir Adrian Johns hosted the event which also counted with the attendance of Chief Minister Peter Caruana, Mr Speaker Hareesh Budhrani and Dr John Cortes, President of the Gibraltar Magistrates' Association.

The Association said it is pleased that a former colleague and Stipendiary Magistrate, with whom many Justices of the Peace worked closely at the Magistrates' Court, has now assumed the post of Chief Justice after years of excellent service.

"The Association considers it particularly appropriate that this appointment has come at a time of great change in Gibraltar's Justice system, which will include major law reforms

and new court facilities. It looks forward to continuing to work with the new Chief Justice in further improving the delivery of Justice in Gibraltar," it said.-

Thursday, February 11th 2010 - 03:00 UTC

The Commissioner and Foreign Office official tour South Georgia

Commissioner Alan Huckle and his wife Helen visited South Georgia in January. Travelling with them was Jane Rumble, Head of the Polar Regions Unit at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and GSGSSI Senior Executive Officer Martin Collins, reports the January edition of the S.G. Newsletter.

Commissioner Huckle opens the new exhibition in the SG museum (Picture <http://www.sgisland.gs>)

The party arrived on the tour ship "Le Diamant", visiting several of the tourist visitor sites en route to be dropped off at King Edward Point (KEP).

They had six days at KEP to meet with the people working here and see what they do and to tour the various buildings including the research station, whaling station, museum, church and hydroelectric power station.

Day two of the visit was a busy one. The group was taken by boat to see the reindeer-damaged vegetation in the Sorling Valley area. A reindeer enclosure in the area surrounds some very different vegetation compared to the heavily grazed area outside. It clearly shows the plant life that re-establishes when it is not subject to grazing and trampling.

After a little sightseeing down near the magnificent Nordenskjold Glacier front, the party then went to look at the remains of the two fishing vessels grounded at the entrance to Moraine Fjord. The wrecks still pose some pollution problems as they continue to break up.

They were then dropped onto the beach at Maiviken where Terrestrial Biologist Jon Ashburner, assisted by others from the research station, was weighing the young fur seal

pups. The party walked back over the pass to Grytviken. That evening the Commissioner hosted a dinner for all the residents at Carse House.

On the 14th, there were three ceremonial events. The Commissioner officially opened the new Theodore Andersson photography exhibition in the Museum. There was also a toast to Shackleton at the explorer's graveside.

On behalf of the South Georgia Association (SGA), the Commissioner officially handed over three benches to the South Georgia Museum. The benches were commissioned by the SGA to be designed and built by wooden boat builder Thies Matzen. They are made from wood salvaged from the whaling station. The benches will be sited in the area in front of the museum.

The following day the visitors were invited for a day out on the yacht "Golden Fleece". The yacht was operating in the Cumberland Bay area whilst the South Georgia Survey personnel and artists continued their work (see below). That evening the visitors were entertained to dinner by the research base personnel.

On the 16th they embarked the Fishery Patrol Vessel "Pharos SG", and despite poor weather managed to visit and inspect Husvik and the British Antarctic Survey base at Bird Island on their way back to Stanley, Falklands.

Thursday, February 11th 2010 - 18:08 UTC

Argentina blocks vessel involved in Falklands operations

Argentina blocked Wednesday a ship from leaving a Techint Group plant after it traveled to the Falkland Islands without government permission, the Argentine Foreign Office said. The "Thor Leader" is docked in Techint's Campana plant carrying a cargo of 7.099 tons seamless pipes, the government office said in a statement.

"Thor Leader", blocked in the port of Campana for not having called on Argentine authorities when operating in the Falklands "Thor Leader", blocked in the port of Campana for not having called on Argentine authorities when operating in the Falklands

"Evidence exists that indicate that the freighter was to be used to supply material linked to oil industry activities that the United Kingdom is illegally promoting in the Malvinas Islands," the statement said.

Techint, in a separate statement Wednesday confirmed that the ship is docked at the plant, but denied as "totally false" the Argentine's government's charge that the pipes were bound for the Falklands. It said the freighter was chartered to deliver the pipes to five clients in various Mediterranean ports, none of which have operations in the Malvinas.

"Thor Leader" was blocked from departing because Argentine law requires vessels visiting the Falklands to ask for permission from Argentine maritime authorities first, the Foreign Ministry said.

The Argentine move comes in reaction to the imminent beginning of oil exploration in the northern basin of the Falklands. An oil rig "Ocean Guardian" is due to arrive in the Islands waters, contracted by Desire Petroleum, to start drilling several wells.

The Falkland Islands elected government with British support has awarded oil and gas exploration and production licences to the north and south of the Islands. Twelve years ago there was a similar round of drilling and traces of hydrocarbons were discovered but the collapse of the international oil price froze the industry's interest.

"The Argentine government had protested on February 2 the renewal of British authorizations for oil explorations in areas of the Argentine continental platform illegally occupied by the United Kingdom," the Argentine foreign ministry said.

It said the shipment of pipes was halted in Campana by the undersecretary of ports after concluding that the freighter had violated Argentine regulations by putting in to the Falklands main port in January without being cleared by Argentine port authorities.

"The Argentine government has energetically protested to the United Kingdom over each and every one of the British unilateral actions with which it has tried to explore or exploit natural resources located in national (Argentine) territory in an area that is the subject of a dispute over sovereignty," Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana said.

He added Argentina announced in 2007 that it would sanction companies that contracted other companies that have engaged in oil development activities in Argentina's continental platform without authorization".

Thursday, February 11th 2010 - 19:16 UTC

Barclays', Argentina's debt swap operator accused of oil interests in Falklands

Two Argentine solicitors announced they will be pressing criminal charges against the Ministry of Economy for having contracted Britain's Barclays' bank for a major sovereign defaulted bonds swap and this financial institution is "a shareholder of Desire Petroleum, the oil company which is poised to begin exploration operations this month in Malvinas waters".

Ministers Boudou and Taiana accused of negligence and hiding information
Ministers Boudou and Taiana accused of negligence and hiding information

The demand will also include the Argentine Foreign Affairs ministry (Jorge Taiana) for not having revealed the close links of the British bank with companies involved in oil and logistic operations in the Argentine continental shelf, thus violating clearly established Argentine legislation.

Mario Cafiero, an ex-member of Congress and Ricardo Monner Sanz, a former prosecutor are known to be closely linked to nationalist groups in Argentina but insisting in the

respect for rule of the law and have openly campaigned for transparency and human rights in Argentina.

In their presentation the solicitors argue that it has been well known and broadcasted, since early January that an exploratory oil rig, "Ocean Guardian" contracted by the UK company Desire Petroleum is on its way to the South Atlantic to begin drilling several exploratory wells "in an area that clearly and undisputedly belongs to Argentine sovereignty".

Faced with this most serious attack on "our territorial integrity" the Argentine government expressed its "most energetic" and inconsequential "protest" to British officials and apparently did not go further because "one of the main shareholders of Desire Petroleum is precisely Barclays Bank Plc that has been contracted by Argentina for the re-opening of the sovereign debt swap".

According to Resolution 267/2009 from last October 23, Minister of Economy Amado Boudou approved an agreement by which Barclays' was named "General Coordinator" of the operation which also includes Citibank and Deutsche Bank.

"As you all remember this process, during January, under went a series of institutional commotion events which ended with the ousting of the Central Bank president following the request from those banks that the Central bank's reserves be offered as collateral for the debt-swap in process. This generated a promiscuous situation involving the foreign debt, the indispensable support for our currency and the very serious foreign conflict we face as a nation", underlines Cafiero.

Besides, according to the presentation Barclays as a "non operational" investor in Desire Petroleum eluded stating this condition in Argentina's Oil production companies registry, created by resolution 407/2007, precisely with the purpose of "impeding the activity in our country of companies, partners, associates or shareholders involved in oil and gas exploitation on the maritime continental shelf without the due Argentine authorization".

However, "with an action that seems to go beyond negligence Minister Boudou honoured Barclays naming them global coordinator for Argentina to the effect of the debt swap negotiations which means putting London at the heart of our financial problems, allege the plaintiffs who demand the immediate derogation of resolution 267.

Friday, February 12th 2010 - 04:38 UTC

Petrobras signs agreement to begin oil exploration in Uruguay's continental shelf

Brazil's state-managed oil company Petrobras signed this week an agreement with the Uruguayan state oil company Ancap to explore and produce oil and natural gas on Uruguay's continental shelf.

The agreement also includes Repsol-YPF and Galp Energia from Portugal The agreement also includes Repsol-YPF and Galp Energia from Portugal

The partners of Petrobras are Repsol YPF and Galp Energia from Portugal, company said in a statement to the Brazilian securities authority, CVM.

The bidding process for the exploration blocks under the Ronda Uruguay 2009 for the Pelotas and Punta del Este Basins was held last July by the Uruguayan government and Petrobras and its partners made the best offer for Blocks 3 and 4.

The blocks are located in the South-Southeastern region of the Punta del Este basin. Block 3 is located 300 km off the coast, at depths ranging from 200 to 1,500 meters, while Block 4 is 150 km off the coast and at a depth of 100 to 200 meters.

Petrobras will be the operator for Block 4 (40%), while YPF will hold equal participating interest, and Galp Energia 20%. In Block 3, Petrobras holds 40% of the interest, YPF will be the operator (40%), and Galp Energia holds the remaining 20% of the rights.

The Company will have four years to analyze the seismic data and decide if it will undertake drilling activities. In the tender, the Company committed to perform the 2D seismic and to complete the reprocessing of existing data.

Friday, February 12th 2010 - 04:41 UTC

Argentina will take the Falklands' oil drilling case to United Nations

Argentina will be taking the case of oil exploration in Falkland Islands waters by private companies licensed by the Islands government to the United Nations, but not to the International Court of The Hague as had been suggested since the London/Buenos Aires dispute resumed a few weeks ago.

Jorge Taiana and Governor Ríos following the "very positive" meeting
Governor Ríos following the "very positive" meeting

Argentine Foreign Affairs Minister Jorge Taiana and Tierra del Fuego, Antarctic and South Atlantic Islands Governor Fabiana Ríos agreed to "work together" between the nation and the province on the controversy triggered by the imminent exploration for oil in the Malvinas islands, where an oil rig is expected to arrive sometime next week.

After a longer-than-an-hour meeting with the Foreign Ministry, Ríos pointed out that any legal report the Argentina may elaborate on the United Kingdom may be before the United Nations, but not before its main judicial organ.

"There are forums where complaints like this one can be reported, one of those forums is the United Nations itself," Ríos explained.

Last week Governor Ríos with the support from other Patagonian provincial leaders rejected the announced drilling for oil in Falklands waters, following on the line set by the federal government.

Under the Argentine constitutions Governor Ríos has jurisdiction over the Falklands and other South Atlantic islands since that is how it has been established, with Ushuaia as the capital.

Minister Taiana reiterated that Argentina will continue with its standing claim over the Islands sovereignty and to protest the “illegal, unauthorized exploration in the Argentine continental shelf”.

“As we have said all along and anticipated when we knew about the oil rig coming to the South Atlantic, our claim remains firm and permanent. We are going to take all necessary measures in the legal and diplomatic framework to preserve our rights and our resources. About this we have talked with Governor Ríos”, said Taiana.

“In the United Nations we have our presence and reiterated sovereignty claim and certainly we shall be pushing the issue before the Decolonization Committee next June, and we will not let go by any chance, opportunity when it arises”, added the Argentine official.

Taiana described the meeting with Governor Ríos as “very good, very constructive, very positive”. The Foreign Affairs ministry has responsibility over foreign policy and “in foreign policy the question of the Malvinas Islands has a fundamental priority”.

Finally the minister again warned that all those corporations which “directly or indirectly” collaborate with the exploitation of hydrocarbons in the Malvinas territory will be exposed and responsible for violating the Argentine legal system.

“All those cases where companies collaborate in the hydrocarbons issue directly or indirectly in territory under Argentine sovereignty and that do not have the adequate authorization, will be responsible”, underlined Taiana.

Friday, February 12th 2010 - 19:37 UTC

Falkand Islands: Seismic contractor moves in on unlicensed acreage

AS the Ocean Guardian oil rig is scheduled to arrive in Falklands waters next week, a UK-registered start-up seismic contractor is aiming to carry out a speculative 6,000km multi-client 2D shoot on unlicensed acreage in Falklands waters.

The Ocean Guardian oil rig The Ocean Guardian oil rig

Spec Partners hope to start the survey this quarter using the Nautic Naiad vessel, owned by Oslo-based Nautic Offshore. However, timing is uncertain.

Mr Roberts told Upstream reporter Rob Watts timing should be firmed up in the next few days: "There is an opportunity there and we want to take it," Mr Roberts said. The survey would take place in an area covering about 60 blocks in the North Falklands basin, immediately north of where the bulk of this year's exploration will take place. If it gets the go-ahead, the survey would last about three months, with processing taking a further three months.

A second application was also made for a survey for a company with existing acreage in the Falklands. Director of Mineral Resources Phyl Rendell would not reveal which companies had lodged applications, saying they were still at a very early stage.

However, Upstream's industry sources said they understood the second application was by Nautic Offshore for the Naiad to carry out a site survey on Desire Petroleum's acreage while it was still in the area.

Desire Petroleum was unavailable for comment.

Meanwhile the Environmental Impact Statement Addendum submitted by BHP Billiton Petroleum (Falklands) Corporation to drill one well within licence PL015 has been described by the Environmental Planning Office as a "well written document which addresses the issues raised by SAMS" (Scottish Association for Marine Science). (Penguin News)

Saturday, February 13th 2010 - 03:13 UTC

Argentina plans “insecurity” for Falklands oil exploration and is tracking the rig

The Argentine government is looking for mechanisms to sanction all those vessels that somehow have participated in the Falkland Islands oil exploration logistics. Operations are set to begin next week with the arrival of the “Ocean Guardian” oil rig.

Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana

The Argentine Defence ministry apparently is tracking the rig’s course and this week supplied its Foreign Affairs counterpart with pictures of the “floating platform” being towed just south from the Uruguayan coastline, reports the Buenos Aires press.

On Thursday the Argentine Under Secretary for Ports and Waterways impeded the departure of the British flagged “Thor Leader” for having incurred “in contravention of rules relative to port operations which impede all kind of traffic with the Malvinas Islands usurped by Great Britain”.

This decision is in line with the Argentine Executive “energetic rejection of the British oil plan to explore for hydrocarbons in the disputed Malvinas area” according to the official release.

The vessel, caught in the middle of the controversy was loading at the port of Campana, belonging to the powerful Argentine-Italian steel group Siderca/Tenaris (Techint) 3.500 tons of seamless pipes manufactured at the local plant, and which according to the company were destined to the oil industry in Egypt.

The first Argentine reaction was that the pipes were destined for the Falklands but later it accused the vessel of having transported equipment and supplies for the oil exploration in the Islands, thus violating Argentine law.

However in spite of the serious incident, according to Buenos Aires media sources, the Argentine government is planning to go even further and for that reason has brought together an elite group of legal experts from the Foreign Affairs and Defence ministries, Customs, the Ports and Waterways office that have drafted a tentative decree which bars from Argentina all those merchant vessels (general cargo) that have been involved or are in the course of participating in the Falklands/Malvinas oil exploration activities.

The idea is to elaborate a registry with statistical data of vessel movements in the area and cross them with ship activities both in Britain and the Falklands. The group is also assessing the legal framework and the commercial impact of the enforcement of such measures.

This is considered part of the strategy master-minded at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to create a framework of "insecurity" for all the "illegal" activities in the disputed area which are geared to exploit "our resources".

"Offshore oil drilling is a very high risk operation and if a sense of insecurity can be injected, it should further discourage the enterprise", said Argentine official sources.

Meantime the Techint group again emphatically denied the pipes loaded on the "Thor Leader" were for the Falklands and invited the government to send observers until the cargo is unloaded in Egypt.

The Argentine opposition in the Lower House has asked for Minister Jorge Taiana to be summoned to report on the "Thor Leader" incident, believing the government is "over-acting".

"In foreign affairs it is essential to reach the necessary consensus that enable us to set the basics for a State policy that ensures the standing exercise of sovereignty in the framework of International Law", said Raul Alfonsin, opposition member from the Lower House.

Saturday, February 13th 2010 - 07:37 UTC

Thirteen cruise vessels visit South Georgia during January

Thirteen cruise ships visited this month South Georgia, according to the SG Newsletter. This included a vessel new to SG, the 112 passenger "Plancius". However one vessel, the "Clelia II" had to cancel her visit after striking rocks with her propeller at Petermann Island in the Antarctic Peninsula.

"Plancius" made her first ever visit to South Georgia "Plancius" made her first ever visit to South Georgia

Three more yachts arrived, two on charter. Private yacht "Aura" had not planned to visit SG and was intending to sail south of the Island en route to South Africa, but their wind vane steering system was damaged in strong winds so they decided to call in to make repairs. Despite on going problems with the engine the yacht sailed on January 20th bound for Cape Town.

South African research vessel "Agulhas" arrived on January 24th to drop 6 weather buoys which will be deployed by the FPV "Pharos SG" in the coming months.

Regarding fisheries, the trawler "Sil" has been research-fishing in the SG Maritime Zone. The vessel, which carried out some trawls in the Shag Rocks area before arriving to anchor in Cumberland East Bay(CEB), was inspected on January 16th. One scientist was embarked from the research base to join those who had already embarked in Stanley, Falklands.

The vessel then continued the programme of research fishing and deep water benthic surveys for GSGSSI.

Saturday, February 13th 2010 - 07:42 UTC

Argentina: Oil Co. report refutes drop in hake stocks

An investigation carried out by the oil company Pan American Energy (PAE), at the behest of the Santa Cruz Fisheries Subsecretariat, contends that the capture of common hake (*Merluccius hubbsi*) has spiked in the San Jorge Gulf fishing-ground. The results of the study contradict claims by the yellow fleet fishers of Caleta Paula, who complain of a smaller abundance of the resource.

The findings of studies undertaken by Pan American Energy in the San Jorge Gulf fail to reveal problems with hake biomass. The findings of studies undertaken by Pan American Energy in the San Jorge Gulf fail to reveal problems with hake biomass.

The fishing sector maintains that the submarine seismic survey conducted by the company spurred a fall in the hake volume.

"The Subsecretariat of Fisheries of Santa Cruz requested a specific measure from us as far as the gulf; that we conduct a fisheries monitoring before, during and subsequent to the survey. We did so in 10 stations and compared it to the seismic one we did within the ban zone," explained Fernando Villarreal, vice-president of Offshore Operations of Pan American Energy.

"We measured biomass, biodiversity and other physical parameters like temperature and the salinity of the water," he continued.

Those studies were conducted by scientists of the company Ezcurra & Schmidt SA - hired by Pan American – and supervised by a Santa Cruz inspector.

The company submitted a report to the provincial government in which it detailed the results of environmental monitoring carried out over the last three years in the fishing-ground of San Jorge Gulf.

The document specifies that fishing “increased” in size and quantity in the zone over the last year and that the Caleta Paula port was one of the beneficiaries with a 45 per cent growth in 2009.

The 211-page report details the actions conducted in the three surveys carried out between the months of August to October 2009 in the San Jorge Gulf.

The seismic survey project consisted of the study of 1652 square kilometres by means of the 3D marine seismic technique, within the area located in the central zone of San Jorge Gulf, in the jurisdictions of the Chubut and Santa Cruz provinces.

The zone of study was set between parallels 46° 00' and 46° 16' South and meridians 66° 40' and 67° 30' West.

During the campaigns, fishing nets were used from commercial fishing vessels that normally operate in the area of:

- Campaign I (Stage prior) was carried out on days 11 to 14 August 2009;
- Campaign II (Stage during) was carried out on days 24 to 28 September 2009;
- Campaign III (Stage post) was undertaken from 24 to 26 October 2009.
-

The research was carried out onboard the seismic ship Western Patriot.

According to research findings, a noticeable predominance of common hake was observed over the rest of the species present.

In the case of Campaign I, hake hubbsi represented 86 per cent, and in Campaigns II and III, 96 per cent of the total. The average sizes of the resource are similar in the three campaigns, with a small variation.

In terms of water quality, the researchers assured that physical, chemical and sedimentological parameters did not vary during the study.

In addition, all the values of temperature and salinity are characteristic of gulf waters.

In relation to the landings registered in Caleta Paula port, the document specifies that 45 per cent more hake was landed in 2009 than in 2008.

According to Subsecretariat of Fisheries and Aquaculture statistics, 274,051.2 tonnes of hake were landed between 1 January and 31 December in Argentine ports, 4 per cent more than in 2008, when 263,322.5 tonnes were unloaded.

Over the last year, the terminal of Caleta Paula received 11,242.4 tonnes of hake; whereas it registered 7,692.9 tonnes in 2008.

Meanwhile, Santa Cruz governor, Daniel Peralta announced that the findings of a survey conducted by the National Institute for Fisheries Research and Development (INIDEP) will be revealed in a couple of weeks.

The authorities and the fishing industry of the Patagonia province hope the INIDEP reveals that the decrease of the resource is due to "a biological question" or another factor. (FIS)

Monday, February 15th 2010 - 06:38 UTC

Chile announce ambitious Antarctica Strategic Plan

Chile's Public Works Ministry announced the launching of five new projects in Antarctica.

Teniente Marsh airfield, gateway to Chilean Antarctica (FA Chile) Teniente Marsh airfield, gateway to Chilean Antarctica (FA Chile)

The projects, which together make up the Antarctic Strategy Plan, will serve to improve the quality of existing facilities, build new infrastructure, and heighten ground security.

One of the projects includes the lengthening and improvement of the Teniente Marsh airfield, the main Chilean base in King George Island.

"The renovation of the airfield will cost more than 100 million US dollars. This project is our highest priority because it will increase mainland access to Chile's Antarctic territory," said Public Works Minister Sergio Bitar.

Other projects in the Antarctic Strategy Plan include a docking pier, port development, and restoration of the Prat Base – the oldest Chilean base in Antarctica.

After the completion of a feasibility report in 2011, the project is set for completion in 2014.

By Kamille Go (editor@santiagotimes.cl)

Tuesday, February 16th 2010 - 19:30 UTC

Argentina demands prior approval for vessels sailing to Falklands

The Argentine government made public Tuesday a decree that requires prior approval for ships sailing between Argentina and the Falkland Islands. The approval will be needed for vessels travelling "or carrying goods directly or indirectly" between the mainland and the Islands, announced cabinet chief Anibal Fernandez during a press conference at Government House.

Cabinet Chief Anibal Fernandez making the announcement
Cabinet Chief Anibal Fernandez making the announcement

"We must make take these decisions in the defence of Argentina's interests" that include sovereignty and natural resources, said Fernández. He added that Britain contrary to repeated United Nations reiterated declarations has "insisted in unilateral actions" ignoring the non innovation principle while the dispute is on.

The announcement comes amid escalating tensions with the United Kingdom as several oil companies prepare to drill exploratory wells to the north and south of the Falklands based on licences awarded by the Falklands elected government

Last week the Argentine government detained a British flag cargo vessel which was loading seamless pipes, allegedly for Egypt, since the vessel had called on the Falklands/Malvinas with no Argentine government authorization.

The decree signed by President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner states that "all vessels trying to transit between Argentine continental ports and Islands' ports, or cross Argentine maritime spaces heading to a port in the Islands must request prior authorization from the Argentine government".

To enforce the decree the cabinet chief office will create "a commission made up with representatives from the Ministries of Planning, Justice, Economy and Foreign Affairs, that will coordinate actions to implement the decree".

The cabinet chief said that faced with the exploration for hydrocarbons in the Falklands/Malvinas maritime spaces, the Argentine government "has insisted in all world forums about the need to adjust to multilateralism and UN resolutions".

"The UK has repeatedly confirmed its negative to abide by UN General Assembly resolutions which recognizes the existence of a sovereignty matter which demands negotiations. The UK has ignored the resolution not to innovate, which has been evidenced in the successive episodes of natural resources exploration", added Fernandez.

Although the purpose of the latest decree as had been anticipated by Argentine authorities is clearly geared to discourage oil companies from exploring in Falklands waters by limiting the logistics and creating a sense of "lack of legal security", it is consistent with the Kirchners policy towards the Falkland Islands dispute.

There are no direct maritime links between the Falklands and Argentina but foreign flagged fishing vessels did operate on both sides until Buenos Aires passed legislation,

which forced fishing companies to opt, with severe sanctions for those companies that “directly or indirectly” retained business operations in the Islands.

The current decree based on the same spirit could also potentially have a great impact on the cruise business since most South Atlantic itineraries include Argentine ports, mainly Ushuaia, gateway to Antarctica and the Falklands.

If the decree is fully applied and the “special committee” turns out to be “lazy” or “particularly distracted” in extending authorizations for cruise vessels to navigate in the South Atlantic and call in the Falklands, the consequences could be serious for the whole industry.

On the other hand., when Argentina is attempting to return to voluntary money markets, and must reach an agreement with pending bond holders and the Club of Paris, (a multilateral government-to-government financial organization that helps bail out developing countries with soft loans), the political move is not particularly attractive, even when the nationalistic chord of a weak government will have a big echo domestically.

Wednesday, February 17th 2010 - 02:05 UTC

UK stern reply to Argentine intention of controlling Falklands’ sea trade

The Argentine government’s announcement on Tuesday that all cargo navigating between Argentina and Falklands/Malvinas Islands “will require previous authorization” received a quick and energetic response from the British government through its embassy in Buenos Aires.

Argentina is strongly protesting (and taking actions against) the oil exploratory drilling season scheduled to begin next week in the Falklands’ maritime spaces over which Argentina claims sovereignty.

"The United Kingdom has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and surrounding maritime territories and it knows very well that the exploration of hydrocarbons is a completely legitimate project" said the British embassy spokesperson and press official, Andrés Federman.

Earlier in the afternoon cabinet chief Anibal Fernandez had announced the decree signed by President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner which limits maritime transit to the Falklands since all vessels which call at Argentine ports and/or navigate Argentine waters en route to the Islands will require prior authorization from the Argentine government.

Further on British embassy spokesperson Federman pointed out that the initiative has to do with "how Argentina applies its laws within its own territories", the same way "that the Falklands elected authorities applies laws in their own jurisdiction, it's something that only relates to the government of the Islands".

The quick and stern British reply surprised Argentine authorities since normally embassy officials consult with London before responding to statements or actions referred to the Falklands.

However since Prime Minister Gordon Brown's New Year message to the Falklands, when he ratified "no doubts about British sovereignty over the Islands" based on the right to self-determination and again expressed full political and technical support for the legitimate oil exploration in the Islands, the Foreign Office has been more immediate and to the point in its replies.

Wednesday, February 17th 2010 - 03:24 UTC

Mrs. Kirchner calls UN to force UK to Falklands' sovereignty negotiations

Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner defended her decision to place stronger controls on navigation and shipping within the Falklands called on the United Nations to force the United Kingdom to come through on negotiations over the sovereignty of that territory.

Cristina promised to insist "one thousand and one times for international rights" Cristina promised to insist "one thousand and one times for international rights"

During a rally held in the Buenos Aires neighbourhood of Merlo, the president said that the United Kingdom has "systematically misunderstood" the UN resolutions and that "they have rejected the idea of sitting down" for negotiation.

Mrs. Kirchner promised she will insist "one thousand and one times for the international rights" to be respected, adding that "I am telling all Argentines that we will keep working for our rights in Malvinas".

This way the Argentine president supported her decision to impede ships from any nationality to operate within the ports in the Falklands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Island and the continent, without previous Buenos Aires authorization.

The Argentine official strategy consists of impeding the exploitation of possible hydrocarbon resources within the Falklands, particularly on the eve of an exploratory drilling round scheduled to begin next week with the arrival of a rig.

Wednesday, February 17th 2010 - 17:01 UTC

Falklands drilling will go ahead despite Argentine shipping movement 'decree'

DRILLING in Falklands waters will go ahead as planned despite an Argentine decree aimed at handicapping shipping movement between the Islands and South America. From London British Foreign and Commonwealth Minister Chris Bryant reiterated that "we have no doubt about our sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and we're clear that the Falkland Islands Government is entitled to develop a hydrocarbons industry within its waters".

Ocean Guardian oil rig should start drilling for oil and gas from next week Ocean Guardian oil rig should start drilling for oil and gas from next week

Responding to the decree that was made public yesterday from the Argentine Government that approval will be needed for vessels travelling 'or carrying goods directly or indirectly' between the mainland and the Islands, Falklands Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) Emma Edwards confirmed, "...everything needed for drilling is already in place and we are due to start on the planned date, weather permitting."

The decree signed by President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner says all vessels trying to transit between Argentine continental ports and islands' ports or cross Argentine maritime spaces heading to a port in the Islands must request prior authorization from the Argentine government.

MLA Edwards added, "With regard to the decree itself we are still waiting for more clarity in terms of what Argentina means by 'maritime spaces.'"

She pointed out that like the Falklands and other countries Argentina has limited territorial waters.

She said, "The Falklands is an important trading partner with Chile and all vessels use international waters, we would hope that Argentina will obey the the International laws of the sea under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea."

LMA Edwards said it was a case of seeing how this situation developed adding, "We really don't know how they will regulate permits, whether there will be a fee or what type and size of vessel it will effect."

British Foreign and Commonwealth Minister Chris Bryant said, "we have no doubt about our sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and we're clear that the Falkland Islands Government is entitled to develop a hydrocarbons industry within its waters. The Falkland Islands territorial waters are controlled by the Islands' authorities. We're monitoring the situation closely, but we're not going to react to every development in Argentina. We remain focussed on supporting the Falkland Islands Government in developing legitimate business in its territory".

Bryant added that "We mustn't lose sight of the fact that Argentina and the UK are important partners: We have a close and productive relationship on a range of issues: in the G20, on climate change, sustainable development and counter-proliferation. We would like to add South Atlantic issues to that list and will work to develop the relationship further. If that could be made to work, it would be good for all concerned."

Managing Director of Falklands port agents Sullivan Shipping Services Ltd said, "I am concerned. It seems as though this is a rushed decision and that the system for applying for, or issuance of, permits is not yet known. Our cruise vessel clients are contacting their agents in Argentina and we will, no doubt, learn more later."

Mr Pollard's concern is unsurprising, his company has been providing port agency services to its maritime clients since the late 1980s, including cruise vessel, fishing vessel and transport vessel owners. It is also the premier shore excursion provider in the Falkland Islands

Lisa Watson – SeAledPR - Stanley.

Wednesday, February 17th 2010 - 23:36 UTC

Wind turbines to supply 40% of Falklands' power

Annual wind power contribution in the Falkland Islands is set to rise to 40% of total energy generated with the installation of three new wind turbines, which started going online on 15 February. The installation of the first three wind turbines in 2007 has resulted in the displacement of 26% of annual fuel consumption and the aim with the three new turbines is to reach 40% fuel displacement.

Three new turbines have been installed next to the first three from 2007 Three new turbines have been installed next to the first three from 2007

This figure compares favorably to the UK Government's goal for 20% of electricity produced in the UK to be renewable by 2020, proving the Islanders' commitment to renewable energy. As well as reducing their carbon footprint in order to protect the

pristine environment of the Islands, the increase in renewable energy has meant that the cost of electricity has been reduced by six pence per unit for Islanders.

The turbines arrived on the Ministry of Defense charter ship, Hurst Point, in September 2009. They are the same type and make as the first three turbines: 330 kilo-watt synchronous variable speed and variable pitch turbines manufactured by Enercon (Germany).

The turbines have been installed at Sand Bay Wind Farm, six miles from the Islands' capital Stanley and approximately one kilometer across the valley from the first three turbines. The most significant impact of the three additional turbines will be the reduction in the amount of diesel used on the Islands, thereby reducing costs and minimizing the environmental impact.

Phase Three of the development of the wind farm will be energy storage, achieved by charging a 2MWh battery during optimal wind times and discharging the battery when wind is not available. This will ensure that energy production is kept more constant.

Glenn Ross, Power Station Manager and a Member of the Legislative Assembly, said: "We are excited about the installation of the three new turbines as Phase One of the wind farm project has been very successful and a further significant step in wind power contribution is certain". (Cision Wire).

Thursday, February 18th 2010 - 01:17 UTC

Argentine protests Falklands oil drilling before the Rio Group and UN

Argentina will be pressing next Monday for support from Latinamerica and the Caribbean, and on Wednesday at United Nations, in its dispute over the oil drilling round about to being in the Falkland Islands.

Jorge Taiana begins next week a diplomatic blitzkrieg
Jorge Taiana begins next week a diplomatic blitzkrieg

Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana is participating Monday and Tuesday of the Rio Group that brings together twenty countries from the region and is meeting in Mexico. The agenda includes Haiti's reconstruction and the regional political balance but Taiana is expected to have the Falklands' issue added.

Since it was born unpretentious in the eighties the Rio Group has been quite successful in defusing regional armed conflicts, mainly in Central American and lately in keeping at bay the ongoing Venezuela and Colombia confrontation.

A strong declaration in support of Argentina's position calling for sovereignty negotiations on the Falklands dispute with Britain, based on UN resolutions, and condemnation of UK's unilateral actions in the South Atlantic can be expected.

On Wednesday Taiana has a meeting scheduled with UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon when Argentina will again denounce Britain's decision to endorse oil exploratory drilling in the Falklands' maritime jurisdiction.

The Argentine diplomatic blitzkrieg will only escalate the current confrontation with London over the oil exploration round and the development of an oil industry in the Falklands, which Britain openly supports as legitimate, based on the Islanders right to self determination and UK sovereignty over the Islands.

On Wednesday Argentine president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner signed a decree establishing that all maritime trade or business with Falklands' ports and/or crossing of Argentine waters needs a formal authorization from the Argentine government, since the disputed Islands are an integral part of Argentine territory.

Argentina's main argument against the oil drilling round by "British companies" in Falklands' waters is that they do not abide by the reiterated UN resolutions.

In response to the Argentine government position and latest decree, Foreign Office Minister Chris Bryant said that UK "have no doubt about our sovereignty over the Falkland

Islands and we're clear that the Falkland Islands Government is entitled to develop a hydrocarbons industry within its waters. The Falkland Islands territorial waters are controlled by the Islands' authorities"

However in a conciliatory note Minister Bryant added that it must not be ignored that Argentina and the UK are important partners.

"We have a close and productive relationship on a range of issues: in the G20, on climate change, sustainable development and counter-proliferation. We would like to add South Atlantic issues to that list and will work to develop the relationship further. If that could be made to work, it would be good for all concerned" said Bryant.

Meantime Desire Petroleum the British company that contracted the oil rig "Ocean Guardian" which is expected to begin exploratory drilling in Falklands' waters next week fully ratified its plans.

"All this is most unfortunate, but has been anticipated for months. Desire's logistics has not been affected", said a spokesperson for the company.

Thursday, February 18th 2010 - 21:36 UTC

Argentina looking for mainland business links of Falkland oil companies

The Argentine government is looking into the British oil companies involved in the Falkland Islands exploratory drilling operation checking on their possible links to interests in Argentina (and if so the infringement of legislation of Argentine legislation), according to reports in the Buenos Aires press.

Minera Lumbrera a major copper and gold undertaking in northern Argentina
Minera Lumbrera a major copper and gold undertaking in northern Argentina

Primary information leaked to the press indicates that the four companies holding Falklands' government licenses to explore and later exploit hydrocarbons, Desire

Petroleum, Falkland Oil & Gas Ltd., Rockhopper Exploration and Borders & Southern Petroleum effectively have through share holders or directly significant investments in Argentina.

The first three companies are in line ready to begin drilling next week when the "Ocean Guardian" oil rig arrives to the North Falkland basin. Borders & Southern has yet to decide.

Apparently Desire Petroleum and Borders & Southern Petroleum have a common shareholder, Barclays Ltd, which happens to be one of the banks selected by Argentine authorities to manage a deal with the holdouts of the 2002 sovereign defaulted bonds, (estimated in 20 billion US dollars) that limit access to voluntary international markets forcing Argentina to pay "exorbitant interest rates".

Precisely the current Argentine central bank controversy was triggered when the administration of President Cristina Kirchner announced the creation of a Bicentennial Fund, with central bank reserves, which among other things would act as collateral for the negotiations with bond holders.

Borders & Southern Petroleum allegedly is also linked to some of the companies which exploit the Minera Lumbrea copper and gold mines in northern Argentina. Minera Lumbrera ranks as the tenth minerals exporter of Argentina.

Falkland Oil & Gas Ltd's associate Anglo-Australian BHP Billiton is one of the world's leading mining companies and is also involved in copper exploratory mining in the north of Argentina.

Finally Rockhopper Exploration has as one of its financial advisors the HSBC banking group, which has an extended network in Argentina.

Last week a former member of the Argentine Congress made a formal presentation before a criminal court against the Argentine Ministries of Economy and Foreign Affairs for having nominated Barclays as global coordinator for the opening of the sovereign bonds swap

"This financial institution is a strong stock holder of Desire Petroleum and holds a percentage of BlackRock, which is part of Switzerland's Xstrata involved in the exploitation of Minera Lumbrera and one of the companies that controls Borders & Southern Petroleum", said Mario Cafiero.

However it is not clear yet how the Argentine government could "intimidate" major corporations or financial institutions without further deteriorating its international image in business affairs when it is trying a comeback to world money markets.

Thursday, February 18th 2010 - 21:56 UTC

Falkland Islands's Government says oil drilling round will commence as planned next week

The Falkland Islands reaffirmed its right to develop a hydrocarbons industry and anticipated that in spite of disruptive measures from Argentina the oil drilling round will commence as planned early next week, "weather permitting".

Gilbert House, seat of the Falklands' elected Legislative Assembly
Gilbert House, seat of the Falklands' elected Legislative Assembly

In a brief statement released on Thursday in response to the Argentine Decree 256 instructing ships travelling from Argentina to the Falkland Islands that they will require a permit, issued by the Argentine government, the Falklands' Legislative Assembly says that "it is no surprise to anyone that they (Argentina) are behaving in this way but it is nonetheless disappointing when they do".

The statement also emphasizes that the British government has clearly expressed support for the Falklands' right to develop a hydrocarbons industry as any other legitimate business, and reaffirms British sovereignty over the Islands.

The message ends saying that if any implications from the new Argentine directive become "clearer" the Legislative Assembly will keep the local population informed.

Follows the complete text of the communiqué from Gilbert House:

"On February 16th 2010, Argentina issued a decree instructing that ships travelling from Argentina to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia or the South Sandwich islands will require a permit, issued by the Argentine authorities.

"This is a move by Argentina to try and disrupt the oil drilling due to start early next week. Currently, all the supplies the industry needs are located here in the Islands and drilling will commence as planned, weather permitting.

"The Falkland Islands Government has every right to develop a hydrocarbons industry within our waters. The British government has clearly stated that they support our right to develop legitimate business. The British Government have also reiterated their stance on our British sovereignty.

"It is no surprise to anyone that they are behaving in this way but it is nonetheless disappointing when they do.

"If any implications of this new directive from Argentina become clearer we will let you know"

Friday, February 19th 2010 - 18:23 UTC

Argentine efforts to disrupt Falklands' oil drilling round meet cool reception

As the "Ocean Guardian" oil rig was this morning due to arrive at Desire Petroleum's prospecting site 100 miles off the Falkland Islands, Argentina's latest efforts to disrupt

exploration were treated to a cool response by the United Kingdom and Falklands elected authorities, reports this Friday edition of the Penguin News.

"Ocean Guardian" oil rig was this morning due to arrive at Desire Petroleum's prospecting site "Ocean Guardian" oil rig was this morning due to arrive at Desire Petroleum's prospecting site

The shipping restrictions imposed this week by Argentine President Cristina Kirchner are likely to have little impact on the Falklands drilling operation, which is "going ahead as planned," say Foreign Office and Falklands Government officials.

President Kirchner's decree obliges all vessels using Argentine ports to seek a permit if they plan to enter or leave "British-controlled" waters.

But Director of Mineral Resources, Phyl Rendell, was not unduly concerned: "Action taken by the Argentine Government this week will not prevent oil exploration continuing as planned.

"This is due to the fact that the rig and the equipment needed to drill wells has been supplied and shipped directly from Europe and much of the drill pipe and casing is already in the Islands. It is business as usual for all involved in the drilling programme" pointed out Director Rendell.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister Chris Bryant said earlier in the week the situation was being monitored closely, adding: "We are not going to react to every development in Argentina.

"We remain focused on supporting the Falkland Islands Government in developing legitimate business in its territory," he said.

But Mr Bryant also concluded: "We mustn't lose sight of the fact that Argentina and the UK are important partners. We have a close and productive relationship on a range of issues; in the G20, on climate change, sustainable development and counter-proliferation.

We would like to add South Atlantic issues to that list and will work to develop the relationship further. If that could be made to work, it would be good for all concerned."

Members of the Falklands elected Legislative Assembly recognised the move by Argentina as an attempt to try and disrupt the drilling, due to start early next week.

"Currently, all the supplies the industry needs are located here in the Islands and drilling will commence as planned, weather permitting," members said in a statement issued yesterday.

"The Falkland Islands Government has every right to develop a hydrocarbons industry within our waters. The British Government has clearly stated that they support our right to develop legitimate business. The British Government have also reiterated their stance on our British sovereignty. It is no surprise to anyone that they are behaving in this way, but it is nonetheless disappointing when they do," the statement read. Members said people would be kept informed of any further developments.

Assembly Member Bill Luxton took his usual hard-line approach, saying on Falklands' radio: "I think they've probably issued the last threat they can.

"They've tried to wreck the Islands' economy and everything else they can for a long time. I think we just need to put two fingers up to them and say get on with it. The British Government is solidly behind us. I don't think we've got any worries".

Last week Argentine authorities prevented the loading of a consignment of oil industry equipment onto a vessel which they said was in breach of port operations rules in force.

A week earlier Argentina had protested to Britain about the imminent start of oil exploration activities in the Falklands.

President Kirchner issued her shipping decree on Tuesday.

Argentina has also said it will take its complaint against Britain to the United Nations.

The Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana said "all necessary steps to defend the claim to the Islands" would be taken.

By Sharon Jaffray - Penguin News - Stanley

Saturday, February 20th 2010 - 15:11 UTC

General Haig, US mediator of Falklands War dies

Alexander Haig, the decorated four- star general and assertive aide to U.S. presidents who declared himself "in control" at the White House after Ronald Reagan was shot, has died. He was 85.

Alexander Haig with former Gral Galtieri in Bs. Aires during the South Atlantic conflict
Alexander Haig with former Gral Galtieri in Bs. Aires during the South Atlantic conflict

He died about 1:30 a.m. today at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, hospital spokeswoman Maryalice Yakutchik said in a telephone interview. The cause of death was complications associated with an infection, the Associated Press said, citing the Haig family.

Haig straddled the worlds of politics and the military during almost two decades in posts that included supreme commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. His 18-month tenure as Reagan's first secretary of state, the pinnacle of his political career, was marred by turf battles and by the famous comment he could never live down.

He uttered it on March 30, 1981, hours after John Hinckley Jr. shot and wounded Reagan outside a Washington hotel. As surgeons worked to save Reagan's life at a nearby hospital, and with Vice President George H.W. Bush in flight to Washington from Texas, Haig huddled with other top officials at the White House, then went before reporters.

"Constitutionally, gentlemen," he told the press, "you have the president, the vice president and the secretary of state, in that order, and should the president decide he wants to transfer the helm, he will do so." He went on, "as of now, I am in control here in the White House, pending the return of the vice president and in close touch with him."

Fourth in Line

In fact, under the rules of presidential succession, Haig wasn't in control. The secretary of state is fourth in line to the presidency, behind the vice president, speaker of the House and president pro tempore of the Senate.

His off-the-cuff comment gave Haig a lasting image as a power-grabber. "It was reminiscent of Dr. Strangelove," Richard Darman, Reagan's deputy chief of staff, wrote in his memoir. "Haig intended to calm the nation. He unnerved the world."

Haig had "lost control" and "written his own political epitaph," Larry Speakes, Reagan's spokesman, recalled in his memoir. "From then on, other members of the Reagan team would be viewing him with suspicion, and within 15 months their hazing would drive him out of the White House."

For his part, Haig long defended his comment as merely "a statement of fact that I was the senior Cabinet officer present."

The 'Vicar'

During his stormy term as secretary of state, Haig called himself the "vicar of American foreign policy" and reportedly chafed when others -- even Reagan -- took steps without his approval. In one instance, White House Chief of Staff James A. Baker III rebuked Haig for remarks on Central America that diverted attention from the administration's planned message about the economy.

"Indiscreet and volatile, knowledgeable and arrogant, Haig was ever ready to take offense at slights real and imagined," Richard Reeves wrote in "President Reagan: The Triumph of Imagination."

In April 1981, while convalescing from his gunshot wound, Reagan penned a heartfelt handwritten note to Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, extolling the importance of peace. Haig tried without success to persuade Reagan to sharpen the letter's tone. Haig's tenure was "doomed from that moment," according to Reagan biographer Lou Cannon.

Reagan's Limits

"Al really did not understand how much Reagan intended to be his own president," Cannon said in a 2008 interview. "Reagan delegated a ton of stuff, arguably more than he should have, but he considered the U.S.-Soviet relationship the most important thing on his plate, and he was never about to delegate that."

Haig resigned in June 1982 and presented his side of the story in a 1984 book, "Caveat: Realism, Reagan and Foreign Policy." The Reagan White House was "an administration of chums," he wrote, and his status as an outsider was a "handicap."

He said he was unjustly blamed for failing to forge a diplomatic solution to avert the Falklands War between Argentina and the U.K. He also denied longstanding allegations that he gave Israel a green light to invade Lebanon in 1982.

Haig became a presidential candidate himself in 1987, joining a Republican field that included Bush, the sitting vice president. He dropped out on Feb. 12, 1988, four days before the New Hampshire primary, and endorsed Senator Robert Dole, who went on to lose the nomination to Bush.

Attacking Bush

Haig spent much of his brief candidacy attacking Bush, venting some leftover resentment toward the Reagan White House.

Rejecting one of Reagan's central arguments, candidate Haig said the ballooning budget deficit was a "Republican deficit" that couldn't be blamed on congressional Democrats. He indicated that at least some of his anger toward Bush stemmed from his feelings toward Baker, a Bush friend and adviser.

Alexander Meigs Haig Jr. was born on Dec. 2, 1924, the son of a lawyer. He was raised in the suburbs of Philadelphia. He graduated in 1947 from the U.S. Military Academy at West

Point, New York, and obtained a master's degree in international relations from Georgetown University in 1961.

He served military assignments in Japan, Korea, Europe and Vietnam, working part of the time under General Douglas MacArthur. Among numerous commendations, Haig received a Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second-highest medal for heroism, for leading outnumbered U.S. troops in a 1967 battle with Viet Cong forces.

Nixon White House

He joined Richard Nixon's White House in 1969 as chief military assistant to National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, became deputy assistant to the president for national security and was promoted to general in 1972. He worked on negotiations for a cease-fire in Vietnam as well as arrangements for Nixon's historic visit to China in 1972.

After a brief stint as Army vice chief of staff, Haig returned to the White House and succeeded H.R. Haldeman as chief of staff as Nixon's team dealt with the fallout from the Watergate break-in. Haig played a central role in persuading Nixon to resign in August 1974.

Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford, named Haig commander-in- chief for U.S. forces in Europe. Haig then spent five years as supreme allied commander in Europe, responsible for the multi- nation forces of NATO.

He survived an assassination attempt in June 1979 when a bomb exploded near his car as he was being driven to his NATO office in Belgium.

That same year, he became president and chief operating officer of Hartford, Connecticut-based United Technologies Corp.

Confronting Soviets

Reagan, upon taking office in 1981, named him the 59th secretary of state. Haig endured contentious confirmation hearings in the Senate, then went to work building a foreign policy rooted in direct confrontation with the Soviet Union in Cuba, Central America and elsewhere.

His resignation in June 1982 marked the end of his work in government. He returned to United Technologies as senior adviser and director while opening and serving as chairman of Worldwide Associates Inc., which provides political and security consulting to international corporations.

He served on the boards of several companies, including America Online Inc., MGM Grand Inc. and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc. He was popular on the paid lecture circuit and hosted an independently produced weekly television program, "World Business Review."

In addition to his 1984 book on the Reagan White House, he wrote "Inner Circles: How America Changed the World," published in 1992.

Haig married the former Patricia Fox on May 24, 1950. They had two sons, Alexander and Brian, and a daughter, Barbara. (Bloomberg)

Saturday, February 20th 2010 - 04:41 UTC

Tierra del Fuego prepares to implement Falklands' maritime traffic decree

Argentine Tierra del Fuego Governor met this week with Coast Guard authorities in Ushuaia to coordinate the implementation of Decree 256 that regulates maritime traffic between Argentine ports and the Falklands/Malvinas Islands, and which could have an impact on the cruise industry.

Since today until March 26 eight cruises will be calling Falklands from Ushuaia Since today until March 26 eight cruises will be calling Falklands from Ushuaia

According to Decree 256 all ships heading for Falklands ports crossing through Argentine waters must previously request a permit from the Argentine government.

“We are committed to make available all of our resources for the new system established by the federal decree in Tierra del Fuego provincial jurisdiction areas so as to collaborate in what is needed for the controls that are to be applied”, said governor Fabiana Ríos.

The head of Coast Guard operations in Ushuaia, Rodolfo Alfredo González said that Governor Rios “was willing to provide all the structure of the provincial government for the implementation of the decree”.

González explained that normally Coast Guard checks the incoming and outgoing vessels on security and documentation issues, “but from now on we will request authorization from the special committee created by decree 256” to fully abide with its implementation and purpose .

The control “will affect mostly cruise vessels sailing between Ushuaia and the Malvinas Islands which at this time of the year, high season, generate an important traffic” indicated Gonzalez.

According to local press reports the meeting was held at Government house in Ushuaia with the participation of provincial cabinet ministers whose offices will be involved in the implementation of the decree.

According to the decree a special commission under instructions from the cabinet chief and with representatives from different government ministries and offices will be in charge of evaluating the permits. So far the commission has not been named or the functioning and attributions clearly determined.

Under the Argentine constitution Tierra del Fuego province also includes Argentine Antarctica and the disputed South Atlantic Islands (Falklands, South Georgia and South Sandwich).-

Saturday, February 20th 2010 - 21:18 UTC

President elect Mujica prepared to support Kirchner as Unasur chairman

The next Uruguayan administration is open to consider voting for former Argentine president Nestor Kirchner as chairman of the Union of South American Nations, Unasur, said Luis Almagro the incoming Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Nestor Kirchner has a difficult relation with outgoing President Vázquez (L) Nestor Kirchner has a difficult relation with outgoing President Vázquez (L)

Almagro anticipated that the administration of President-elect Jose Mujica, who takes office March first, will assess "from zero" the issue of candidates for Unasur chair.

The stance marks a total reversal of current policy under President Tabare Vazquez who vetoed Kirchner in the midst of the bilateral conflict over the construction of a pulp mill on a shared river, and Argentine (government sponsored) pickets blocking traffic to Uruguay since November 2006.

"The next government will look at the candidates presented. We'll assess again and from zero and we will be deciding on that basis", added Almagro.

President elect Mujica has shown willingness to dialogue and negotiate with Argentina with the object of overcoming the tense situation of these last years.

Almagro described Unasur as a "concerted mechanism" with a "superlative importance in the regional context". However he did not accept the concept that Unasur should be seen as "excluding" the US.

"I never support going against something. I don't think that it excludes the US but simply is part of a Latinamerican process, in search of the best mechanism for integration or concerted actions".

The incoming minister recalled that in spite of the bilateral pulp mill conflict, Mujica has held several "personal contacts" with the Argentine government.

"The issue needs a quick solution and we are on course to that objective and therefore we are not going to close or ignore any instance that cuts the road to a solution", he added paraphrasing president elect Mujica words on the issue.

As to a joint committee agreed last January during a meeting in Buenos Aires with President Cristina Kirchner, Almagro said that no agenda had been established, yet, or who would be sitting in.

Almagro anticipated that The Hague International Court of Justice ruling on the pulp mill dispute will most certainly hold a "multiplicity of aspects" which should help address the issue jointly with Argentina, but "hopefully nobody is thinking of dismantling the plant and shipping it back to Finland".

Almagro also underlined that relations with Brazil are "essential" for Uruguay as well as a more dynamic Mercosur to help it overcome its "current paralysis".

"We believe Mercosur must advance with Unasur and in negotiations with the European Union, addressing the issues with pragmatism", said Almagro.

More specifically on trade with Iran and Venezuela the Mujica administration will have an "objective, pragmatic" relation.

"Iran and Venezuela are countries with which Uruguay has long standing links of friendship and trade", but he emphasized "relations will be absolutely business-oriented with Uruguay's interests paramount".

Finally he confirmed the incoming President Mujica administration support for the re-election of Chile's Jose Miguel Insulza as Secretary General of the Organization of American States, OAS.

"He's a man of impeccable credentials and has done a magnificent job", said Almagro.

Saturday, February 20th 2010 - 02:28 UTC

Falklands' standoff: PM Brown anticipates successful diplomacy with Argentina

Britain and Argentina on a collision course over the oil exploration round in Falkland Islands waters, following an exchange of strong statements and actions, seemed to be sending converging messages about possible diplomatic contacts that could help find a way out to the standoff.

Argentine Deputy Foreign Affairs minister warned that Malvinas is a long term policy with no immediate results
Argentine Deputy Foreign Affairs minister warned that Malvinas is a long term policy with no immediate results

Prime Minister Gordon Brown said Friday he was "confident" diplomacy could resolve a standoff with Argentina on the Falkland Islands but insisted the Islanders had a right to develop a legitimate business such as an oil industry.

"The diplomacy between us and Argentina is one that I think will be successful," Brown said, insisting that Britain was acting within international law. "I think the work that's being done will avoid any tension", he added.

PM Brown made the statements during a press conference next to Spanish President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero in London where they were participating of an international conference on employment and the current global slowdown.

The latest verbal skirmishes have been triggered by Argentina's decree that ships travelling through its waters to the Falkland Islands require an Argentine permit. The Argentine decision follows the imminent beginning of a round of oil exploratory drilling by British companies in Falklands' waters, over which Argentina claims sovereignty.

Brown's comments came as the Falkland Islands government stated in an official release that oil drilling would begin as planned next week, "weather permitting."

Spanish president Rodriguez Zapatero said he wanted "dialogue, diplomacy, closeness" to resolve the South Atlantic situation, without commenting in detail.

Brown insisted the UK was acting in the framework of international law and earlier in the week expressed full support for the Falklands and any legitimate business in their jurisdiction, following the latest Argentine move.

"We have made all the preparations that are necessary to make sure that the Islanders are properly protected", said Brown adding that it is perfectly within our rights to be able to do this. I think the Argentines actually understand that. Sensible discussions will prevail on this".

In Buenos Aires Deputy Foreign Affairs minister Victorio Taccetti said that the Argentine government first objective was "to sit to the table with the UK to negotiate" about sovereignty over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands and adjoining maritime spaces.

Taccetti recalled that next Wednesday Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana will be meeting UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon in New York to push for Argentina's case. Asked to comment on PM Brown's statement Taccetti said "what is positive is the fact that the British are recognizing there's a controversy with Argentina. Acknowledging there's a problem is the first step to try and overcome it".

However Taccetti pointed out that Falklands/Malvinas is a long term policy. "We Argentines must get used to think on the long term, and this is a long term policy; we can't expect results tomorrow or in a couple of days", and once negotiations begin it "will face difficulties, ups and downs".

"We must think Malvinas is a national strategy, All united and with a clear mind, having very clearly established our objectives" underlined Taccetti.

Meantime Taiana is currently in Mexico preparing for the Rio Group two-day summit which begins next Monday and brings together the leaders of twenty regional countries. Mrs. Kirchner is scheduled to arrive in Cancún Sunday night.

Taiana expects to harvest from the Rio Group a strong declaration of support for Argentina and condemnation of Britain and "its unilateral oil exploration policy" with which he will be travelling for the appointment with Bank Ki Moon in New York.

Saturday, February 20th 2010 - 04:39 UTC

"Malvinas Islands controversy, not a rupture of relations with UK"

A leading spokesperson for the Argentine government in Congress said that there is "no rupture of relations with Great Britain but a controversy over the Malvinas Islands" because of the oil drilling round set to begin in the coming hours in Falklands waters.

Agustin Rossi, Argentine government Lower House spokesperson
Agustin Rossi, Argentine government Lower House spokesperson

Agustin Rossi, head of the government's block in the Lower House also talked about those companies that could have commercial direct or indirect links with the oil exploration companies involved in the Falklands drilling round or its logistics.

"In fact there are British oil companies working in continental Argentina. But one thing can't be mixed with the other" said Argentine Rossi, insisting the current situation with Britain is that of "a controversy over the Malvinas", and "not a rupture of relations".

"Argentina has a mining investment law and all companies, whatever the origin of the capital they represent, and if they abide by investment regulations are entitled to work in the country. What we are questioning is the presence of an oil rig in the Malvinas Islands because they belong to an international and historic claim of our country. These are two

absolutely different things, otherwise it could be interpreted as an arbitrary action from Argentina", underlined the lawmaker.

He went on to say there's "no animosity in particular: we have a claim with historic, geographic and geopolitical foundations over the Malvinas islands. This is where all the energy of Argentina must concentrate".

Further on Rossi pointed out that historically "in each of our international claims is included the request, by Argentina, of a ban on hydrocarbons exploitation or attempted exploitation along the continental platform which corresponds to our country".

Rossi made the comments following the summoning to Congress of Deputy Foreign Secretary Victorio Taccetti to explain the government's current policy on the Falklands. "The purpose of the presidential decree is to adopt all necessary actions so as to avoid an advance in a direction which all international resolutions clearly ban", said Taccetti who described the decision as "not friendly".

"Although the measure does not impede traffic in and out of the Malvinas Islands, it does make trips longer, sailing costs increase and it disrupts the logistics effort for the oil drilling operation in Islands' waters", pointed out Taccetti.

He added that Argentina "does not have the means to stop vessels from going to the Malvinas, since we've given up the use of force".

Taccetti mentioned that an additional resolution from the Energy Secretary "eliminates from the registry of authorized companies to operate in hydrocarbons in Argentina, all those involved with a pseudo licence from the Malvinas usurpers".

He underlined that with decree 256 Argentina was basically protecting its sovereignty claims over the Islands, and complained that the UK has never complied with international resolutions calling on both sides to initiate sovereignty talks.

"The fact is that the decree will force vessels to request cross permits from Argentine authorities and we are also currently talking with friendly countries to avoid those very vessels from taking supplies in their coasts".

Sunday, February 21st 2010 - 01:21 UTC

Falklands' dispute: Argentina seeks "diplomatic, peaceful dialogue" with UK

Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana said Argentina "seeks to have a diplomatic, peaceful dialogue" with Great Britain, and asked for London to join in discussions regarding the Falklands/Malvinas Islands sovereignty to "finally end this anachronistic colonial situation."

Argentine Foreign Affairs secretary Jorge Taiana Argentine Foreign Affairs secretary Jorge Taiana

Taiana, currently in the Mayan Riviera, in Mexico, provided the press with these statements while setting the agenda for the next Presidential Summit along with other foreign ministers. The two day event is scheduled to start next Monday, when 33 heads of state from Latinamerica and the Caribbean arrive in the region.

"The United Kingdom is a member of the Security Council, and as such, it has to comply with the current UN resolutions ratifying the existence of an on-going dispute between both countries and urges them to meet every year to discuss the Malvinas Islands sovereignty and their surroundings," he explained.

The United Nations also keeps in place a resolution urging both parts to "refrain from aggravating the controversy", which the Foreign Ministry says "Great Britain has not respected once more, after illegitimately authorizing the approval of private projects to explore the disputed region in search of hydrocarbons."

Taiana, and President Cristina Kirchner scheduled to arrive Sunday evening, will be trying to rally regional support for Argentina's stand on the Islands oil exploration round set to begin almost simultaneously with the arrival to the Falklands of the oil rig "Ocean Guardian"

From Mexico Taiana will be flying to New York to meet with United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to present Argentina's case and demand the beginning of sovereignty talks over the Falklands with Great Britain.

On Friday British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said in London he was "confident" diplomacy could resolve a standoff with Argentina on the Falklands.

"The diplomacy between us and Argentina is one that I think will be successful," Brown said, insisting that Britain was acting within international law. "I think the work that's being done will avoid any tension".

Sunday, February 21st 2010 - 23:09 UTC

Falklands' war tested modernized Super Etendard in Argentine Navy's agenda

The possible transfer to Argentina of a refurbished model of the French manufactured fighter-bomber Super Etendard, which had an outstanding performance during the 1982 Falkland Islands conflict, is under consideration by the French Ministry of Defence, reveals the French publication, Mer & Marine.

Argentina has 11 Super Etendard but in 2015 could see them converted into SEM
Argentina has 11 Super Etendard but in 2015 could see them converted into SEM

The operation which includes giving the Argentines part of the sophisticated avionics of the Super Etendard Modernized (SEM) model would take place in 2015 when the French navy will be decommissioning their air fleet to be replaced by the new Rafale.

However in the event of the operation going ahead it will depend on the availability of SEMs at the moment the French navy begins the decommissioning process, subject to the Rafale delivery program.

If an agreement is reached with Argentina it won't necessarily mean the transfer of aircraft to fly with the Argentine Navy colours.

"The sale of aircraft or spares in stock will only be leased to ensure the modernization of the Argentine Super Etendard", points out a French military source quoted by the publication.

In 1979 Argentina purchased 14 French Super Etendard, five of them were delivered before the Falkland Islands conflict and the rest following the end of hostilities with Britain.

Originally purchased to operate from the air carrier ARA 25 de Mayo, the eleven which remain, are now grounded in air fields because of the decommissioning of the carrier.

Since they use the same aircraft, the Argentine and French navies hold regular contacts and exchange of information.

To such an extent that Argentine pilots recently visited Landivisiau, northwest Bretagne, for training purposes and to be updated on the evolution of the SEM.

The Dassault Aviation Super Etendard flew for the first time in 1974 and four years later 74 of them were incorporated to the French Navy. Since then it has undergone several upgrading which make it "a reliable, modern and extremely polyvalent aircraft".

The SEM refurbishing has included improved radar (Anemone), an Atlis laser system, Sherlock detectors, heat oriented Barracuda missile and Alka and Phimat flare systems.

In 1997 SEM was equipped with laser guided bombs and AS 30 missiles. As of 2003, 25 SEMs have night operational gear, a combination of GPS and laser which enables the aircraft to pinpoint the objective with just a few metres precision.

"This modernization process should enable the SEM to remain highly effective until at least 2015", points out the Mer & Marine publication.

Monday, February 22nd 2010 - 05:48 UTC

Latinamerica agrees on new regional organization without US and Canada

The new Latinamerican and Caribbean organization that would not include the United States, Canada and Spain could formally be launched on 5 July 2011, during a summit in Venezuela once the statute is drafted and approved, according to the ministerial meeting previous to the Rio Group two-day summit scheduled to begin Monday.

The official launching is scheduled for 5 July 2011, on the 200 anniversary of Venezuela's independence The official launching is scheduled for 5 July 2011, on the 200 anniversary of Venezuela's independence

"We are going to commission a task group so that in one year and four months time they can prepare the statutes, and by July 2011 in Caracas we can proceed to approve them", said Ecuadorian Foreign Affairs minister Ricardo Patiño in Cancún, Mexico where the discussions are being held.

Representatives of the 32 countries meeting for the unity summit of Latinamerica and Caribbean discussed behind closed doors possible names and procedures for the new organization which would leave out the US and Canada.

Venezuela's Foreign Affairs minister Nicolas Maduro confirmed the summit that will see the birth of the new regional body will take place in Caracas "coincidentally with the 200 year independence celebration of Venezuela" and will not substitute any of the existing organizations.

The document will be presented to the regional leaders meeting Monday and Tuesday for the unit summit.

Over the weekend Argentina's Cristina Kirchner, Brazil's Lula da Silva and Haiti's René Preval arrived in Mexico.

Top of the agenda for the summit is coordinating aid to the quake devastated Haiti and also a last minute request from Argentina in support of her claims over the Falkland Islands and criticism of the oil exploratory round that has begun in the South Atlantic Islands waters under British jurisdiction.

Patiño revealed that one of the issues which most delayed the discussions was whether the new organization can be considered a Community, Union or Organization of Latinamerican and Caribbean states.

"So far all foreign affairs ministers have agreed that the summit must decide on the creation of the new organization. We have some points still to be debated, that's the delay, but we have a consensus on certain principles, functions and responsibilities", pointed out Patiño.

What is most important is that the "significant, historic step of creating a block that should enable us to establish a dialogue mechanism for joint positions, as an only voice, regarding other world blocks", added the Ecuadorian minister.

The Organization of American States created in 1948 includes the US and Canada. OAS summits usually under the heading of Ibero-American include Spain and Portugal.

Patiño revealed that it still has to be agreed how the statutes task force will be integrated since there are different positions.

Nevertheless the prevailing position is that it should be made up of Mexico, Brazil a representative from the Caribbean and one from Central America.

The two day summit is expected to end with two main documents: an official declaration and another with the decision to create the new block, plus "eight to ten resolutions" and the Rio Group position on migration, Haiti, Argentina/Falklands and the US embargo on Cuba.

Chilean president Michelle Bachelet who will acting at the chair of the summit said that including Caribbean countries in the new organization is "correct" but in no way should it replace OAS.

"Chile believes that any organization, structure or expansion of this space (Rio Group) of convergence and dialogue, must never be seen as replacing OAS", said Ms Bachelet. She emphasized that the new organization must keep to the Rio Group very first objective and existence reason: "ensuring democracy in our region".

However it should not be an international body but rather "an inter-government association, between governments, a space for political convergence and articulation" and must not be considered "synonymous of the OAS".

Both organizations must have different functions and strategies and "therefore different categories".

Monday, February 22nd 2010 - 01:21 UTC

Falklands suffer the first Argentine attack of the 2010 cyber war

The Falkland Islands suffered a first cyber-war attack from Argentine hackers who hijacked the website of the Falkland Islands' weekly, Penguin New, posting reasons why the disputed Islands should belong to Argentina rather than Britain.

Facsimile of the hacked Penguin News Facsimile of the hacked Penguin News

In the midst of the escalating controversy over the start of the oil drilling round in Falklands waters which Argentina firmly opposes, hackers posted in the weekly's home page a collection of pro Argentina statements in Spanish with a light blue and white background - the colours of the Argentine flag and an audio recording the "March of the Malvinas".

The material was removed early Sunday.

The Argentine activists wrote that "the islands are Argentine" and claimed the move was a "tribute" to the country's soldiers who died during the Falklands War.

The islands belong to Argentina because "we inherited them from Spain and the River Plate vice-royalty" argued the hackers. They also pointed out the fact "Argentina is the nearest country," and that navigators working for Spain in the 16th century first visited the Malvinas, long before England.

The Islands also are part of Argentina's continental shelf, according to the posting. "The first children born in the Malvinas were/are Argentines" continued the cyber diatribe.

Argentina has threatened to ban British companies with any links with the oil venture from the mainland and has insisted that all ships traveling between Argentina and the Falklands must seek permission from Argentine authorities.

However a British cruise ship carrying 2.600 tourists on board is expected to arrive at Port Stanley Monday as the first real test of Argentina's resolve. The "Star Princess" set sail from Buenos Aires with no demand for a permit from the authorities and was not expecting any disruptions.

The mainly British passengers were due to visit the Falklands capital as one of the highlights of their South American cruise. The ship is also carrying a number of Argentine tourists on board.

Cruise tourism has become a significant source of income for the Falklands, Buenos Aires city and the south of Argentina so it is thought unlikely that the Argentine government will want to risk alienating cruise operators and losing a lucrative slice of the profits.

Argentina's Deputy Foreign Minister Victorio Taccetti tried to play down the row at the weekend, claiming his government was merely seeking to re-open talks over the disputed sovereignty of the Malvinas Islands. He admitted Argentina does not have the naval resources to enforce the famous decree 256 on maritime traffic and is not interested in displaying any act of force.

Buenos Aires media also reported that the "Star Princess" before leaving contacted her agents about the new regulation, and after a round of "non replies" in different offices they only managed the concession that "the decree is still waiting for its implementation", particularly regarding the naming of a commission under the cabinet chief that supposedly would decide on the requests.

Monday, February 22nd 2010 - 19:58 UTC

Falklands' veteran emotional return to the Islands in support of traumatised soldiers

The campaign by millionaire Scots businessman and ex-Para Tony Banks to raise funds for British soldiers traumatised by their wartime experiences will receive a shot in the arm, with the screening in April of a documentary charting his emotional return to the Falkland Islands.

Left to right: Jim Foster, Tony Banks and Wayne Rees at Liberation Memorial in Stanley
Left to right: Jim Foster, Tony Banks and Wayne Rees at Liberation Memorial in Stanley

Tony has just returned from the Falklands and visited a number of the battlefields where he fought as a 20-year-old during the conflict in 1982.

As founder and chairman of Forfar-based Balhousie Care Group, Tony took part in Channel 4's Secret Millionaire program last year and lived undercover in Liverpool. There, he met Iraq war veteran Lee Sanger, who suffered from PTSD.

This experience prompted him to become involved with Combat Stress and provided the impetus for his return to the Falklands.

Channel 4 will screen the film of his four day, 50-plus mile trek to Port Stanley in April and Tony hopes the documentary will both raise awareness of, and much needed funds for, Combat Stress, the leading charity for those veterans suffering from service-related mental illness, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety.

Combat Stress has bases in Ayr, Surrey and Shropshire. Fellow Falklands' veterans Jim Foster and Wayne Rees also joined Tony on his fundraising trek for the charity. And their return to the site of battles such as Goose Green and Wireless Ridge made a devastating impact on Tony (48).

He said: "I was just a boy when I was there last and it was a very emotional experience to return again. The sheer size of the place was a shock. All of the battles were fought at night, so it was hard to get an appreciation of just how big the Islands are.

"But once we visited the graves – not just of the British soldiers, but of those on the Argentine side too – and the places where friends of mine died, the memories came flooding back and it became quite overwhelming."

The welcome he and his colleagues received from the Islanders also took Tony by surprise. He said: "We talked to some of the people who were kicked out of their houses or captured at Goose Green and who still feel they are under threat of invasion.

"Every one of them told us about how tremendous it felt to be liberated and how grateful they were to the armed forces for helping give them their freedom back.

"When we walked into Port Stanley, there were around 70 people who had come out into the street to meet us.

"We gave a talk to a group of 14-year-olds at Port Stanley School. The teacher there was on a secondment from the UK and his father was actually killed at Mount Longdon.

"As we talked about our experiences, we could see him getting quite emotional too. Once we started talking to the youngsters, we found more and more of them telling us about how their parents and grandparents fought in the conflict. It really was something that touched everyone on the Islands and we were grateful to have had the opportunity to share our experiences with them."

Tony also admitted returning to the Islands had also confirmed his own beliefs on the conflict itself.

He said: "We visited Liberty Lodge, which is a fantastic facility originally devised by the Falklands Veteran's Foundation for the benefit of veterans visiting the Islands.

"There, I was giving a talk to the Governor of the Islands, the Commander of the British Forces and local dignitaries about the servicemen who died on both sides and about how several times since the end of the conflict I had questioned whether the war was worth it.

"But having gone back again, spoken to the Islanders, seen the transformation in places like Port Stanley, it was clear to me that it was a just cause and that the sacrifice of the 255 British servicemen who died was not in vain.

"I was incredibly humbled by this realisation and had to leave the room as I found myself completely overwhelmed."

"I was both surprised and saddened to learn that a number of the Islanders still suffer from PTSD as a consequence of the conflict," he said.

"Combat Stress does some incredibly important work and I very much hope people will feel moved to support our campaign to raise £10,000 for the charity once they see the film of our return to the island next month."

For more information on Tony's trek to the Falklands, please visit:
www.justgiving.com/Tony-Banks

Monday, February 22nd 2010 - 23:56 UTC

NZ joins Australia in pressing Japan to end annual whale hunt in Antarctica

New Zealand said Monday it may join Australia in seeking international legal action against Japan over its annual whale hunt in the Antarctic if negotiations fail to produce a diplomatic solution.

Japan would be allowed to kill minke whales in the north Pacific Ocean. Japan would be allowed to kill minke whales in the north Pacific Ocean.

Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said Friday his government would take Japan to international court over its research whaling program that kills hundreds of whales a year if Tokyo does not agree to stop the hunt by November.

Australia, a staunch anti-whaling nation, has long threatened international legal action.

New Zealand Foreign Minister Murray McCully said a diplomatic solution would be quicker - and therefore save more whales -- than pursuing a case in the International Court of Justice at The Hague, which could take years to resolve.

Diplomatic negotiations likely will be complete within weeks, McCully said.

"We'll know soon whether we are going to achieve success that way or not," he said. "If not, the court process is obviously a serious option."

He gave no details of the negotiations, believed to revolve around having Japan end its Antarctic whale hunt while still being allowed to kill minke whales in the north Pacific Ocean.

Prime Minister John Key also backed a diplomatic resolution to Japan's whaling in the waters off Antarctica, saying New Zealand may only resort to court action if it fails.

"Either the diplomatic solution is going to be a stunning success in the next few months or it's going to be a stunning failure," Key told the NewstalkZB radio network.

If a "diplomatic solution fails and the only option available is a court action, at that time we will consider whether we'll join Australia, but I wouldn't want to jump to conclusions that we would," Key said.

Australia also was still pursuing a diplomatic outcome, "and that is why they're holding off from taking a court case before November," he told reporters.

Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada said Sunday that Tokyo will defend its hunt in any legal forum, saying it is an allowed exception to the International Whaling Commission's 1986 ban on commercial whaling.

Speaking after meeting with his Australian counterpart Stephen Smith, he said it was unfortunate Australia had indicated it would take international court action.

Smith said the Australian government also has decided to present a proposal to the International Whaling Commission asking that Japan's whaling program be stopped within a "reasonable period of time."

Tuesday, February 23rd 2010 - 03:22 UTC

Falklands: full support for Argentina from Latinamerican and Caribbean leaders

Argentine President Cristina Kirchner said on Monday Latin American and Caribbean leaders backed her objections to oil exploration in the disputed Falkland Islands as drilling of the first well began on Monday.

Mrs. Kirchner thanked her peers during the opening speech in Mexico Mrs. Kirchner thanked her peers during the opening speech in Mexico

"There continues to be systematic violation of international law that should be respected by all countries" Mrs Kirchner told the opening session of the Rio Group regional summit near the Mexican resort town of Playa del Carmen.

"In the name of our government and in the name of my people I am grateful for the support this meeting has given to our demands" Mrs. Kirchner said.

Mexican President Felipe Calderon said in the closed-door meetings the group had approved a document supporting Argentina in the territorial dispute, according to Argentine diplomatic sources.

In her opening speech Cristina Kirchner also assured that "Argentina is to insist on claiming for Malvinas Islands" within a democratic and institutional framework. "We are planning to use up all existing resolutions belonging to our national law in order to affirm our sovereignty on the Islands."

Mrs. Kirchner then pointed out that the setting of a platform for oil search in the Malvinas Islands "is a violation of all United Nation's previous dispositions".

Escalating the dispute last week Argentina formally objected to British companies' exploratory drilling round in Falklands' waters and signed decree 256 which requires all vessels sailing between Argentine mainland and the Islands or crossing Argentine waters heading for the Islands, to obtain a permit from Argentine authorities.

However Mrs. Kirchner said Argentina would not consider more serious measures like shipping blockades. "Argentina will not take any step that is not framed in international law".

Meantime Desire Petroleum announced in the London Stock Exchange it broke ground at a well on its offshore "Liz" prospect, north of the Falklands, which could contain up to 400 million barrels, although there is a possibility the exploration will recover nothing.

"Drilling operations are expected to take approximately 30 days and a further announcement will be made once drilling is completed," it said. "Liz" is the first of up to 10 wells to be drilled by British companies in the coming months.

Earlier in the day Argentina's Foreign minister Jorge Taiana said he had secured support from the 33 Latin American and Caribbean nations attending a regional summit in Mexico to issue a declaration on the Falklands. The list includes some Caribbean islands members of the British Commonwealth.

"We're making solid progress and heading towards a unified continental position over the historical claims of sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands", said Taiana.

Victorio Taccetti, Argentina's deputy foreign minister, said: "We are confident that Britain will understand that it behooves them to negotiate with Argentina and not to be in opposition to a consensus within the international community".

Britain maintains that Islanders have the right to self-determination and to develop an oil industry and says the exploration is within the law.

On Wednesday Taiana will hold talks in New York tomorrow with Ban Ki-moon, UN secretary-general, to try to increase international pressure on Britain.

"The central issue is the sovereignty issue. If we can talk about that, then we can discuss the issue of exploitation of [oil and gas] reserves," said Taccetti..-

Wednesday, February 24th 2010 - 02:11 UTC

Possible mixed Gibraltar/Spain police patrols to avoid marine incidents

A proposal for the creation of mixed police patrols between the RG Police and the Guardia Civil is one of the matters under discussion in the ongoing technical round of talks of the Tripartite Forum, according to reports in the Madrid daily ABC.

The news was published in Madrid's daily ABC The news was published in Madrid's daily ABC

The newspaper which notes the background of "continuous incidents between Guardia Civil patrols and Royal Navy and RG P vessels in waters around the Rock", states that the technical delegations are considering the possibility of joint operations.

ABC reports that there are other judicial and policing proposals on the table which are being discussed including mechanisms for commission rogatoire, European Arrest Warrants, and the setting up of joint maritime patrols to pursue delinquents at sea.

ABC adds that there will shortly be an environmental disaster exercise in the bay with units from Spain, UK and Gibraltar taking part.

Wednesday, February 24th 2010 - 02:29 UTC

Intra-Mercosur trade experienced one of its worst years in 2009

Trade among Mercosur members plummeted in 2009 under the effects of the international slowdown which severely limited access to financing and made credit in the region harder to obtain, according to a report from the Inter American Development bank, IDB.

Overall trade among Mercosur members in 2009 was back to 2007 levels Overall trade among Mercosur members in 2009 was back to 2007 levels

Although trade contraction last year was global for Mercosur the loss was even greater than in the previous crisis at the end of the nineties when Asia, Russia and Brazil collapsed.

Mercosur total intra-trade in 2009 reached 28.9 billion US dollars which is almost identical to the numbers of 2007, 28.98 billion USD.

Exports to the rest of Mercosur from the largest Latinamerican economy, Brazil totalled 15.8 billion last year, while imports 13.1 billion USD, which represent a drop of 27.2% and 12.2% compared to 2008, a year when trade had actually increased 25.3% and 28.5% respectively over 2007

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Brazil represents 52% intra group exports and 34.9% of imports (2008 data). For Brazil, Mercosur is equivalent to 10.3% of its overall foreign trade.

However an interesting figure is that of Brazil's trade surplus with its associates, which since 2004 has suffered a significant contraction (60%); in other words this means that Brazil was a kind of crisis shock absorber for the region.

In effect Brazilian sales to Mercosur fell 27.2% in 2009, a higher percentage than for the rest of the world, 22.2%.

A primary conclusion is that when Brazilian sales to the block increase, they grow at a faster rate than with the rest of the world, while in recession periods exports to Mercosur suffer abruptly and are lost at a higher percentage than when out of the region, points out the report.

Wednesday, February 24th 2010 - 06:18 UTC

US "neutral" on Falklands" dispute but recognizes UK administration

The United States has a “neutral” stance regarding the question of the Falklands/Malvinas sovereignty but recognizes the current British administration of the Islands, said US State Department spokesperson during the daily press conference.

“We are cognizant of the issue and its history. I think we are neutral on the question of sovereignty. We do recognize the current UK administration of the Islands”, said Philip Crowley, US State Department spokesperson.

He added that “what we encourage in this case is what we encourage in other areas where there are disputes, that this can only be resolved through good faith dialogue between those two countries”.

Asked if the US would be willing to step in and be an arbiter should the dispute continue, Crowley said if such a situation arises it would consider it.

“Usually, the first step in arbitration is that the two countries will ask for a third party to be the mediator. If we ever got that kind of request from both sides, we would consider it”, indicated Crowley.

UK has said it is willing to reopen negotiations with Argentina, but not on sovereignty issues or the exploitation of hydrocarbons in the waters surrounding the Falklands. The UK government position is that the Falklands are British based on the right to self determination of the Islanders, principle enshrined in the United Nations charter.

Wednesday, February 24th 2010 - 06:24 UTC

Falklands: UK willing to talk with Argentina but not sovereignty; Taiana at UN

The United Kingdom said on Tuesday it was willing to re-open talks with Argentina but not on Falkland Islands sovereignty or the development by the Islanders of a hydrocarbons industry. The statement came on the eve of a meeting of Argentina’s Foreign minister Jorge Taiana with UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon.

Chris Bryant, Foreign Office Minister with responsibility for Latin America
Chris Bryant, Foreign Office Minister with responsibility for Latin America

Chris Bryant, Foreign Office Minister with responsibility for Latin America said that there was "no doubt about our sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. It is underpinned by the principle of democratic self-determination: Falkland Islanders want to remain British".

Bryant added that "we're also clear that the Falkland Islands Government is entitled to develop a hydrocarbons industry within its waters. We remain focused on supporting the Falkland Islands Government in developing this legitimate business in its territory".

On Wednesday Taiana arrives at the UN in New York with support for Argentina's claims from a summit of Latinamerican and Caribbean states and is expected to table a motion condemning Britain for allowing an oil rig to begin drilling in the disputed Falklands waters.

The Foreign Office minister said that UK has discussed South Atlantic common interest issues with Argentina until 2007, when they left negotiations, something "I quite don't understand why".

Further on he said that Argentina's reaction so far has been entirely predictable, "nobody wants a return to the 1980s, least of all the Falkland Islanders" and it is understandable that the Argentine Government is naturally seeking support from some of its regional partners for its sovereignty claim to the Falklands.

"But there is nothing new in this. Many Latin American countries, for their own reasons, have long adopted a similar position in public. Argentina has not undermined the work that we can do with our friends in Brazil or in Uruguay or in Chile or in any of the other countries of Latin America", underlined Bryant in an official statement.

Nevertheless Bryant again pressed that UK "forged a close alliance last year with Argentina working in the G20 to make sure that there was a proper response to the world wide economic crisis. And our close relationship on other issues such as climate change,

sustainable development and counter-proliferation will continue”.

Insisting on the right to self determination, Bryant said that as all Latinamerican countries can decide and choose what type of government they want “I think this is also valid for the government of the Falkland Islands; they can decide whether they want to be British or whatever and we all know they want to remain British”.

As to the origin of the people of the Falklands, Bryant rejected the argument that they do not belong to the Islands.

“From where did the population of Buenos Aires come? From Spain, Italy, many other European countries including Britain. I’m Welsh, not English, but I live in the UK. Half of the Welsh came from England, Ireland, Scotland even Italy. I don’t think it is a strong argument”, said the UK Foreign Office minister.

Thursday, February 25th 2010 - 05:09 UTC

Falklands’ dispute reaches the UN: Ban Ki-Moon’s praises peaceful attitude

Argentina’s Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana as had been anticipated on Wednesday formally asked United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to interfere in the “unilateral decisions” Britain has made regarding the Falklands/Malvinas Islands issue and highlighted that “from now on” everyone has to wait until Ban acts within a “good-solicitor” framework.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon with Argentine minister Jorge Taiana
UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon with Argentine minister Jorge Taiana

Following the meeting both held with Ban Ki Moon at the United Nation's building in New York, Taiana pointed out that the interview had been “cordial” and that his arguments were “highly welcomed.”

Taiana remarked that “the underlying reason for the visit was a pending conversation as regards Ban's role of being a good solicitor among the negotiations between Britain and Argentina” concerning the Falklands/Malvinas sovereignty dispute.

“He is to make a phone call to Britain and will take care of our situation. Several options are at stake and we'll see how to solve this matter” Taiana summed up.

Previously, it was said that a resolution is also set to be tabled in the UN General Assembly condemning Britain for allowing the Ocean Guardian oil rig to begin drilling 100 kilometres north of the Islands.

Meanwhile the UN website said that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today took note of Argentina's concerns regarding the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) during a meeting at United Nations Headquarters with the country's Foreign Minister, Jorge E. Taiana.

“Mr. Ban expressed satisfaction at Argentina's commitment to resolving its dispute with the United Kingdom over the Islands in a peaceful manner”, according to information provided by a UN spokesperson.

In addition, the Secretary-General reiterated that his good offices are available when requested by all parties in a dispute.

The dispute between the two countries – which fought a war over the islands in 1982 – is back in the spotlight owing to reported oil drilling by the UK off the Falkland Islands.

According to media reports, Argentina says that the UK has broken a UN resolution forbidding unilateral development in disputed waters, while the British Government says the Islands have a 'legitimate right' to develop an oil industry within their waters.

Desire Petroleum Company, which is operating the rig, has said that the drilling will take about a month. Further exploration for other companies will follow.

Argentine president Cristina Kirchner said in Mexico that in spite of the British attitude ignoring Argentine legislation, "we're not going to adopt any measure outside the framework of international law: we don't believe in such things as blockades". She added that in this Argentina will act strictly "because the only thing you can't do with a cannibal is eat him".

Friday, February 26th 2010 - 06:39 UTC

Falklands: UK MOD denies naval incident with Argentine vessel

The British Ministry of Defence strongly denied Thursday any incident in the Falklands territorial waters involving a Royal Navy South Atlantic patrol and an Argentine Navy corvette, as reported in some London sensational media.

HMS York, calling Stanley HMS York, calling Stanley

UK Defence officials however did admit that there was "friendly dialogue by radio" between the South Atlantic patrol vessel HMS York and the Argentine corvette ARA Drummond while sailing in the area in rough waters.

"We can confirm that on 28 January this year during rough weather and at night, HMS York and an Argentine ship were operating in the same locality," said a ministry statement.

The incident happened in international waters around 50 miles from the territorial waters of the Falklands, said the ministry.

"After a friendly dialogue by radio they each continued with their own exercises," said the statement.

The Falklands are at the centre of a dispute between London and Buenos Aires after British oil companies announced drilling plans off the Islands, over which Argentina claims sovereignty.

The Sun newspaper reported the HMS York monitored the progress of the Argentine corvette ARA Drummond before radioing the vessel to change course.

The paper said the ship had entered a so-called conservation zone, the area where Britain is carrying out oil exploration.

But Britain's MOD declined to comment on a report in the Sun newspaper that a submarine had been sent to the Falklands, but added it was not increasing its forces in the area.

"We do not comment on (British) submarines," said the ministry. "Our force structure remains unchanged and is being maintained at routine levels," it added.

In related news British and US sources anticipated that Argentina would be seeking the support from Washington in its Falklands dispute with the UK when President Cristina Kirchner meets Secretary of State next Monday in Uruguay.

The scheduled meeting announced by Hector Timerman, the Argentine Ambassador to Washington, will take place in Montevideo when Mrs. Clinton will attend the presidential inauguration of José Mujica.

"Argentina will be pressing the White House to drop its declared neutrality and support Buenos Aires in the dispute, which looks set to deteriorate further", said the sources quoted in UK and US media.

The US official position so far has been to stick to with a policy of non-intervention. Philip Crowley, the State Department spokesman, said that the US maintained a position of neutrality but encouraged "good faith dialogue", adding that if both sides requested mediation "we would consider it".

The State Department was unwilling to offer immediate comment on how Hillary Clinton planned to deal with an issue that will undoubtedly be raised not only by Ms Kirchner but also by other regional leaders with whom she is to meet. The week-long tour follows the Rio Group summit in Mexico, at which 32 Latin American and Caribbean heads of state backed Argentina's claim of sovereignty.

Friday, February 26th 2010 - 06:50 UTC

Falklands' oil companies could be takeover targets, says financial report

United Kingdom oil and gas companies drilling near the Falklands Islands may become takeover targets this year, Deloitte & Touche LLP said in a report released Thursday in London.

Ocean Guardian is drilling at an average 116 meters per day Ocean Guardian is drilling at an average 116 meters per day

Desire Petroleum, Borders & Southern Petroleum and Rockhopper Exploration, moved up in market value rankings for UK-listed independent production companies because they hold exploration acreage in the British Overseas Territory Falkland Islands.

"M&A is less difficult this year than last year," said Ian Sperling-Tyler, co-head of oil and gas corporate finance at Deloitte. "The companies in the Falklands aren't big enough to monetize those assets on their own. At some point, they'll farm out or be acquired by a bigger company."

Desire started the first exploratory drilling in Falkland Island waters since 1998 this week with the arrival of the Ocean Guardian oil rig. Argentina, which claims sovereignty over the Falklands this week garnered support from Latinamerican and Caribbean leaders at a regional summit and on Wednesday visited UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to demand sovereignty talks and protest UK unilateral actions in the South Atlantic disputed waters.

Desire moved up 10 places last in the rankings of UK upstream companies to 14th place, and Borders & Southern broke into the top 25, Deloitte said.

Tullow Oil Plc. the U.K. explorer developing reserves in Uganda, and Cairn Energy Plc, which focuses on India, ranked first and second and accounted for 60% of the market capitalization of the top 25 companies, the report showed.

"There is a fairly strong pipeline of oil and gas companies looking to raise funds," Sperling-Tyler said. "I would expect a lot of capital market activity in 2010".

Desire's Liz prospect has estimated resources of between 45 million and 783 million barrels, according to a report by Senergy Ltd. commissioned by the explorer. Falkland Oil's Toroa prospect has estimated resources of between 380 million and 2.9 billion barrels, the company said in November.

However Ross McCracken from Platts, oil and gas information service was more cautious and pointed out that relatively little is known about the geology of the South Atlantic and undoubtedly "the new drilling campaign is high risk".

The drill-bit of the 14,400 ton platform will descend through layers of sandstone and Lower Cretaceous rock beneath the seabed at an average of 116m a day with a target depth of 3,500 meters. Geologically, the area is not dissimilar to the North Sea and according to the companies involved if a discovery is made, the field could contain nearly millions of barrels of oil.

But independent analysis of the rock structures claim that the operation has only a slim chance of success — about 17%, to be precise.

"A commercial find is likely to send the share prices soaring, but the probability of such a find is fairly low. These are, after all, wildcat wells on almost virgin territory" said McCracken.

Friday, February 26th 2010 - 16:49 UTC

The Economist: Kirchners recipe for continued decline

Leaving aside much of the London media rhetoric about a build-up or even a possible re-edition of 1982, between Argentina and the UK over the Falklands and South Atlantic islands sovereignty, The Economist adopts a more common sense and pragmatic attitude about the controversy over oil exploration in the South Atlantic.

Basically it argues that if the Argentine administrations of the Kirchner couple had not been so hostile to private initiative in the energy sector, the big oil-strike, could very well be taking place on the continental side and not necessarily in the Falklands. And a more mature leadership would be taking advantage of the current Falklands round as an economic (and know-how) opportunity to become the main onshore base for the Islands oil industry.

The current childish attitude of the Kirchners administrations is, unfortunately, a recipe for continued decline again threatening Argentina with the long fall from the first to the third world over the past century. The Economist points out that they have only to look around them—at Brazil, Chile and Uruguay—to see that responsible centre-left governments have achieved lasting social progress by respecting the role of private investment and the sanctity of contracts.

Follows the transcription of the article

Argentina and the Falklands

The beef in Buenos Aires

The Kirchners could have more oil if they stopped bullying Argentine business

Once again an unpopular Argentine government is making aggressive noises towards the Falkland Islands. In 1982 the country's military dictators gambled that grabbing the islands, a far-flung relic of the British empire, by military invasion would allow them to cling to power on a wave of popular acclaim. Fortunately for the islanders the junta was defeated by Margaret Thatcher's dispatch of a task-force (though it was a far closer-run

thing than she would ever acknowledge and cost 650 Argentine and 260 British lives). The conflict had a silver lining for Argentina, in the form of its swift return to democracy. Now an elected, but unpopular, president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, is working herself into a nationalist frenzy over the arrival of an oil rig.

Seismic studies of the islands suggest there may be a lot of oil and gas beneath waters that Argentina has always claimed as its own. Ms Fernández's government pledges to prevent their discovery and development, and has restricted the use of Argentine ports and waters by island shipping. Argentina wisely insists that it will not resort to military action (in contrast to 1982, the Falklands are now well-garrisoned whereas its own armed forces have shrunk). Instead it is counting on regional solidarity and diplomatic pressure. This week it won the support of a summit of the leaders of 32 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Almost every Argentine and most Latin Americans believe that in geography, history and international law the islands they call the Malvinas belong to Argentina. Britain ousted a small group of Argentine settlers in 1833. British ownership is indeed an anomaly—but the world is full of them. If the clock is to be turned back to 1833, southern Argentina should be an independent country under indigenous leadership and the Brazilian state of Acre should revert to Bolivia. For Britain, upholding the right of the Falklanders to self-determination is paramount. And that is the stronger argument.

What the Kirchners should learn from their neighbors.

The irony in Ms Fernández's stance is that a big oil-strike could very well be taking place in Argentina, or its inshore waters, were her government and that of her husband and predecessor, Néstor Kirchner, not so hostile to private initiative in the energy industry. As a result of their policies, Argentina's output of oil and gas has fallen in each of the past three years. That forms part of a pattern. Under the Kirchners some private businesses have faced nationalization or harassment by punitive regulation, while others have flourished, seemingly because the Kirchners see them as loyal (see article). This formula is a recipe for continued decline. So is the government's childish attempt to fiddle the country's economic statistics. Inflation, at once symptom and cause of Argentina's long fall

from the first to the third world over the past century, once again threatens to take off, potentially ruining Argentines' living standards. They have only to look around them—at Brazil, Chile and Uruguay—to see that responsible centre-left governments have achieved lasting social progress by respecting the role of private investment and the sanctity of contracts.

A more mature Argentine leadership would see oil exploration in the Falklands as an economic opportunity, not a political one. Argentina could become the main onshore base for the Falklands' oil industry—if there is one. Its own offshore exploration could benefit from the know-how that this would create. A friendlier Argentina could profit greatly from co-operation with its South Atlantic neighbors. And oil could provide the economic foundation for the Falklanders to declare independence—something Britain surely would not resist.

Friday, February 26th 2010 - 19:28 UTC

Falkland Islands: Desire chief says it's boom or bust as drilling begins

FOUR days into a drilling operation that has captured the attention of the world's media, Desire Petroleum's Operations Director Bob Lyons conceded: "This is it: we're a one trick pony. It'll either be successful or it won't. It is very simple."

Oil rig support vessels, "Maersk Pacer" and "Toisa Invincible" in Stanley Oil rig support vessels, "Maersk Pacer" and "Toisa Invincible" in Stanley

As Desire's share prices rose on the back of news that drilling had begun and fell as Argentina ramped up its efforts to disrupt the first exploratory drilling in 12 years, the man responsible for the operation was unfazed by the current political situation.

"We just want to get on with it," he told the Penguin News in an exclusive interview yesterday.

"We were fully aware of what Argentina's stance would be so we planned it so we wouldn't require any support from anywhere locally. We're self sufficient, we can do it all ourselves," he said.

In view of the shipping restrictions Argentina had attempted to implement he said all the necessary equipment would come out of the UK, "so it doesn't affect us in the slightest."

Plans had not been altered because of the shipping restrictions, and Argentina's response was anticipated, said Mr Lyons, adding that he thought the press had made much of the situation. Even if Argentina were to increase the level of pressure, it would not stop the operation, he said.

Out on Desire's Liz prospect 100km off West Falklands, everything on the Ocean Guardian - manned by about 90 workers - is progressing according to plan.

Weather conditions have been less than ideal in the early stage, but are similar in many respects to those encountered in the North Sea, where Ocean Guardian was last operational, said Mr Lyons.

"It can cope with quite a lot. Working in 2-3 metre seas with quite a lot of wind is fairly routine," he said. "We tend to get higher winds here for longer periods, but it's not untoward."

Wind speed alone can restrict crane operations and there are different limits of rig motion for different operations.

He also spoke of the prospect of Desire becoming a takeover target if drilling succeeds: "We are a small company and exploration drilling is a completely different animal to a full development programme. That is a bridge we will have to cross, hopefully when we do come to it."

He said there would be a fundamental shift in how the company was set up and what it would need to take it to the next phase, should the occasion arise.

"It always has been an option and we may well reach a time when we want to pass the baton on to someone else to take it to the next phase. It would be a nice problem to have," said Mr Lyons.

He discounted rumours that the rig had been buzzed or shadowed by Argentine air force jets while in transit. "It's just gossip," said Mr Lyons who confirmed that on February 10 an Argentine coastguard aircraft had flown over the rig on a routine flight, but that there had not been any other air activity.

By Sharon Jaffrey - Penguin News - Stanley

Saturday, February 27th 2010 - 08:18 UTC

Petrobras announces two discoveries with 65 million barrels potential

Brazilian government managed energy firm Petrobras announced this week it had made two separate discoveries of oil in the Campos Basin near Brazil's coast with recoverable reserves of 40 million and 25 million barrels.

The two discoveries were made in the same well, 6-BR-63A-RJS, but the larger reserves were "sub-salt" oil, which lies below the first find in a deep layer of salt rock a few kilometres (4.430 metres) under the ocean floor.

Petrobras is studying the idea of extracting oil from the well using the P-43 platform already installed near the well's location, about 100 kilometres from the coast of Rio de Janeiro.

Brazil's oil output is expected to rise significantly over the next decade, mainly due to the discovery of the potentially huge sub-salt reserves, which analysts have estimated could contain somewhere between 50 billion and 80 billion barrels of crude.

News of offshore discoveries is now a weekly occurrence as firms like Petrobras and OGX, owned by Brazilian billionaire Eike Batista, progress with exploration of offshore blocs.

Saturday, February 27th 2010 - 07:31 UTC

Falklands a “bilateral issue between Argentina and UK”, insists Washington

The Falkland Islands and the political figure of President Barak Obama were among the issues addressed by United States Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Arturo Valenzuela during a Friday mid day press conference in anticipation of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s trip to five countries of the region.

Arturo Valenzuela, US Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs
Arturo Valenzuela, US Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs

Ms Clinton is scheduled to meet next Monday afternoon in Montevideo with Argentine President Cristina Kirchner on the sidelines of the inauguration of Uruguayan president Jose Mujica.

This week the Argentine president was particularly critical of Obama’s first year in office for “not having fulfilled the region’s expectations”.

According to Argentine diplomatic sources during the Monday meeting Mrs. Kirchner is also expected to bring up the Falklands sovereignty dispute with the UK and the current oil drilling round by British companies for which Argentina reaffirmed its support from all Latinamerican and Caribbean countries at a summit held in Mexico earlier in the week.

From Mexico Argentine Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana travelled to New York to meet with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to request UK complies with UN resolutions and re-opens sovereignty talks on the Falklands.

However confirming State Department policy, Valenzuela said that "we will not be discussing the Falklands issue with Argentina. This is a matter for Argentina and for Britain. And it's not a matter for the United States to make a judgment on".

As to President Cristina Kirchner's assertion that President Obama "had not fulfilled" the region's expectations during his first year in office when "we were hoping to see strong realism, real-politik, from the White House", Valenzuela referred to the popularity standing of the US president in Latin America.

"In the last year there has been an enormous appreciation in the Americas of the president and his performance". In most Latin American countries president Obama has "different degrees of popularity" which reflect "the enormous acknowledgement of his figure as a leader and of his vision of the world", said Valenzuela.

Everybody is entitled to have an opinion on US foreign policy "but we simply disagree; we think that not only have we had a very significant engagement over the past year with countries in the hemisphere while at the same time having to focus on two very difficult and significant crises, the first being, of course, the Honduran coup d'état that took place last June and then also the more recent earthquake in Haiti", said Valenzuela.

He added that with Argentina Ms Clinton will not only be discussing bilateral issues but also some of the international issues. "The Argentines have been fairly outspoken on issues like Iran and international terrorism".

Finally Valenzuela stressed that "there are a whole host of things that we're doing on a (constructive) bilateral basis with the Argentines. There is very, very good cooperation on law enforcement issues and at the same time, we've been pleased at the votes that the Argentines have taken in the International Atomic Energy Agency on Iran", and the Argentine position on international terrorism "has been a very good one".

"We share very many things with the Argentines, and we would very much like to be able to strengthen our relationship with Argentina as we move forward".

Ms Clinton (including Valenzuela in the delegation) from Uruguay travels to Chile, Brazil, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

Saturday, February 27th 2010 - 00:42 UTC

Iceberg size of Luxembourg knocks loose and could disrupt weather patterns

An iceberg the size of Luxembourg knocked loose from the Antarctic continent earlier this month could disrupt the ocean currents driving weather patterns around the globe, researchers said on Friday.

The Metz Glacier tongue from where the huge mass of ice broke loose The Metz Glacier tongue from where the huge mass of ice broke loose

While the impact would not be felt for decades or longer, a slowdown in the production of colder, dense water could result in less temperate winters in the north Atlantic, they said.

The 2550 square-kilometre 400 metres thick block broke off on February 12 or 13 from the Mertz Glacier Tongue, a 160-kilometre spit of floating ice protruding into the Southern Ocean from East Antarctica, south of Melbourne, Australia, researchers said.

According to scientists the iceberg could disturb the area's exceptionally rich biodiversity, including a major colony of emperor penguins near Dumont d'Urville, site of a French scientific station, according to the scientists.

"The ice tongue was almost broken already. It was hanging like a loose tooth," said Benoit Legresy, a French glaciologist who has been monitoring the Metz Glacier via satellite images and on the ground for a decade in co-operation with Australian scientists.

The huge mass was dislodged by another, older iceberg, known as B9B, which split off in 1987. Jammed against the Antarctic continent for more than 20 years, B9B smashed into the Metz tongue like a slow-motion battering ram after it began to drift.

Both natural cycles and manmade climate change contribute to the collapse ice shelves and glaciers. Tide and ocean currents constantly beat against exposed areas, while longer summers and rising temperatures also take a toll.

“Obviously when there is warmer water, these ice tongues will become more fragile,” said Legresy, who works at the Laboratory for Geophysics and Oceanographic Space Research in Toulouse, southern France.

The Metz Glacier Tongue, fitted with GPS beacons and other measurement instruments, could provide crucial insights into how these influences should be apportioned.

“For the first time, we will have a detailed record of the full cycle of a major calving event — before, during and after,” he said.

Since breaking off, the iceberg — along with the newly mobile B9B, which is about the same size — have moved into an adjoining area called a polynya.

Distributed across the Southern Ocean, polynyas are zones that produce dense water, super cold and rich in salt that sinks to the bottom of the sea and drives the conveyor-belt like circulation around the globe.

If these icebergs move east and run aground, or drift north into warmer climes, they will have no impact on these currents.

“But if they stay in this area — which is likely — they could block the production of this dense water, essentially putting a lid on the polynya,” Legresy explained.

The Metz Glacier Polynya is particularly strong, and accounts for 20% of the “bottom water” in the world, he added. Eventually, the icebergs will die a natural death, but their lifespan depends on where they go.

MARCH

Monday, March 1st 2010 - 01:39 UTC

Argentina warns BHP Billiton about drilling in Falklands’ waters

Argentina's ambassador to Australia says Melbourne based mining group BHP Billiton will face business sanctions if it pushes ahead with oil exploration in Falklands waters. BHP has a licence to explore off the Falkland Islands and is scheduled to start doing so in the next four months, reports Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

But Ambassador Pedro Villagra says if the company proceeds, their business in Argentina will suffer.

"If they conduct activities they will not be allowed to carry out some activities in the Argentine territory in the mainland," he said.

Argentina has never relinquished its claim over the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic and the dispute flared again in February when a British oil exploration firm started drilling off the Falkland Islands.

BHP, in partnership with Falkland Oil and Gas Limited, holds 14 exploration and production licences for the East Falkland Basin - licences which have brought Argentina's wrath to Australia.

Ambassador Villagra says Argentina first officially warned BHP when they began talks with Falkland Oil and Gas Limited in 2007.

"Normally these letters are called letters of discomfort and advises any company that is engaging in these kinds of activities of what might the consequences be for Argentine law," he said.

"The communications simply advised BHP - BHP Petroleum in this case - that they should not engage in any acts of exploration, of exploitation unilaterally called by Great Britain.

"And if they decide to pursue this they may [incur] the sanctions that the Argentine law foresees for this kind of operation."

BHP does not currently have any operations in Argentina but has in the past held stakes in gold and copper mining projects. The miner is one of several companies prospecting for oil off the coast of the Falkland Islands this year.

The first of these, Desire Petroleum, began its explorations this week, with BHP and its minority share partner Falkland Oil and Gas Limited set to follow suit within four months.

Tuesday, March 2nd 2010 - 05:11 UTC

Falklands: Argentina formally request Hillary Clinton US mediation

Argentine president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner formally requested visiting Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that the United States act as intermediate in the Argentine-United Kingdom Falkland Islands dispute.

The two ladies at Casa Rosada: smiles and promises The two ladies at Casa Rosada: smiles and promises

"I have requested the intermediation role for the United States before the United Kingdom so that we can sit to discuss about the Malvinas Islands, contemplating the interests of the Islands inhabitants", said Mrs. Kirchner at a press conference Monday night following a meeting with Hillary Clinton in Casa Rosada, Buenos Aires.

"We agree; we stand ready to help resolve the issue. We would like to see Argentina and the UK sitting round a table discussing the matter. If we can be of any help in facilitating such an effort, we stand ready to do so" said Clinton.

But the Secretary of State also pointed out that the US position is that "this is a matter to be resolved between the United Kingdom and Argentina. We can't force sides to sit" but dialogue "is the correct way to proceed".

The latest chapter of the longstanding Falklands' dispute between Argentina and UK was triggered by a round of exploratory oil drilling in Falklands' water that begun last week and which Buenos Aires strongly objects.

Clinton's offer of help came on the first full day of a Latinamerica tour. Until mid afternoon the Secretary of State was in Montevideo for the inauguration of President Jose Mujica and to meet with outgoing leader Tabare Vazquez, who proved in his five years to be a staunch ally of Washington. From Argentina Clinton will be flying to quake-hit Chile, Brazil, and then Costa Rica and Guatemala in Central America.

Clinton, speaking to reporters on her plane bound for Argentina from Uruguay, said she did not see the United States in a mediating role, but rather as simply encouraging dialogue.

"We're not interested in and have no real role in determining what they decide between the two of them. But we want them talking and we want them trying to resolve the outstanding issues between them," she said.

"We recognise that there are contentious matters that have to be resolved and we hope that they will do so."

Cristina Kirchner had anticipated she would welcome mediation from the United States as a country friendly to both states. She said all that her country was asking was for talks. "I don't think that's too much" Mrs. Kirchner said.

Another issue which was on the table was Honduras, with Argentina and the US in differing positions.

"We had an exchange of ideas regarding differences we have over the Honduras issue", said Hillary Clinton. The US supports the newly elected government while Argentina insists that the ousting of Manuel Zelaya can't remain unpunished and that elections were held under a de facto government, and thus should not be legitimized.

Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana, cabinet chief Anibal Fernandez, Secretary of the presidency Oscar Parrilli, Interior minister Florencio Randazzo and Economy minister Amado Boudou were also present at the meeting.

On the US side, US ambassador Vilma Martínez; Thomas Kelly political councillor of the embassy; Arturo Valenzuela, Assistant Secretary for Hemisphere affairs; US permanent ambassador before OAS, Carmen Lomellin; head of Latinamerican Affairs at the National Security Council Luis Rosello and other State Department officials.

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Tuesday, March 2nd 2010 - 19:53 UTC

Britain rejects US offer to help UK and Argentina resolve Falklands' dispute

Downing Street has rejected an offer from the United States to help the UK and Argentina resolve their latest dispute over the Falkland Islands. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made the offer after renewed tensions were triggered with the beginning of a round of exploratory oil drilling in the Islands' waters.

"We don't think that's necessary", said a spokesperson for British PM Gordon Brown "We don't think that's necessary", said a spokesperson for British PM Gordon Brown

A spokesman for Gordon Brown said he welcomed her comments but did not think her direct involvement was necessary.

Argentina that claims sovereignty over the Falklands/Malvinas has been angered by the decision from several UK companies to drill.

Mrs Clinton said the row should be resolved between the two, but "if we can be of any help in facilitating such an effort, we stand ready to do so".

However Prime Minister Gordon Brown's spokesman responded to the offer by saying: "We don't think that's necessary.

"We welcome the support of the secretary of state in terms of ensuring that we continue to keep diplomatic channels open but there is no need for that (direct involvement)."

He stressed that "self-determination of Islanders is the key issue" and emphasised that Britain and Argentina have a strong ongoing working relationship.

However the spokesman also said the UK believed the oil drilling was "both the right thing to do and is entirely legitimate".

Foreign Secretary David Miliband emphasised the point, saying the drilling companies are "wholly within their rights" under international law.

Mr Miliband told MPs at Commons question time: "The government has made it clear it has no doubt about the UK's sovereignty of the Falkland Islands.

"There can be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the Falkland Islanders so wish it and they have made clear they have no such wish".

"The companies are acting wholly within their rights and wholly within the legality of international law," he added.

Ms Clinton spoke about the situation when she stopped in Buenos Aires to meet Argentine President Cristina Fernandez as part of a six-country tour of Latin America.

"What we have requested is mediation as a friendly country of both Argentina and the United Kingdom" Mrs Kirchner was quoted by the Buenos Aires media.

After the meeting, Mrs Clinton said the US wanted to encourage dialogue but was not offering to act in a mediating role.

Argentine Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana last week claimed that by drilling in the disputed waters, Britain was committing a unilateral act contrary to international law.

He asked United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to bring the UK into talks over the sovereignty of the islands.

The UK government says the Falklands have a "legitimate right" to develop an oil industry within their waters. (BBC).-

Tuesday, March 2nd 2010 - 19:56 UTC

Spain says Falklands' dispute is bilateral: EU should refrain from involvement

Spain has declared that the European Union should refrain from any type of involvement in the Falkland Islands dispute, according to the official news agency EFE. A spokesman for the Spanish Government, which currently holds the rotating six-month presidency of the EU, is quoted as saying that "this is not a European matter but a British one, a bilateral affair rather than a regional one.

Madrid supports Argentine claims over the Falklands Madrid supports Argentine claims over the Falklands

Spanish diplomatic sources have stated that the conflict aggravated by the exploratory oil drilling round begun by British companies in Falklands' waters, which has exacerbated Argentina, "should be solved through a process of dialogue between the two affected parties".

Buenos Aires contends that Britain is seeking to exploit the natural resources of a territory Argentina believes rightfully belongs to them.

The Spanish Government says it understands that Buenos Aires should be recruiting support among South American countries in its sovereignty claim over the Islands, but considers that "the EU should not get involved as it is not a bi-regional matter".

Madrid also notes that the EU does not take sides in other territorial disputes "like that of Gibraltar" between Spain and UK, or other territorial hotspots between South American countries.

Spain has always supported calls by South American diplomatic summits for Buenos Aires and London to renew negotiations on the political status of the islands according to United Nations resolutions.

Tuesday, March 2nd 2010 - 22:08 UTC

MPs claim UK defense spending on Falklands 50% down in six years

Defense spending on protecting the Falkland Islands has plunged by 50% cent in just six years, it was claimed by a report in London's Daily Mail.

Tory MP Andrew Rosindell, secretary of the all-Party Falkland Islands group at Westminster
Tory MP Andrew Rosindell, secretary of the all-Party Falkland Islands group at Westminster

New figures published by the UK government show the budget for stationing the Armed Forces 8,000 miles away from Britain has plummeted from £143million in 2005-06 to £69million in 2010-11.

On Monday MPs warned that the apparent slump in defense spending on the Falklands had encouraged Argentina to raise the pressure over its right to the Islands.

UK Ministry of Defense said the fall was because of changes to 'accounting policy' - omitting costs such as military equipment, servicemen's pay, repairs and communications from the budget.

Defense spending peaked in 1982, the year of the Falklands War, when Argentina invaded the islands before a UK taskforce seized back control.

By 1989-90, the territory's defense budget had slumped to £60million, but by 2000-01 it had more than doubled to £143million - which happened to be the same amount spent in

2005-06. But the following year, it fell to £65million and has risen by just £4million for the financial year starting next month, claimed the newspaper article.

The UK has 1,000-plus troops garrisoned on the islands, plus four state of the art RAF bombers on standby at the international-standard Mount Pleasant airport. Royal Navy ships are also currently on patrol in the South Atlantic.

Andrew Rosindell, the Tory MP and secretary of the all-Party Falkland Islands group at Westminster, said: 'It is dangerous for the Government to give any kind of indication that Britain is not ensuring adequate defenses of the Islands.

'To seemingly cut defense spending while Argentina is saber-rattling sends out a very bad message.'

Liberal Democrat MP Bob Russell called for increased defense spending on the Falklands 'to make sure that we are fully prepared, especially as we have a smaller Royal Navy'.

But Armed Forces Minister Bill Rammell said: 'There is some variation between years caused by what categories of expenditure were included.

'For example, in recent years figures do not include military equipment, military personnel pay, service children's education facilities, estate works and maintenance, IT and communication, maritime visits or air charter.'

Last week, the Argentine government tabled a UN resolution condemning Britain for allowing oil exploration off the Falklands.

President Kirchner issued a decree last month forcing ships sailing to the Falklands from Argentina to seek a permit after learning that a rig was to start drilling. She has also secured backing from 32 Latinamerican nations during a meeting in Mexico.

The administration of President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner all along has states that Argentina will keep its claims in the framework of international law and based on US resolutions.

"We have no intention of stopping ships in high seas. We're not in that business", Mrs. Kirchner was quoted a week ago.

Wednesday, March 3rd 2010 - 07:11 UTC

Falklands' MLA at Westminster political seminar

The Falkland Islands most voted member of the Legislative Assembly is currently in the United Kingdom where he will be participating of the Westminster Seminar, which is described as a perfect learning ground for recently elected politicians.

Dick Sawle, most voted member of the Falklands Legislative Assembly
Dick Sawle, most voted member of the Falklands Legislative Assembly

The Falkland Islands asked for one of the coveted places and on successfully being chosen, Members of the Legislative Assembly agreed that Dick Sawle MLA should attend.

The Objectives of the Westminster Seminar on Parliamentary Practices and Procedures to take place in London from 7-19 March 2010 are:

To learn about accountability and legislation Mechanisms; To study the structure, administration and funding of a Parliament and the work of its key office holders; To examine methods to represent and engage better with communities (to include a constituency visit); To explore the contributions parliamentarians can make to the issue of climate change; To explore the contributions parliamentarians can make to the outcome of the global financial crisis; To interact and exchange views with Members and officials at Westminster and to mark and celebrate Commonwealth Day and International Women's Day.

The seminar is sponsored by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Foreign Office.

Wednesday, March 3rd 2010 - 07:32 UTC

Ban Ki-moon calls for “creative solutions” from UN Decolonization Committee

Creative solutions are needed for the remaining Non self-governing territories if the United Nations is to fulfil its obligations in supporting the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of these territories, said UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on the opening of the 2010 session of the Special Committee of 24 on decolonization, G-24.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

Ban Ki-moon insisted that a pragmatic and realistic approach taking into account the specific circumstances of each “is most likely to lead to concrete results”. The 2010 session of the G-24 coincides with the Second international decade of the eradication of colonialism and fiftieth anniversary of the declaration on independence for colonial countries and peoples.

UN Secretary General said that 2010 would be an important year for G-24, because it marked both the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

The message conveyed by B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Ban said the achievements of the Second international Decade (2001-2010) included a reduction in the number of United Nations-listed Non-Self-Governing Territories from 17 to 16 following Timor-Leste’s hard-won independence in 2002. The Special Committee had also assisted the people of Tokelau exercise their right to self-determination in two votes, he said, noting that it continued its annual deliberations, hearings, regional seminars and professional reporting, including on its website.

Heartened by the strengthened dialogue between the Special Committee and the administering Powers, he said it was crucial for those Powers to work with the people of the Territories under their administration to generate further momentum for self-determination.

“What we need now are creative solutions for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories,” he added. “If the United Nations is to fulfil its obligations in supporting the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of these Territories, a pragmatic and realistic approach — taking into account the specific circumstances of each — is most likely to lead to concrete results.”

In opening remarks Donatus Keith St. Aimee (Saint Lucia), the Special Committee’s newly elected Chairperson, noted that only one Non-Self-Governing Territory had been eliminated from the list during the Decade, emphasizing: “We need to do better than that.” There was a “crucial need” in its final year to generate new momentum so as to ensure that the 16 remaining Territories would be able to exercise their right to self-determination, on a case-by-case basis, through the follow-up to and application of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

There was a need to find creative ways to resolve the difficulties of the decolonization process while paying genuine attention to the socio-economic needs of the Territories’ peoples as well as their interests. The Special Committee must continue its work in a proactive, pragmatic, and innovative manner, he added, stressing also that the administering Powers must recognize their own responsibilities. Of special significance was the responsibility to disseminate information on the available self-determination options and the decolonization process to the remaining non-self-governing peoples, he said, noting that the example set by Tokelau and the Government of New Zealand could set a benchmark for all others to emulate.

He said regional seminars provided an excellent venue for enhancing education on and public awareness of decolonization, and welcomed an offer by the territorial Government of New Caledonia, in consultation with France, the administering Power, to host a regional seminar this year.

Taking unanimous action on a draft decision based on a letter from the Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to its Chairperson, the Special Committee recommended that the General Assembly appoint that country as a member, raising the body's membership from 28 to 29.

In other business, the Special Committee elected, by acclamation, Pedro Núñez Mosquera (Cuba) and Rupert Davies (Sierra Leone) as Vice-Chairs, and Bashar Ja'afari (Syria) as Rapporteur. It also invited the delegations of Algeria, Argentina and Spain to participate in its deliberations as observers.

The Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (also known as the Committee of 24) is the focal point for the implementation of the Declaration on Decolonization. Its current 28 members are: Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Chile, China, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Grenada, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Mali, Papua New Guinea, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sierra Leone, Syria, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania and Venezuela.

Remaining on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories are: Gibraltar, New Caledonia, Western Sahara, American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, Saint Helena, Turks and Caicos Islands, United States Virgin Islands, Tokelau and the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

The Special Committee heard brief statements by representatives of Cuba, Dominica, Venezuela, Indonesia, Syria, Congo, Ecuador, Bolivia, Grenada, Tunisia, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia and Nicaragua. The Special Committee will reconvene at a date and time to be announced.

Wednesday, March 3rd 2010 - 22:45 UTC

"Falklands has a right to oil exploration", letter in The Times

Licences to drill for oil in Falkland Islands territorial waters were issued by the Falklands' government, not by London, and Islanders are entitled to do this by the terms of the Joint Declaration over Oil issued by the Argentine and British governments in 1995, said Falklands Government Representative in London Sukey Cameron.

Ms Sukey Cameron, FIGO representative in London Ms Sukey Cameron, FIGO representative in London

On February 25 The Times printed a letter from Ms Cameron in rebuttal of assertions made earlier by an Argentine contributor to the newspaper's letters page, Dr. Celia Szusterman, "Future of the Falklands", Feb. 23.

The letter in full follows:

Falklands has right to oil exploration

Sir, Celia Szusterman presents a confused and partial analysis of the situation over oil exploration in Falklands waters ("Future of Falklands", letter, Feb 23). First, it was the Falkland Islands government (which Argentina consistently refuses to recognize) that granted the exploration licences. We are fully entitled to do this in our own territorial waters. This right was recognized by Argentina and the UK in the 1995 Joint Declaration over Oil.

The declaration stated the full claim by each side to the territory involved and was to allow Falklands' oil exploration to go ahead in Falklands waters as defined by the fishing zones — effectively with the agreement of the Argentine Government and without interference or government involvement by it. The first round of exploration duly went ahead in 1998 on these terms. The agreement also designated an area straddling the border of the Falklands' designated area as a special co-operation area to be exploited jointly.

A further licensing round in the Falklands took place in 2001 and ended in 2005; again within the terms of the 1995 agreement: so there is no question of a "unilateral decision to grant exploration rights", as Dr Szusterman implies.

It was not until March 2007 (not 2005), that the Argentine Government unilaterally repudiated the 1995 agreement. To use Dr Szusterman's words, "it signaled that co-operation over oil, fisheries, conservation and other matters should be steps in a path that must lead to talks on sovereignty."

People may be forgiven for thinking that this announcement, on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the Argentine invasion and when the licensed companies had already invested two years' work, was carefully planned to disrupt the exploration process and "revive the old cause".

Argentina is attempting to achieve by economic sanctions what it failed to achieve by military means. It has withdrawn co-operation on fishing conservation and environmental protection. It has threatened sanctions against companies holding licences to fish in Falklands' waters and tried to exclude Falklands Islands' representatives from participating at international fish conservation conferences. Now it is attempting to disrupt oil exploration.

On one point I agree with Dr Szusterman's analysis. It is time that Argentina recognized the Islanders and their democratically elected government. We are no longer a British colony but a self-governing overseas territory with full rights of self-determination. We have chosen to remain British citizens.

We have no desire to be colonized by Argentina, which refuses to recognize our Government or our right to determine our own future, but simply wants to seize our homeland, where we have lived for nearly 180 years. We will not be bullied into submission. Sukey Cameron, Representative Falkland Islands Government
London SW1.-

Wednesday, March 3rd 2010 - 23:05 UTC

Falklands fourth Oil Company announces plans to drill south of the Islands

The fourth British company licensed to explore in Falkland Islands waters, Borders and Southern Ltd announced preparations were "well underway" for a drilling campaign to the south of the Islands.

CEO Howard Kevin Obee made an enthusiastic presentation
CEO Howard Kevin Obee made an enthusiastic presentation

Representatives of the Falklands business community and others who attended a public meeting at the Chamber of Commerce last week were assured by Borders and Southern Ltd, that while recent media and political attention has been focused on the drilling for oil currently under way to the north of the Falklands, preparations were well underway for a further campaign in licence areas to the south.

Roger Charles of environmental consultants RPS began the evening with a presentation giving an overview of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that his company prepared for Borders and Southern in respect of two drilling targets: Darwin East and Stepping.

Darwin East is situated some 140km south of the Falklands and Stepping a further 30kms away, at depths of 2,010 and 1,400 metres below sea-level respectively. Reviewing the data gathered by Borders and Southern in a survey done in 2008 and other available information, the conclusion of the RPS assessment was that neither drill site was in a particularly environmentally sensitive area and that there was unlikely to be any conflict with commercial fishing interests.

It was estimated, said Mr Charles that the drilling campaign would last for around 70 days, but its start date was dependent on the availability of an appropriate drill ship or a 5th or 6th generation submersible platform.

The Environmental Impact Assessment would be refined and redrafted to take into account any significant seasonal factors, once the start date could be determined.

With regard to accidental discharges from a well, in the event of oil being discovered, Mr Charles quoted the example of the North Sea where over 3,500 wells had been drilled without such an accident occurring. However, Borders and Southern would be taking measures to deal with any “worst case” emergency should it arise.

Computer models also indicated that even with wind and tide combining to exacerbate a spill, there was no chance of oil beaching on the nearest land mass, Beauchene Island.

Following on from the EIA presentation, Borders and Southern’s Chief Executive, Howard Obee, gave an enthusiastic and upbeat account of the reasons for his company having chosen the Darwin East and Stepping targets.

Geologically, the Darwin East and Stepping targets are located in what is essentially an underwater continuation of the Andes mountains stretching from the tip of South America and curling westward to surface again in South Georgia.

Seismic three-dimensional work had identified similar structures to those found in other oil producing regions extending as far north as Venezuela, and wells drilled for scientific purposes in the seventies indicated the presence of similar source rock to that found in Argentina.

The Falklands second phase of exploratory drilling offshore the Islands commenced in February 2010 with the arrival of the semi-submersible rig, Ocean Guardian, contracted to drill wells in the North Falkland Basin for Desire Petroleum plc and Rockhopper Exploration plc.

Additionally, the rig will drill the first exploratory well to the south of the Islands for BHP Billiton Petroleum, associate of Falkland Oil and Gas Ltd.

No commercial discoveries of oil or gas have been made yet, but the first wells, drilled in 1998, proved the presence of hydrocarbons in the rich source rock of the North Falkland Basin.

Thursday, March 4th 2010 - 03:34 UTC

Spanish opposition reacts to Ban Ki-moon's approach to decolonization process

Spanish opposition Popular Party MP José Ignacio Landaluce said this week that the only option for the decolonisation of Gibraltar was its return to Spain. He was reacting to comments made by the United Nations' Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, who has called for a "pragmatic and realistic" approach to the decolonisation process.

Popular Party MP Jose Ignacio Landaluce Popular Party MP Jose Ignacio Landaluce

He wants governments to take into account the specific circumstances of each country – including Gibraltar – still on the UN list of colonies.

On Monday, the Gibraltar political system welcomed the UN chief's statement and said it was a step in the right direction toward delisting through self-determination. But unsurprisingly Landaluce offered a sharply different interpretation.

He said the UN Secretary General's statement would benefit the Spanish position and that, while the voice of Gibraltarians must be heard in the decolonisation process, international law meant the only option was the return of Gibraltar to Spain, as per the Treaty of Utrecht.

He called on Spanish foreign minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos to adopt a "firm and conclusive" position on the recovery of sovereignty over Gibraltar.

For the Gibraltar Government and the UK, the UN's position on Gibraltar is largely academic, given that both governments consider its decolonisation process outdated. As far as they are concerned, Britain and Gibraltar already enjoy a modern, non-colonial constitutional relationship under British sovereignty.

Thursday, March 4th 2010 - 21:12 UTC

What can Argentina gain from another Falklands dispute?

The Washington Post published this week an editorial on the current Falkland Islands situation arguing that "you know that an Argentine leader must be in political trouble" if the subject of the South Atlantic Islands comes up again.

Cristina Kirchner must set aside the toxic mix of populism and crony capitalism
Cristina Kirchner must set aside the toxic mix of populism and crony capitalism

In this case it is President Cristina Kirchner whose populist administration has lost the support of most of the country and "has seized on the episode to stoke the curious jingoism that the Islands inspire in her country".

The Washington Post suggests that Mrs. Kirchner set aside its senseless nationalism and persuade oil firms to begin exploration in Argentina's coastal waters empty of the rigs now lining up off the coast of Brazil.

But for this Mrs. Kirchner must regain the confidence of foreign investors driven off by "the toxic mix of populism and crony capitalism".

The full text follows:

You know that an Argentine leader must be in political trouble if the subject of the Falkland Islands has come up again. In this case the beleaguered president is Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, whose populist administration in Buenos Aires has lost the support of most of the country. Hosting Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in Buenos Aires on Monday, Ms. Fernández de Kirchner requested that the United States mediate Argentina's dispute with Britain over the islands, which lie about 400 miles off Argentina's southern coast but have been governed from London since 1833.

Ms. Clinton responded by urging the two sides to talk, while wisely sidestepping the mediation suggestion. Such studied neutrality is in keeping with traditional U.S. policy on

the Falklands -- though it's worth remembering that mistaken interpretation of signals from Washington helped produce Argentina's disastrous 1982 invasion. In this case, it's hard to see why the Obama administration should throw any lifelines to Ms Fernandez de Kirchner, who hasn't shrunk from playing to anti-American sentiment around the region.

Ms. Fernández de Kirchner is not threatening force, and she points to a provocation -- the arrival in the islands' territorial waters of a British company's oil rig. Most experts seem to be sceptical that the drilling will produce a big find. But the president has seized on the episode to stoke the curious jingoism that the islands inspire in her country. The weirdness lies in the fact that there is no modern history of an Argentine connection to the "Malvinas," as they are called in Buenos Aires. The 3,000-odd inhabitants are mostly descendants of immigrants from Britain, and they overwhelmingly support continued British rule. That means that Argentina's claim that the territory should be "decolonized" into its hands is fundamentally at odds with the principle of self-determination.

Were oil to be found in the Falklands, Argentina could be a prime beneficiary, if it could set aside its senseless nationalism. Its ports and firms could provide a staging ground and supplies for the industry. Even better, Ms. Fernández de Kirchner could persuade oil firms to begin exploration in Argentina's coastal waters, which are empty of the rigs now lining up off the coast of Brazil. This, of course, would require the Argentine government to regain the confidence of foreign investors it has driven off with its toxic mix of populism and crony capitalism. For Ms. Fernández de Kirchner, it's easier to make speeches about colonialism -- even if they don't bring much return.

Friday, March 5th 2010 - 17:19 UTC

Chilean flags in the Falklands – fund raising for Earthquake victims

CHILEAN flags have been on display in the Falkland Islands as members of the Chilean community, along with Islanders, have begun fundraising for victims of the Chile earthquake.

Ella Clement and Katrice Berntsen with Chileans flags receive cruise visitors next to the Public Jetty
Ella Clement and Katrice Berntsen with Chileans flags receive cruise visitors next to the Public Jetty

Angely's kindergarten children raise money from visiting cruise ship passengers for the Chilean Earthquake Appeal'
Angely's kindergarten children raise money from visiting cruise ship passengers for the Chilean Earthquake Appeal'

Chilean-born Angely Morrison Sanchez, owner of kindergarten business Mini Mis, and her young charges, spent the day raising funds at the Stanley Jetty Centre where hundreds of cruise ship tourists were disembarking from the Norwegian Sun.

Angely, who has one child, Ellya (7) with her Falkland Islander husband said, "We want to raise as much as possible today from the sale of cakes and biscuits we have baked ourselves and then contact 'Teleton' in Chile to let them know how much we have made."

Angely has family in Santiago, but said, "They are all unharmed; the only thing that happened was that they lost their electricity; they were very lucky. After much trying I eventually managed to contact them at midnight on Saturday."

The young woman who moved to the Falklands in 1991 said, "The tourists have been very generous and the children have enjoyed helping the cause."

Celia Short, a long term member of the Falklands community, has created a fund-raising committee and opened the 'Chilean Earthquake Appeal' bank account with the Falklands only Bank, Standard Chartered.

She said: "We aim to contact businesses and ask them to donate to a raffle, we also hope to hold a children's' bazaar and raise funds at the Latin Night held at the Globe Tavern.
"As soon as the Falklands Charity Shop heard what we were doing they donated £1000."

Ceila also has family in Chile. Although most live in the Punta Arenas/Puerto Natales area she has a sister in Santiago: "Thankfully she is OK," said Celia.

To ensure that Chileans can keep up with breaking news, Mario Zuvic, owner of KTV in the Falklands has in the past week introduced the Chilean National TV channel '24 hours' to those others broadcast around the Islands.

Chilean airline Lan provides a Saturday flight between the Falklands and Punta Arenas. The flight is scheduled to arrive tomorrow and Falklands passengers en route to Santiago from Punta Arenas will fly on the arranged replacement flights. A Lan representative in Stanley confirmed that normal Lan operations were expected from the middle of next week.

By Lisa Watson - SeAledPR- Stanley

Saturday, March 6th 2010 - 15:35 UTC

Sails of South America 2010 from Buenos Aires head for Ushuaia

Bicentennial celebrations winds arrived in Buenos Aires this week with the imposing figure of eleven tall ships, wonderfully crafted relics of the past that will be docked until next Tuesday when they sail on to the South Atlantic.

The magnificent tall ships displaying colour and pride in Buenos Aires The magnificent tall ships displaying colour and pride in Buenos Aires

"Sails of South America 2010" has brought together magnificent sailing ships, among them frigates, schooners and brigs from various countries of the Americas and Europe to participate in the Bicentennial Regatta.

The event is organized by the navies from Argentina and Chile to celebrate the bicentennial of the first national governing board during the struggle of South American countries to break away from the then Spanish colonial empire.

The unique challenge has gathered thousands of navigators in the most important ports of the region, sailing emblematic places for the mariners of all times, like the circumnavigation of the mythical "Cape Horn".

The vessels departed from Rio de Janeiro on February 7th and arrived in Buenos Aires this week after having called at Mar del Plata, Punta Del Este and Montevideo in Uruguay.

"We want the event to be a festivity for Ibero-American nations. It's an emotive expression of fraternity and union", said Captain Luis Maria Gonzales, PR for the Argentine Navy that is hosting the tall ships in Buenos Aires.

In the coming four days each of the vessels is scheduled to give a display of music, dance and traditions of diverse cultures each of them represents.

There will be parades in downtown Buenos Aires and open days for the public to visit the vessels.

Next week from Buenos Aires the regatta leaves for Cape Horn, Ushuaia, Punta Arenas and eventually Valparaíso. The celebration concludes in several months time in Veracruz, Mexico.

The vessels docked in Buenos Aires are: "Capitán Miranda", Uruguay; "Cisne Branco", Brazil; Cuauhtémoc, México; Esmeralda, Chile; Europa, Holland; Gloria, Colombia; Guayas, Ecuador; Juan Sebastián Elcano, Spain; Libertad, Argentina; Sagres, Portugal; Simón Bolívar, Venezuela, and Eagle from the US Coast Guard.

Tuesday, March 9th 2010 - 18:53 UTC

Britain files legal challenge against EC over Gibraltar waters row

The British Government has filed a legal challenge against the European Commission's decision to re-list Spain's controversial nature site in Gibraltar waters. Britain had already announced that it would take the step and the case was filed with the European Court of Justice last Thursday, just a day before the March 5 deadline.

Listing of Spanish nature site in Gibraltar waters triggered the controversy Listing of Spanish nature site in Gibraltar waters triggered the controversy

A spokesman for the Foreign & Commonwealth Office declined to provide any further detail on the ongoing legal case.

The row over the waters stems from a decision by Brussels to approve a Spanish request to list most of Gibraltar's territorial sea - and an area of international waters too - as one of Spain's protected sites under EU law.

In doing so, the Commission ignored the fact that Britain has jurisdiction over these waters and had already designated part of them as a European protected site in 2006.

Last year, the Gibraltar Government filed a legal challenge against the EC's initial decision to list the Spanish site. That case seeks to have the EC's decision annulled and it is likely that the British action will seek a similar aim.

It is not clear at this stage, however, whether both governments have used similar legal arguments to achieve that goal. In any event, both cases will be contested.

Brussels, supported by Spain, is already challenging Gibraltar's case on the grounds that only Britain has the jurisdiction to bring such a case to court. Britain has now taken that step and, although neither Spain nor the EC have confirmed this yet, both are likely to contest the UK filing too.

Tuesday, March 9th 2010 - 07:45 UTC

Falklands' tension, no risk of military conflict says Jane's analyst

Exploratory oil drilling, which began last month in waters north of the Falkland Islands (whose sovereignty remains contested by the United Kingdom and Argentina) has upped the tension level in the region, the security information provider Jane's has noted.

The commencement of hydrocarbons exploration activities has led to diplomatic protests from Buenos Aires and new measures requiring Falklands-bound shipping in Argentine waters or ports to obtain pre-visit authorization.

IHS Jane's Americas Analyst, Robert Munks noted that "a further intensive round of diplomatic activity from the Argentines will now concentrate on shoring up regional support for its case from other Latin American countries and presenting its annual case to the UN Decolonization Committee in June".

But Munks added, "It is nevertheless vital to stress that the current resurgence of interest in the Falklands carries no risk of military conflict between the two countries. Argentina's return to democracy in 1983 and its pledge to pursue its claim to the 'Malvinas' through peaceful means underline that the military option is no longer viable.

Indeed, the military balance of power in the South Atlantic is also substantially different from the time of the 1982 conflict, with the UK having qualitatively improved its defense posture on the Islands at the same time as Argentina's military capabilities have stagnated and so are little better than at the time of the previous conflict in 1982."

There will now be a period of relative calm for some six to eight months while four companies undertake exploratory drilling in a range of concessions around the Islands, during which Buenos Aires will maintain a heightened level of diplomatic activity.

The next crucial development will come if or when any substantial and exploitable oil reserves are confirmed. Any discovery would be certain to give added impetus to Argentine protests, which, given the relatively hard-line posture of Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, could escalate into a number of retaliatory measures including trade sanctions or action to reduce transport and communication links to the islands.

Munks concluded, "Even under this scenario, such tensions would not lead to any prospect of renewed, large-scale military hostilities between the United Kingdom and Argentina".

Tuesday, March 9th 2010 - 19:12 UTC

Falklands all Party Parliamentary Group chairman steps down

The Falkland Islands Government hosted a dinner at the House of Commons to say farewell to Sir Nicholas Winterton MP, as Chairman of the UK Falkland Islands All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), a post he has held since 1997.

Sir Nicholas retires from Parliament at the next general election after serving 39 years

Sir Nicholas retires from Parliament at the next general election after serving 39 years as an MP. He was a founding member of the APPG in 1981, and a staunch supporter of the Falklands, which he visited twice, firstly in 1990, and then again for the 25th Anniversary commemorations in 2007.

Sukey Cameron MBE, Falkland Islands Government Representative, hosted the dinner on February 24 and presented Sir Nicholas with a painting of Stanley.

Nicholas was born in 1938. He was educated at Rugby School. He is married to Ann, from 1983 MP for Congleton, and they have two sons, one daughter and seven grandchildren. After completing his National Service in Germany Sir Nicholas worked for Shell-Mex and BP and later for Construction Machinery Company.

Sir Nicholas first stood for election to Parliament in 1969 at a by-election in Newcastle-under-Lyme and again in the same constituency at the General Election in 1970. He was elected to Parliament after winning Macclesfield in a by-election in September 1971.

He is currently the senior member of the Speaker's Panel of Chairmen, and one of the four members of the Panel who takes sittings in Westminster Hall on a regular basis with the honorary title of Deputy Speaker. He was knighted in June 2002 for services to Parliament.

He is heavily involved in the House of Commons and chairs the Procedure Select Committee, having been first elected as Chairman in 1997. He also serves as the senior Conservative member of the Modernization Select Committee and the Liaison Committee. He is one of two Vice Chairmen of the Conservative Parliamentary Party 1922 Committee.

He is member of the Executive Committee and Finance & General Purposes Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and of the Executive Committee Inter-Parliamentary Union. He is also Joint Chairman of the British-Taiwan Group.

Nicholas was a member of the Social Services Select Committee from 1979-90 and then Chairman of the Health Select Committee from 1990-92. Nicholas' interest in health matters is highlighted by his position as an Honorary Vice President of the Royal College of Midwives, which recognizes his role as Chairman of the Health Select Committee when it produced a ground breaking report into maternity services.

His continuing and active interest in sport has led to a position of Vice Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games Group, and Nicholas was able to visit all the major sporting facilities for the Games in Manchester before the Games took place.

He is a Freeman of the City of London and a Past Upper Bailiff and Member of Court of The Worshipful Company of Weavers and for his many years of support for the St John Ambulance he was installed as a Serving Brother of the Order of St John.

However last year in a letter to David Cameron, the Tory leader, Sir Nicholas and Ann said that they could no longer "maintain the hectic pace" of political life and wanted to step down in order to spend more time with their family.

Their decision came after the Telegraph disclosed that they claimed more than £80,000 in rent for a small London flat that was owned by a trust controlled by their children. Since 2002 the Wintertons' flat in Westminster has been owned by a trust which is controlled by their children.

In his letter to Mr Cameron, Sir Nicholas wrote: "Parliament and my constituency have been my life for almost 38 years (and politics in general for almost 50 years) and in Ann's case for more than 26 years, but when you feel as we do that maybe the years are taking their toll and perhaps we can no longer represent Macclesfield and Congleton with the same level of energy and enthusiasm as in the past, we have reached the conclusion that we should pass the baton to a younger person because both Congleton and Macclesfield deserve the very best."

Mr Cameron responded: "I completely understand your decision to stand down and appreciate that these must not have been easy decisions to make.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the service, energy and commitment both of you have demonstrated to Parliament and to your respective constituencies. Never before has a husband and wife team served the House of Commons for a total of 65 years and this is something you can both be very proud of."

Tuesday, March 9th 2010 - 19:57 UTC

Falklands' government donates £ 5.000 to Chile Earthquake Appeal Fund

The Falkland Islands Government donated £ 5.000 to the Chile Earthquake Appeal Fund, which was opened by Chilean residents in the Islands to help victims of the earthquake that devastated central Chile.

Member of the Legislative Assembly Roger Edwards underlined the close links of the Falklands with Chile Member of the Legislative Assembly Roger Edwards underlined the close links of the Falklands with Chile

The payment was unanimously approved by the Falkland Islands Legislative Assembly.

Following the vote Roger Edwards reiterated the message of support sent by Members of the Legislative Assembly on 2 March 2010 to the Chilean president and people, saying that "Falkland Islanders join with our Chilean neighbours in mourning the great loss of life caused by the earthquake".

He said that the people of the Falkland Islands value the close contacts “which we maintain with Chile through our many business links”, and praised the visiting medical team from Clinica Alemana de Santiago who carried on their work at the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital in Stanley notwithstanding the terrible news from their own country”.

Rogers ended by noting that the Falkland Islands “have a strong long established resident Chilean community who are a welcome and vibrant part of today’s modern dynamic society”, and wished them every success with their fund-raising efforts.

In February the Falkland Islands Government also donated £5,000 to the Haiti Earthquake Appeal Fund.

Wednesday, March 10th 2010 - 05:49 UTC

Argentina’s YPF imports fuel to meet demand for the first time in 30 years

Argentine-Spanish oil company YPF said on Tuesday that it plans to import 50 million litres of gasoline as demand outstrips supply. Argentina, an oil-producing country where fuel is subject to government price controls, has not imported gasoline in 30 years.

Loading gasoline in Buenos Aires Loading gasoline in Buenos Aires

“Everyone is putting less fuel on the market, except YPF; the people have come to YPF in search of the missing fuel,” corporate Communications Director Sergio Resumil said, blaming his firm’s domestic competitors for the shortage.

He said YPF, the Argentine subsidiary of Spain’s Repsol, is turning to imports as an “exceptional” measure and that the 50 million litres represents a little more than a month’s supply.

Resumil said the other firms in the Argentine fuel sector – Brazil’s Petrobras, Esso and Royal Dutch Shell – reduced both oil production and refining here by 200,000 cubic meters in January and February.

Moreover, he said, YPF has secured 56% of the market by undercutting its competitors on price, and he sought to reassure consumers that the company can meet Argentina's needs.

"There is gas and there is fuel, people just have to have a little patience," Resumil said.

Wednesday, March 10th 2010 - 19:05 UTC

Falklands expose Argentine aggressiveness in the British press

The point of view of Falkland Islanders has been included in two leading newspapers in the UK this week, ensuring that British public opinion is aware of Islanders' position.

Jan Cheek, member of the Falklands Legislative Assembly Jan Cheek, member of the Falklands Legislative Assembly

On 8 March The Times (circulation 508,250) published a letter from the Hon. Jan Cheek, a Member of the Legislative Assembly, which argued that suggestions regarding the "leaseback" of the Falklands were "deeply disappointing" in response to an article by Matthew Parris (27 February).

A longer "Response" article appeared in The Guardian (circulation 302,285) on 10 March, reiterating the Islanders' right to self-determination and correcting points made by Simon Jenkins in the newspaper on 25 February.

The letters submitted to the press can be viewed below:

The Editor,
The Times,
March 5.

As Matthew Parris knows because he interviewed me at the time, Falkland Islands representatives initiated, and were involved in, talks with the UK and Argentina in 1999 aimed at improving co-operation on a number of issues including conservation of fish stocks in the South Atlantic. Some years earlier a joint declaration on an area of Joint co-operation in oil exploration was agreed. We have worked hard to have a normal neighbourly relationship with a country 300 miles away.

The Kirchner government in Argentina renounced the declaration on the Joint co-operation area for oil exploration in 2007. They have also refused to allow charter flights from other South American countries to the Falklands. The Argentine government has also withdrawn from the Commission on fisheries management for the S W Atlantic. This had been set up to ensure that fishing in the area was sustainable, through joint experimental cruises and the exchange of scientific data. More recently the Argentine government had threatened to hinder shipping in the area. This is part of the attempt to prevent companies licensed by the Falkland Islands from exploratory drilling.

It is therefore deeply disappointing to see the suggestion of 'leaseback' of the Islands which never were part of Argentina. Such a move would, in effect be giving away the birthright of our grandchildren, some of whom are the eighth and ninth generations to live in the Falkland Islands. Self determination is a right recognised by the UN. Falkland Islanders did not displace an indigenous population, there was none.

Yours sincerely

The Honourable Jan Cheek

Member of the Falkland Islands Legislative Assembly

8 March 2010

The Guardian Response column

Simon Jenkins' article, "The Falklands can no longer remain as Britain's expensive nuisance" (26 February), fails to acknowledge the fact that the Falklands have moved on, unlike Mr. Jenkins' opinions. Argentina's endeavours to force their colonial ambitions on a

small country in direct denial of the freely expressed wishes of its people are not new and ignore our basic right to self determination.

The Argentine claim to the Islands is certainly not strong, as Mr. Jenkins believes; the claim to a territory 300 miles away is neither logical nor valid. Falklands inhabitants did not replace an indigenous population because there was none. The Islands were claimed by Britain in 1765, long before Argentina existed as a country and have been permanently settled since 1833. Some families like mine, can now boast eight and nine generations – my grandchildren are eighth generation Islanders. The Falkland Islands are an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom, with internal matters governed by a democratically elected Legislative Assembly, of which I am a Member.

Neither does the United Nations accept the legitimacy of the Argentine claim. As he made clear to President Kirchner last week, the most that the Secretary General is prepared to do is to mediate between Britain and Argentina should both sides agree to discuss sovereignty. That is a far cry from endorsing Argentina's arguments. The annual vote in the UN Decolonisation Committee is a sham - the Falkland Islands are not a colony and the debate there is therefore an irrelevance. More relevant are the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and of the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights, both of which endorse the principles of self-determination.

We have repeatedly attempted to work with Argentina and agreed a joint declaration on co-operation on oil exploration in 1995. This was renounced by Argentina in 2007. Co-operation on sustainable fisheries through a Joint Commission was a way for the Falklands and Argentina to conserve South Atlantic stocks through the exchange of scientific data, joint experimental cruises and the setting of sustainable catch levels. Argentina not only withdrew from the Commission but also sets unsustainably high quotas in some fish stocks. This is an abrogation of a responsibility to their own people, as well as the rest of the world.

Mr Jenkins states that "Argentina has not threatened military action over the Ocean Guardian" (the oil rig currently drilling in our waters). But it is clear that our large neighbour is attempting to achieve by economic warfare what it failed to achieve by

military means. It has threatened sanctions against companies holding licenses to fish in Falklands' waters and tried to exclude Falkland Islands representatives from participating at international conferences. It prevents charter flights from other countries in South America flying to the Islands and is now it is attempting to disrupt our oil exploration by threats to hinder shipping to the Islands. These are hardly the acts of a friendly and peaceful neighbour.

We remain eternally grateful to those who liberated us from the Argentine aggression in 1982, by referring to that time as "the silliest of wars" Mr. Jenkins not only insults their memory but also manages to diminish the incredible achievement of those who freed us. Mr. Jenkins believes us to be an "expensive legacy of Empire", he should be aware that the Islands are self financing, except for defence and the Falkland Islands Government has expressed the wish to contribute more to these costs, should oil be discovered in commercial quantities. Of course, it should be pointed out, that the reason that defence is needed is the continued Argentine claim to my country.

The Honourable Jan Cheek

Member of the Falkland Islands Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, March 10th 2010 - 19:30 UTC

Spanish opposition willing to accept advances in Spain/Gibraltar relations

The Mayor of the Spanish town of La Linea, Alejandro Sanchez has declared that relations with Gibraltar and "attaining the maximum level of cross-border understanding and cooperation" should be pursued by an incoming PP (Partido Popular) (conservative) Government in Madrid.

La Línea mayor Alejandro Sánchez said he received full support from Spanish opposition leader Mario Rajoy. La Línea mayor Alejandro Sánchez said he received full support from Spanish opposition leader Mario Rajoy.

Speaking in the Spanish capital where he attended the 30th National Congress of Nuevas Generaciones, the PP's youth wing, Sanchez expressed the conviction that leader Mariano Rajoy will be leading the party to an election victory in 2012.

"As mayor I will be conveying this message as a top priority so that both La Linea and Gibraltar can prosper like never before."

Meanwhile the La Linea branch of the PP has expressed full support for Sanchez's "policy of friendship and neighbourly collaboration with Gibraltar" noting that a new chapter in mutual relations has been established.

"The mayor has invested great effort to ensure that dialogue becomes the basic norm in our relationship with Gibraltar," said a spokesman.

La Linea PP was responding to criticisms levelled by the local PSOE against Sanchez accusing him of political 'doublespeak,' of saying the right things about cooperation with Gibraltar when he is with Chief Minister Peter Caruana, yet adopting a the hard-line stance against dialogue in PP meetings in Cadiz, Sevilla and Madrid.

A La Linea PP spokesman expressed regret at the PSOE remarks while counter arguing that it is precisely the socialists that resort to 'doublespeak' in Gibraltar related matters.

"It was the Government of the nation that changed the parameters of Spanish policy toward the Rock. We defend and will always defend good neighbourly relations with Gibraltar outside of diplomatic and politics of state positions regarding sovereignty negotiations.

"Perhaps the socialists forget that the future of La Linea depends on Gibraltar as much as their future is tied to ours," said the spokesman.

According to the PP, the local PSOE has a lot to learn about good neighbourly relations and they should "refrain from making public comments about issues they know nothing about."

"They should find out more about what we are doing in terms of relations with Gibraltar and maybe even ask their own Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos about the results of the Tripartite Forum, such as the opening of the Instituto Cervantes and why not, about the pensions issue," he added.

Mayor of La Linea Sánchez, attended the meeting of Nuevas Generaciones the PP youth wing, that celebrated its 30th national congress at the weekend in Madrid. Sanchez said his presence underlined the strong support he has from the highest echelons of the Partido Popular and the commitment toward La Linea expressed by its leading national figures.

Sanchez was the only PP mayor in the Cadiz province to be invited to the convention, which he believes is "recognition of the policies carried out since becoming mayor of La Linea."

Friday, March 12th 2010 - 18:21 UTC

Deminers recover over a thousand mines in Falklands

MORE than a thousand mines have been recovered and destroyed by deminers working in the Falkland Islands. The Falkland Island Demining Programme Office (FIDPO) was established in Stanley in early October 2009.

De-mining expert working in Falklands' peaty soil in search of minimum metal mines (Photo by Kev Bryant.) De-mining expert working in Falklands' peaty soil in search of minimum metal mines (Photo by Kev Bryant.)

Roger Gagen of British demining company BACTEC International told Mercopress that in the Sapper Hill Mine Field behind Stanley, 190 Spanish P4B Anti Personnel Mines, two BL 755 Cluster Bombs and one Rifle Grenade have been recovered. All ordnance has now been accounted for in this area.

The Surf Bay minefields to the East of Stanley, a favorite leisure area of residents, has been cleared of 454 Italian SB81 Anti Vehicle Mines, 414 Italian SB33 Anti Personnel Mines and five M67 Hand Grenades. Less than 250 mines remain in this area.

Along with the success in the Stanley area of the primarily Zimbabwean team of workers, the sixteen men deployed to a Goose Green minefield, "...are making good progress," said Roger.

He added, "We shall then have a small team deployed to Fox Bay (West Falklands) in early April."

Asked if the Falklands environment was a particularly difficult one to work in, he said, "Once you have the right balance of clothing, such as waterproofs and thermals working in minefields is similar wherever you deploy.

Speaking of the work he explained that mining in the Falklands was very similar to anywhere else in the world, "Mining is a standardized process wherever you are, you clear a little move forward a little and so on.

He added that in the Falkland, however, "The main difficulty is the quantities of items available here on the Islands and the re-supply of specialized equipment items which break when you least expect them to."

Although it was thought that very poor records exist showing the location of the Argentine laid mines, Roger explained that in the Stanley area records are very good. He said later in the Falklands Conflict when the Argentine authorities realized that the British troops were not planning to land in the Stanley area the placement of mines outside of Stanley became much more haphazard and less well recorded.

Demining in the Islands primarily utilizes metal detectors to locate the ordnance, "...and then we excavate them using a wide range of excavation tools similar to those used by ordinary gardeners; once we have exposed and identified the mines we simply place a donor charge next to them and destroy them where they are located.

The deminers are a popular group in the Falklands, one Islander said, "They are great guys and very respected for the work they do; they're good fun too and when they have the time they join in with many aspects of the social life and sport."

BACTEC hope to complete planned operations by May 2010.

By Lisa Watson – SeAledPR – Stanley

Saturday, March 13th 2010 - 01:02 UTC

Falklands' economy poised to expand 5.3% following a contraction in 2009

The Falkland Islands economy is expected to expand by 5.3% in real terms during 2010, following a period of contraction in 2009, which was caused primarily by a poor fish harvest rather than the immediate effects of the global recession, according to the Economic Briefing & Forecast released by the Falklands' government.

Asian jiggers waiting in Stanley to collect their squid licences Asian jiggers waiting in Stanley to collect their squid licences

Fisheries is the largest sector in the Falklands economy, producing just over 50% of GDP and the main products are Illex and Loligo squid, together with fin-fish species such as rock cod, hake, kingclip and the valuable Chilean sea bass.

According to the document during 2010 above-average growth in public sector output, fisheries, agriculture and utilities should help compensate for an anticipated reduction of 15-20% in cruise ship tourism.

Tourism a great direct contributor to the Falklands economy saw the Islands receive 105 cruise ship visits carrying 62,500 passengers during the 2008/09 summer.

The retail trade, construction and hospitality industries are also expected to benefit this year from the ongoing de-mining and oil drilling projects and the imminent upgrade and extension of the runway and Mount Pleasant Airport.

Contractors employed by the British government commenced work during summer 2009-10 on locating, removing and destroying approximately 20,000 landmines laid by Argentine military forces after they invaded the Falkland Islands in 1982.

The semi-submersible drilling rig Ocean Guardian arrived in Falkland Islands waters in late January 2010, after an 83 day journey from Scotland. The oil drilling campaign is expected to last 8 months, after which it is anticipated that Ocean Guardian will leave Falklands waters while the results of the drilling campaign are analysed.

The first well, for Desire Petroleum, was 'spudded' on 22 February 2010. Desire Petroleum plans to drill a minimum of four wells (with the possibility of an additional two wells) while Rockhopper Exploration plans to drill two wells, all in waters to the north of the Falkland Islands. Ocean Guardian will also drill one well for BHP Billiton, and partner Falklands Oil and Gas, to the south of the islands.

Ocean Guardian is supported by three vessels, Maersk Traveller, Maersk Pacer and Toisa Invincible. These three tugs take it in turn to monitor the 500 metre safety exclusion zone enforced around the rig.

"The Falkland Islands are not remote from the world economic pressures as highlighted by a drop in investment income. Further economic decline during 2009 was caused by a poor squid harvest and reduced tourism spending. The full impact of this drop was somewhat offset by the Falkland Islands Government approving a deficit budget" said Roger Edwards spokesperson for members of the Legislative Assembly.

He went on to say, "The current year, in line with other world economies should see some recovery with early signs of an improved catch within the Illex fishery and higher wool and meat prices within the agricultural sector. The outlook in tourism remains bleak. Further effects could be felt by local residents as a result of a weaker sterling and higher oil prices adding to inflationary living and housing costs."

Mr Edwards concluded, "The Falkland Islands Government has a duty of care to future generations, and in partnership with the private sector and other public agencies is actively progressing the Economic, Rural and Tourism Development Strategies to enable the Islands to make the most of future economic challenges and opportunities."

The Economic Briefing & Forecast for 2010 is a seven pages document which examines the current global environment and its likely impact on the Falkland Islands. It reviews the fisheries, agriculture, tourism and other commercial sectors and examines the implications for the public finances of the Falklands.

The economic document was written by Sonny Jose, the Falkland Islands Government's Head of Policy and Economic Adviser. Prior to joining the Islands' Government in 2008, Mr Jose was managing a private investment fund and was marketing consultant to Glocap Partners LLC of New York. He is a trained economist with over 25 years of international experience in finance, investment, marketing and development.

Monday, March 15th 2010 - 18:18 UTC

Falklands' on shore Loligo containerisation to improve quality and create jobs

For the first time a whole season's catch of Loligo Squid will be containerised in the Falkland Islands, an experiment set to improve the product quality and meet world export demands plus generating on-value added activities in the Islands.

Transshipment of loligo to refrigerated containers. Transshipment of loligo to refrigerated containers.

Fishing vessels in Stanley bay Fishing vessels in Stanley bay

The Falkland Islands floating dock facility FIPASS has been in full swing because to the normal fishing industry activity, comes the Loligo containerization experience and all the operations related to the oil drilling round.

At the east end was the British Antarctic Survey ship Ernest Shackleton discharging rubbish and taking on stores, while at the other was a Seaview Logistics trawler unloading its cargo of loligo squid into the hands of two teams of stevedores.

These teams, one local and the other from the ship's crew, were toiling ceaselessly to stack the frozen blocks neatly into refrigerated containers, which almost obscured the ship from view. Waiting to take the full containers to nearby hard standing was a fleet of articulated trucks.

Normally, as Seaview manager Alex Reid explained to Penguin News, this trans-shipment would be from trawler to a larger refrigerated ship, or reefer, and would take place in Berkeley Sound.

But this season for the first time, his company together with partners Seafish Falklands, were attempting to containerise all of the loligo catch from their three trawlers.

Given the current heightened activity at FIPASS due to oil exploration and the tourism season, the whole operation was "a strategically nightmare" said Mr Reid, but storage in reefer containers as opposed to the hold of a ship was much better for the product.

So far the containerisation operation is going well, with the second ship currently discharging its cargo in this way. Its success, said Mr. Reid, was down to the magnificent job that South American Atlantic Services (SAAS) had done for his company and to the support received from the management of FIPASS.

So far also, he said the fishing and oil industries seemed to be working hand in glove to the benefit of all.

Containerisation was best for the product, said Mr Reid, but also allowed for much more flexibility of delivery through the worldwide container network.

This point was enthusiastically endorsed to the Penguin News by Director of Natural Resources, John Barton, who said containerisation could bring the opportunity for onshore value-adding activities such as preparing consignments to the requirements of particular clients. Mr Reid said his company was committed to containerisation as the way forward and keen to support SAAS in this regard.

This season's experiment would, he hoped, prove that it could be done, although further expansion might be limited by the lack of hard standing for containers and particularly the lack of the reefer plugs, essential to keep the cargo frozen until the containers could be loaded for export.

Meanwhile, there is cautious optimism as the illex season also gets underway.

With more than 60 vessels so far having called into Stanley to collect licences to fish for illex squid, early estimates of a likely take-up of around 40 have already been exceeded, said Mr Barton.

Illex catches so far have been variable, reaching 20 to 30 tons per vessel per night, but averaging around 15 tons until just recently when a bit of a dip occurred.

So far it had been a better start to the season than there had been for a few years, but whether it developed into a good season would depend on whether these catch levels could be maintained and improved upon.

Unlike the loligo squid, which lives out its life in relatively inshore waters, the illex is migratory. Mr Barton said so far results from the high seas and areas further to the north of the Falklands had not indicated a massive illex presence, but this could not be ruled out. By John Fowler – Penguin News - Stanley

Monday, March 15th 2010 - 20:07 UTC

Controversy in UK over cuts in military training to save money

A record 80 training exercises were cancelled last year By the UK Ministry of Defense while the number of British troops in Helmand reached 10,000.

PM Brown was accused by former UK Army generals of being "disingenuous" over claims forces in Afghanistan had proper equipment PM Brown was accused by former UK Army generals of being "disingenuous" over claims forces in Afghanistan had proper equipment

Last week a coroner castigated the Ministry of Defence over "inadequate" mine detection training following the death of Cpl Sarah Bryant, the first British woman killed in Afghanistan, and three SAS soldiers.

The Daily Telegraph has also learnt that units training to deploy to Afghanistan within the next two years have had their training cut. One battalion commander said: "We are attempting to train essentially with one hand tied behind our back."

Figures show that the number of exercises conducted in the past three years fell by almost 30%, dropping from 646 in 2008 to 462 last year. Meanwhile, the number of cancellations rose from 58 in 2006 to a high of 80 last year.

The cuts will lead to further questioning of PM Gordon Brown's commitment to the Services after his appearance at the Iraq Inquiry, when former generals accused him of being "disingenuous" over his claims that the Armed Forces were fully funded.

Last week, a woman whose son was killed in Afghanistan challenged the Prime Minister on BBC One's Politics Show. Ann Probyn asked him: "My son was sent out on a night patrol in the dark with just his gun... would you like your son to go out on a night patrol with no equipment?"

Guardsman Daniel Probyn, of 1st Bn Grenadier Guards, was killed near the town of Garmsir in Helmand in May 2007. Mr. Brown said he would "not allow" troops to go into a particular operation "without knowing they had the proper equipment",

The latest training cuts, which could save the MoD around £20 million, were part of a £97 million saving forced on the Army along with a recruitment freeze.

Willie Rennie, the Liberal Democrat defense spokesman who obtained the figures in a parliamentary answer, said it would be "deeply alarming" if vital exercises were cut "merely as a cost-saving measure".

MoD officials admitted that cuts had been made as part of "in-year saving measures".

No exercises that involved units in their final six months before deployment have been cut. Bill Rammell, the Armed Forces Minister, said: "All exercises that better prepare our forces for operations in Afghanistan will continue."

Monday, March 15th 2010 - 21:36 UTC

Gibraltar participates in leading Cruise convention in Miami

The Port of Gibraltar is participating of the 26th edition of the Seatrade Cruise Shipping Convention, which opened at the Miami Beach Convention Centre in Florida. The international exhibition and conference is recognised as the leading cruise industry event.

The Rock is expanding the Cruise terminal and in the near future will have an air terminal
The Rock is expanding the Cruise terminal and in the near future will have an air terminal

The Port of Gibraltar has its own stand - number 1167 - in the cruise destinations pavilion of the trade show and will also be represented as a member of the MedCruise organisation.

Ahead of the conference, the Minister for Transport, with responsibility for the Port, Joe Holliday travelled to Miami for meetings with senior executives of various principal cruise companies based in Florida.

The focus of these meetings was to cement the good relationships that the Port of Gibraltar enjoys with these companies, and to make them aware of the new possibilities

for turnaround cruises that the expansion of the Cruise Terminal and the new Air Terminal will bring in the future.

“The cruise industry is currently experiencing difficulties as a result of the prevailing economic conditions, but there is optimism that 2011 and beyond will result in improved performance. I am pleased to be in Florida to have meetings with various leading cruise companies to explore future opportunities for growth for the Port of Gibraltar, particularly with the advent of the new Air Terminal which will offer cruise companies the use of Gibraltar as a turnaround port”, said Mr. Holliday.

Thursday, March 18th 2010 - 02:15 UTC

Falklands implements second plan to reduce seabird mortality in trawling fishery

The Falkland Islands recently adopted their second Plan of Action to reduce seabird mortality due to trawling activity. The first plan of action was approved in 2004 following the work of SAST (Seabird at Sea Team), a collaborative project between Falklands Conservation and RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds).

A trawler is followed by seabirds while discarding fish offal A trawler is followed by seabirds while discarding fish offal

Further work conducted since 2004 by the APP (Albatross and Petrel Programme), with collaboration from the fisheries observers since 2006, has been the base for the re-evaluation of the initial plan.

Four years of APP observers' work at sea brought up new and more detailed information relating to the sources and magnitude of seabird incidental mortality due to interactions with trawling fishing gear and its mitigation.

The trawling fleet operating in the Falklands is mostly formed by demersal trawlers fishing at the bottom of the sea, and a small group of pelagic trawlers fishing in the water column.

In both cases, the incidental mortality registered is linked with the presence of fish enmeshed on the net or discards of fish offal, undersize catch and non-commercial species. The demersal fleets' main source of seabird incidental mortality is the interaction of seabirds with warp cables (the cable used to tow the net).

What attracts the seabirds to the proximity of the warp cables is the presence of discards on the cables' vicinity.

Seabirds feeding on the discards are unaware of the warp cables that are constantly cutting the water due to the pitching movement of the vessel.

The speed at which the cable cuts the water is increased in bad weather, provoking an increase in interactions and its severity.

On the other hand, in the pelagic fleet, the main source of mortality is the interaction of seabirds with the net in pursuit of enmeshed catch. In this case the main factor is the mesh size, which is big enough to allow the seabird to pass through and become enmeshed.

This is aggravated by the time the net spends at seabird diving depths, or at the surface of the water.

Pelagic nets, with a bigger overall size than demersal nets, spend longer periods at those critical depths, increasing the chances of interaction with seabirds.

As evidences of seabird mortality sources were found, mitigation measures have been evaluated, adapted and trialled in collaborative projects between Falklands Conservation, FIG Fisheries, fishing companies and vessel crews.

Based on the obtained results, a set of mitigation measures tackling the identified problems has been implemented in the licence conditions of the trawling fleet to minimise the impact trawling activity may have on seabird populations.

The plan adopted by the Falkland Islands contains extensive background information and a detailed framework for the next four years, outlining those aspects which may need further investigation to ensure a negative impact on seabirds due to trawling activity and, in general, fishing activity to diminish.

For those interested in this topic, the plan and its summary can be obtained either from Falklands Conservation or from the Falkland Islands Government.

The plan should be shortly available on the Falkland Islands Fisheries Department webpage (<http://fis.com/falklandfish/>).

Finally, Falklands Conservation would like to thank all sources of funds received since the beginning of this project, the unconditional help of many collaborators and the work of all those observers from SAST, APP and FIFD who spent countless hours exposed to the elements collecting the invaluable information at sea. Esther Sancho - Penguin News - Stanley

Tuesday, March 16th 2010 - 21:43 UTC

Falklands MLAs with greater responsibilities and busy overseas agenda

It is proving a busy overseas season for the Falkland Islands Members of the Legislative Assembly with a full agenda of political and administrative contacts in London, reports Gilbert House, Office of the Legislative Assembly.

MLA Sharon Halford busy at FIGO and the FCO
MLA Sharon Halford busy at FIGO and the FCO

Members of the Public Accounts Committee (*) are currently in London to learn how such committees operate; MLA Jan Cheek is back after spending time meeting Foreign Office

officials and contacting the London press, and MLA Dick Sawle is participating in a seminar on Parliamentary Practices and Procedures.

Public Accounts Committee members Stuart Wallace (chair), MLA Sharon Halford and Mike Forrest are currently in the UK until 20th March on a 5-day trip funded by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office through the Overseas Territories Fund.

The purpose of the trip is to learn how Public Accounts Committees operate in small jurisdictions and local authorities within the British Isles.

The visit starts with a meeting at the Audit Commission Head Office in London, covering the principles behind public audit and the operation of public accounts committees. The Falkland Islands representatives then have a packed schedule, as they spend a full day at each of Guernsey, Tameside Borough Council in Manchester, and the Isle of Man. In each location the visitors will meet with elected representatives, officials and public accounts committee members. They will share their experiences of good governance in public office, and learn how other jurisdictions handle public audit and scrutiny.

MLA Sharon Halford spent Monday working at the Falkland House, the Falkland Islands Government Office in Westminster, London and was scheduled to attend a meeting at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

Meantime Jan Cheek MLA returned to the Falkland Islands after a ten day privately-funded trip to the UK, primarily on business for the South Georgia Heritage Trust. During her trip she spent a morning at the Falkland House, meeting with Falklands Representative Sukey Cameron and finalising an article for the Guardian newspaper ('Argentina's claim to the Falklands is neither logical nor valid' published 10 March).

"I took the opportunity while I was in the UK to visit the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, where I met with Andrew Allan and Victor Clark, who together staff the FCO's Falklands desk. It is usual practice for newly-elected MLAs to meet the people at the FCO responsible for Falkland Islands matters, and it was a very useful and productive meeting. By coincidence, Mr Clark is due to visit the Islands in the near future" said MLA Jan Cheek.

Finally MLA Dick Sawle is currently in London, attending the Westminster Seminar on Parliamentary Practices and Procedures, which runs from 7th to 19th March. The Seminar is organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for newly-elected politicians. Mr Sawle is due to return to the Falkland Islands on 29th March after a short private holiday.

(*) The current Falkland Islands Constitution, which came into force on 1 January 2009, makes provision for the first time for the appointment of an independent Public Accounts Committee. The Committee comprises three independent members and two elected Members of Legislative Assembly (neither of whom may act as chair of the Government's Standing Finance Committee). The principal role of the Committee is to examine and report to Legislative Assembly and keep the Governor informed on all public accounts and audit reports. The subsidiary objects of the Committee include advising the Governor on arrangements, priorities and effectiveness of audit; and reporting to Legislative Assembly on the effectiveness of regulation where public services are contracted out to private bodies. The Public Accounts Committee Ordinance came into force on 1 February 2010.

Tuesday, March 16th 2010 - 16:37 UTC

Chile per capita expenditure on defence, the highest of Latinamerica

Chile is the second largest weapons importer in the Americas and the 11th largest in the world, a recent study has shown. Chile's defence budget nearly doubled between 1997 and 2007, the study carried out by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said.

Chart shows national shares of the volume of imports of major conventional weapons by states in the Americas, 2004–2008. Credit: SIPRI
Chart shows national shares of the volume of imports of major conventional weapons by states in the Americas, 2004–2008. Credit: SIPRI

In terms of defence budgets, Chile ranked third among Latin American nations in 2008, spending 6 billion US dollars on defence, behind Brazil with 23.3 billion and Colombia with

9.1 billion. However, on a per capita basis, Chile by far outspends both countries, since its population is 17 million, compared to Brazil's 194 million and Colombia's 46 million.

Chile has spent its arms budget on an ambitious Armed Forces modernization program, buying 10 F-16 fighter bombers from the United States in 2004, 18 second-hand planes of the same type from the Netherlands in 2005, and 140 refurbished Leopard-2A4 tanks from Germany in 2009.

These acquisitions set off alarm bells in neighbouring Argentina, Peru and Bolivia, all of whom have problematic relationships with Chile, according to SIPRI.

"This purchase will create an imbalance in the region," commented Peruvian Foreign Minister Jose Garcia Belaunde after the announcement of the Dutch warplanes buy, adding that Chile's arms purchases are all the more difficult to accept given the current maritime border dispute, now being litigated at the International Court of Justice in the Hague.

The key to the increase in Chilean military spending is the steep rise of international copper prices in recent years. The Copper Law implemented in 1958 and later amended during the 17-year dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet stipulates that the Armed Forces are automatically granted 10 percent of all sales (not profits) made by the state-owned Codelco, the world's biggest copper producing company.

However, after 20 years of democratic rule in Chile, the former President Michelle Bachelet made a serious attempt to do away with the law intended to circumvent civilian control of military budgets. At the beginning of February, she proposed legislation for sweeping changes in the military structure and financing, including separation of defence spending from the economic fortunes of Codelco.

Weapons imports to South America rose by 150% during the last five years compared to the beginning of the millennium, the SIPRI report states. High prices of commodities, such as soy and oil boosted revenues of other countries. Significant arms purchases by Brazil,

Chile and Venezuela in recent years are giving rise to speculation about an arms race in South America.

"Transparency and confidence-building measures need to be improved to reduce tension in the region," says SIPRI Researcher and Latin America expert Mark Bromley. By Mira Galanova - Santiago Times

Wednesday, March 17th 2010 - 00:50 UTC

"Shrimp surprise" for NASA 200 metres below Antarctica ice

At nearly 200 meters below the ice, there is no light, the temperature is way below zero degrees, and scientists were expecting to find nothing more than a handful of microbes - and for good reason. So it's easy to understand why they were so surprised to find not a single (evolved) life form, but actually two such creatures.

The shrimp holds on to the cable of the camera The shrimp holds on to the cable of the camera

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA, lowered the camera, in an attempt to look deep in the underbelly of Antarctica's ice; not long after that, a shrimp-like creature swam by and then "landed" on the cable. Scientists also picked up a tentacle that they believe can only come from a jellyfish - a pretty big one too.

"We were operating on the presumption that nothing's there," said NASA ice scientist Robert Bindaschadler, who will be presenting the initial findings and a video at an American Geophysical Union meeting Wednesday. "It was a shrimp you'd enjoy having on your plate. We were just gaga over it," he said of the 3-inch-long (76-millimeter, orange critter starring in their two-minute video.

The video forces experts to rethink what they previously believed about where evolved animals can survive in extreme environments; if they can live in this freezing underwater environment, why not on Europa, the frozen moon of Jupiter, or other such places?

"This is a first for the sub-glacial environment with that level of sophistication," Ellis-Evans said. He said there have been findings somewhat similar, showing complex life in retreating ice shelves, but nothing quite directly under the ice like this.

Wednesday, March 17th 2010 - 12:41 UTC

New General Manager at Falkland Islands Tourist Board

New Zealander Paul Trowell has been appointed as the new General Manager of the Falkland Islands Tourist Board and will take up his duties on 5 April 2010.

Mr Trowell will be moving to the Falklands with his wife and son from New Zealand, where he has been running his own tourism marketing company for the last six years. He brings with him a wealth of knowledge about international and domestic tourism.

He will be arriving in the Falkland Islands at a time of great challenge and great opportunity for the tourism industry, and his responsibilities will include guiding the industry towards achieving the goals set out in the National Tourism Strategy 2012, and marketing the Falkland Islands as a tourism destination. As well as increasing revenue from the cruise sector, a particular focus for Mr Trowell will be on developing the land-based tourism sector.

"I have done a lot of research on the history and present situation of the Falkland Islands over the last few months and look forward to enjoying this unique culture and spectacular natural environment and making a strong contribution to a team that is focused on growing the Falkland Islands brand to the world as a "must do" destination" says Paul.

Falkland Islands Tourist Board Chairman, the Hon Emma Edwards, emphasised the importance of tourism to the Falkland Islands economy and commented "We are looking forward to Paul's arrival and believe he will bring great knowledge and enthusiasm to his new role. We are confident that he will be well placed to take over from Jake Downing in

driving forward the tourist board's efforts to increase visitor numbers and revenue for the island".

Jake Downing, who has been in the role of General Manager for the last two and a half years, will be leaving the islands with his family on 10 April 2010, to take up a new post in Alice Springs, Australia

Thursday, March 18th 2010 - 02:19 UTC

Chilean Professor chairs Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

The Inter-American Commission On Human Rights (CIDH) from the Organization of American States, OAS, this week elected Chilean human rights attorney Felipe Gonzalez as its new president.

Felipe González is an expert in human rights and public interest law Felipe González is an expert in human rights and public interest law

Gonzalez is the director of a network of universities working on human rights and public interest law in Latin America. He also directs the series Annual Reports on Human Rights in Chile. Professor Gonzalez teaches International Human Rights Law and Constitutional Law at Diego Portales University in Chile. He also teaches at American University in Washington, D.C., and is a visiting professor at Madrid's Carlos III University.

In the 1990s, he worked in Washington, D.C., with Global Rights (formerly International Human Rights Law Group) and with the ACLU Project on National Security and Freedom of Expression. Professor Gonzalez holds an LL.M. from American University Washington College of Law.

CIDH also elected Brazilian Paulo Sergio Pinheiro as its 1st Vice President and U.S. citizen Dihan Shelton as 2nd Vice President. By Steve Anderson (editor@santiagotimes.cl)

Friday, March 19th 2010 - 00:12 UTC

Proposal to ban Atlantic bluefin tuna international trade rejected

A proposal to ban international trade in Atlantic bluefin tuna, which is a sushi mainstay in Japan, has been rejected by a UN wildlife meeting. Thursday's decision occurred after Japan, Canada and many poor nations opposed the measure on the grounds it would devastate fishing economies.

Atlantic bluefin tuna is a sushi mainstay in Japan Atlantic bluefin tuna is a sushi mainstay in Japan

Monaco tabled the plan at the meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Stocks have fallen by about 85% since the industrial fishing era began.

Monaco argued that the organisation responsible for managing the bluefin fishery - the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (Iccat) - had not implemented measures strict enough to ensure the species' survival.

Scientists and campaigners working with conservation organisations were disappointed with the outcome.

"We think it is quite a blow," said Glenn Sant, leader of the global marine programme with Traffic, the international wildlife trade monitoring network.

"Iccat has not been able to demonstrate that it is able to implement procedures that will lead to [the bluefin's] recovery.

Mr Sant was a member of the expert panel convened last year by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization to examine whether the Atlantic bluefin's plight was severe enough to meet Appendix One criteria.

A majority of the panel believed it did, though consensus was not achieved. Earlier, Iccat's scientific advisers had concluded a trade ban was justified.

The US, which supported and lobbied for the ban, also described the outcome as "disappointing".

"Today's vote was a setback for the Atlantic bluefin tuna," said Tom Strickland, head of the nation's CITES delegation.

"But we will keep fighting to ensure that the fishery is managed sustainably, so that future generations may see it return to health."

US officials said they would be pressing governments to live up to promises to control fishing through Iccat. Japan - the principal bluefin-consuming nation - had made its opposition to the proposal clear before the CITES meeting started.

It argues that commercial fisheries should be managed through bodies such as Iccat. The debate - described by one observer as "passionate" - saw two votes.

The first, on an EU amendment that weakened the original Monaco proposal but still endorsed the ban, was defeated by 72 votes to 43 in a secret ballot.

(The EU is supposed to vote as a bloc in these negotiations. Nations with active tuna fleets such as France, Italy and Spain had been unwilling to support an outright, immediate ban.)

The vote on the original motion then went down by 68 votes to 20.

In theory, EU nations had to abstain on the second vote as not all delegates had authority from their governments to vote for it.

Sue Lieberman, director of international policy with the Pew Environment Group, suggested lobbying from the fishing industry was ultimately responsible for the defeat.

"This meeting presented a golden opportunity for governments to take a stand against over-fishing, and too many governments failed to do so," she said.

"The market for this fish is just too lucrative, and the pressure from fishing interests too great, for enough governments to support a truly sustainable future for the fish."

CITES votes can be reviewed on the meeting's final day, but the substantial margin of defeat suggests this one will not be.

Friday, March 19th 2010 - 03:42 UTC

King Penguin with avian pox; "one in zillion" black KP in South Georgia

A small percentage of King Penguins in a variety of locations around the South Georgia Island are suffering from disease, possibly avian pox, reports the latest edition of the South Georgia Newsletter.

Only two affected birds were seen amongst the many thousands at St Andrews Bay, but reports have been received of others at the other main colony sites such as Salisbury Plain and Gold Harbour, and afflicted birds have been seen locally in Cumberland Bay.

The affected birds have protruding and obvious lesions. Vets in the Falkland Islands have seen photographs of affected birds and think it may be an outbreak of avian pox, but no samples have yet been taken to confirm the identity of the disease. Penguin biologists are hopeful that the afflicted animals can survive the infection.

Tour ships were asked to be especially vigilant on overseeing their bio-security when moving from one site to another to minimise the risk of human activity spreading the disease.

In related news National Geographic reports that an all black king penguin, "a very rare mutant" was spotted and filmed in South Georgia.

While many king penguins and other penguins can have feather-colouring mutations, variations usually are partial.

The video was recorded by National Geographic Traveler Magazine contributor editor Andrew Evans on his bus2Antarctica expedition.

Dr. Allan Baker, an ornithologist and head of the Department of Natural History at the Royal Ontario Museum, called the discovery of the 'all-black' king penguin "astonishing." He jokingly said "it's a one in a zillion kind of mutation," and scientifically calls it 'very rare.'

He explains that typically, melanistic birds will have white spots where melanin pigmentation has failed to color the feathers. But it's extremely rare for there to be melanin deposits over the entire breast of a bird.

Photographer Evans says he almost didn't get the sighting recorded. As he got his camera positioned, the penguin started walking away.

Video on mutant all black penguin can be seen in the National Geographic web site

Friday, March 19th 2010 - 03:49 UTC

Falklands: Taiana certain UK will understand it must sit to negotiate

Argentine Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana said on Thursday that there has been progress in creating the "political and diplomatic conditions" for the United Kingdom to understand the need for negotiations on the Falkland Islands sovereignty.

Argentine Foreign Secretary Jorge Taiana Argentine Foreign Secretary Jorge Taiana

"We are advancing towards creating political and diplomatic conditions so that finally the United Kingdom understands that it must comply with United Nations mandates and sit down to negotiate with Argentina", Taiana said in a interview with a Buenos Aires radio station.

Taiana added that this year the reaction from the UN Security Council "has been very committed and positive", and recalled it was the first time the "council has expressed publicly" on the issue.

He added that the United Kingdom must abide UN resolutions, particularly taking into account that it is one of the five permanent members of the Security Council and therefore "among those with the greatest responsibilities".

Taiana said that his recent visit to the UN had much to do with the "mandate extended to Secretary General Ban Ki-moon by the General Assembly and the council" to begin good offices actions so that UN resolutions are followed by both countries (Argentina and the UK) and sovereignty negotiations can begin.

"For the last two/three years we have been in talks with the Secretary General. He has been receptive, but obviously to advance you need the support from both sides. From our side our willingness to sit and talk is very clear", said the Argentina official.

Taiana said that the UN Secretary General has growing and better information "about all that is happening and above all about the unilateral actions from Britain".

Relations between Argentina and the UK have strained lately particularly since the beginning of a round of exploratory drilling for hydrocarbons in the Falklands waters by several British and Australian companies.

Argentina made a formal complaint before the UN and even requested US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to encourage a dialogue between both countries over the disputed islands in the South Atlantic.

Argentina considers that the oil companies are in violation of its sovereignty over the Islands and adjoining waters, and has even imposed restrictions on vessels travelling to the Falklands.

London's position all along has been that the UK has no doubts about British sovereignty over the Falklands, that the Islanders have the right to self-determination and to explore and exploit resources in Falklands' territory and waters.

The latest British official to ratify such a policy was Foreign Office Minister Chris Bryant who visited Chile to deliver relief aid and funds to earthquake victims and for the inauguration of President Sebastian Piñera on March 11, a week ago.

"We are prepared to talk, debate with Argentina on many issues, but not sovereignty over the Falklands. We have no doubts about our sovereignty, if not we would be involved in international lobbying. And since there are no doubts we do not need any lobbying and we don't want to raise our voice", said Bryant interviewed by El Mercurio from Santiago.

He added it was the elected government of the Falklands that issued the licences for the exploratory drilling round, and since "we are convinced of their right to self determination, we believe they have all the legal right to explore for oil, and also to exploit hydrocarbons if there are any".

"We are most sure about our legal position regarding sovereignty over the Islands, and the Falklands government is very sure about what they are doing exploring for oil" emphasized Bryant.

Finally the FO official said that according to the Lisbon Treaty, "the Falklands are part of the United Kingdom" and regarding Latinamerican support for the Argentine claim, Bryant pointed out that "it was not the first time for such a support, it's the fifth, sixth, seventh time...it's only normal".

"We're not interested in fighting with Argentina. We are working together in many things with our good close Argentine friends such as efforts against non proliferation of nuclear weapons, climate change, the global financial problems", concluded Bryant.

Friday, March 19th 2010 - 15:25 UTC

Falklands rife with speculation waiting for first oil drilling results

Speculation was mounting this week on news of a potential oil strike as a promised announcement from hydrocarbons exploration company Desire Petroleum grew closer.

Having contracted the semi-submersible rig the Ocean Guardian for its initial round of drilling, which arrived on site on February 19 and began with the spudding of the first well on February 23, Desire Petroleum stated it would not be making any report on progress until the first campaign was concluded.

The company also said it would take some 30 days to drill down to the target depth of 3,500m. No announcement would therefore be expected much before March 25.

However, fuelled by poor arithmetic, or in part by stories in the international media, reports of stock prices jumping on the back of unsubstantiated rumours and, perhaps, news of a VIP visit to the rig on Monday, the diddle-dee grapevine briefly ran even hotter than usual early in the week. The rumours included a story that oil samples were taken on the military airbridge on Tuesday for testing in the UK.

Officials at the Falkland Islands Government's Mineral Resources Department declined to comment, but did admit to a helicopter flight, describing it as "a routine visit to the Ocean Guardian drilling rig to observe operations."

Members of the Minerals Resources Department, including Director Phyl Rendell, were accompanied by Legislative Assembly Members Roger Edwards, Jan Cheek and Emma Edwards.

Cllr Emma Edwards, who is the mineral resources portfolio holder, described the visit as "routine, but very informative."

Desire's shares gained 8.9 per cent on Monday, while Rockhopper Exploration saw its shares jump by an impressive 11 per cent.

However, by Thursday, Desire's share price had dipped by 3.25p and Rockhopper's by 1.75p, suggesting the market had rejected any early suggestions of a substantial oil discovery.

Meanwhile, the UK media have continued to focus on South Atlantic defence issues, most recently claiming that a nuclear submarine is in Falklands waters to "strike fear into the hearts of any possible enemy."

Two of Britain's tabloid papers, The Sun and The Mirror, led on Wednesday with unconfirmed reports that HMS Sceptre, a 5,000-tonne Swiftsure Class nuclear-powered submarine, had been dispatched to the South Atlantic from South Africa.

"Details of Sceptre's presence in the waters around the Falklands came as speculation mounted that British firm Desire Petroleum has struck oil," wrote The Sun.

Built in the 1960s and described by one newspaper as the oldest ship in the Royal Navy still afloat, HMS Sceptre is nevertheless equipped with sonar, attack and search periscopes, collision avoidance radar and state-of-the-art listening sensors. In addition it has five torpedo tubes capable of firing Spearfish anti-ship torpedoes.

If the week has proved less than exciting for most people interested in Desire Petroleum's progress, there was some excitement for the company's local representative and former non-executive director, Lewis Clifton.

Lewis's wife Barbara gave birth on Wednesday to a son, Joseph Benjamin.

Penguin News congratulates Lewis and Barbara and hopes this happy event may augur well for another happy event with greater consequences for the Falklands economy... perhaps as early as next week. By John Fowler – Penguin News - Stanley

Friday, March 19th 2010 - 16:48 UTC

Falklands' delegation at annual OCT's forum for closer links with European Union

A Falkland Islands delegation is on its way to Brussels for the annual Forum for Overseas Countries & Territories of the European Union, which will be attended by representatives of all 21 EU Overseas Countries & Territories, reports the Falklands Legislative Assembly

MLA Roger Edwards said the Islands are interested in the formation of an All Party Falkland Islands Group within the European Parliament. MLA Roger Edwards said the Islands are interested in the formation of an All Party Falkland Islands Group within the European Parliament.

The Falklands' delegation is led by Legislative Assembly member Roger Edwards, who is the portfolio holder for EU affairs, Ms Sukey Cameron, Falkland Islands Government official representative in London and Michael Poole, Senior Economist and Statistical Analyst.

The annual four day event, from March 23 to 26, is arranged and paid by the EU. Among the issues to be discussed is the new "Overseas Association Decision" which governs the relationship between the EU and its Overseas Countries & Territories and expires 2013, collect resources assigned to the Falkland Islands under the current European Development Fund round and political contacts with members of the European Parliament for the formation of an All Party Falkland Islands Group within the European Parliament.

MLA Edwards said before his departure on Friday, "I am looking forward to an interesting and fruitful series of meetings. There are four main reasons why the Falkland Islands send representatives to the Forum. First: to enhance communication between the EU and the OCTs; second, to achieve a clearer understanding amongst OCTs about the financial assistance available from the Tenth European Development Fund; third, to promote the economic and social development and self-reliance of OCTs within the global economy, and finally, to ensure better co-operation and co-ordination on sustainable development strategies suitable for OCTs".

He added "I will also be attending an event organised by the European Parliament for OCT representatives, at which I look forward to repeating our right of self-determination and our right to peacefully exploit our natural resources within and under the seas surrounding our islands. The Falkland Islands Government is keen to engage with MEPs to gauge the level of interest in the formation of an All Party Falkland Islands Group within the European Parliament.

"Along with my colleagues I have a number of side meetings arranged, to co-ordinate payment by the European Commission to the Falkland Islands Government of the € 4.13 million assigned to the Falkland Islands under the current European Development Fund round. The Falkland Islands are very fortunate to have benefited from funding from the European Union over the past decade, and we have a responsibility to ensure the money is used wisely for the long-term benefit of all."

According to Gilbert House the first day of the Forum is devoted to a Trade Workshop, focused on trade issues between the European Union and its Overseas Countries & Territories.

Falklands' representatives will be giving a presentation on Rules of Origin issues, the rules governing the importation of tariff-free goods into European Union member states from the Overseas Countries & Territories.

The Annual General Meeting of the Overseas Countries & Territories Association is held the following day. The final two days comprise a series of meetings covering a wide range of issues, from trade and development funding, to environmental and political issues, and are attended by European Commission officials and representatives of those countries with overseas territories (Denmark, France, Netherlands and the United Kingdom).

This year's Forum also provides an opportunity for the Overseas Countries & Territories Association to put its views forward on the new 'Overseas Association Decision', which is the document that governs the relationship between the European Union and its Overseas Countries & Territories. The current decision expires in 2013, and a new decision is to be

drafted over the next 18 months in consultation among the European Commission, the 27 European Union members states and the 21 Overseas Countries & Territories.

Prior to travelling to Brussels on 22nd March, Mr Edwards, together with Mr Drew Irvine of the Falkland Islands Vessel Owners Association, will be meeting with representatives of the UK's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to discuss Rules of Origin issues for the Falkland Islands fishing industry and to lobby the British government to support the Falkland Islands Government's position. The following week, on 30th March, Mr Edwards is also due to visit the Foreign & Commonwealth Office for a general discussion on Falklands' issues.

Saturday, March 20th 2010 - 01:13 UTC

Insulza re-election as OAS Secretary General is "almost certain"

With less than a week for the election of a new Organization of American States Secretary General, OAS, international analysts consider as "almost certain" the re-election of Chile's Jose Miguel Insulza, although they do not discard a last minute "artificial" or protest candidate.

Jose Miguel Insulza seems poised for OAS re-election in spite of the Honduras crisis and The Washington Post editorials Jose Miguel Insulza seems poised for OAS re-election in spite of the Honduras crisis and The Washington Post editorials

The event takes place next Wednesday March 24 in Washington and whoever is elected will have the job for the following five years.

According to Peter Hakim, president of Inter-American Dialogue, a centre of Latinamerican studies in Washington, the former Chilean minister can be considered "almost re-elected", since "it's hard to loose an election when you don't have an opponent".

Walter Sanchez from the International Studies Institute of the University of Chile agrees with Hakim adding that following the 8.8 magnitude quake which struck Chile February 27, "somehow it changed the poor willingness towards the re-election of Insulza".

"I had serious doubts about the continuation of the former Chilean minister in the OAS job, but I believe that the post-quake modified that context since Insulza is seen as a coordinator of efforts, in the region to establish a space for political dialogue and the level of criticism towards the current and previous OAS performances has since been contained" added Sanchez, who also admitted that a "last minute" candidate should not be ruled out.

"Maybe there could be a candidate to express some sort of protest, but in terms of a viable or serious candidate, there are none", underlined Hakim.

"It's all part of the political game, an artificial candidate to show concern about OAS performance and standing, who might even go as far as question Insulza's achievements or wants to make a presentation for the following election", said Sanchez.

So far most South American and Caribbean countries have expressed support for Insulza, others such as Peru said they would prefer some other candidate while the administration of President Barack Obama has remained tight lipped.

"The US can't be absent from the main institution in the hemisphere. I'm kind of surprised that so far the US had not made it clear or public which are its concerns in the region...it sound something like a lack of interest", said Hakim.

Sanchez however was more cautious, "in these scenarios sometimes the US support is like the kiss of death: the fact Washington supports creates more doubts and generates resistance".

But it will be hard not to see the US making public its support before expressing its ballot, "particularly if we take into consideration that there's a top official of Chilean origin: the Assistant Secretary of State for Hemispheric Affairs, Arturo Valenzuela".

Regarding the criticisms to Insulza's OAS performance by The Washington Post (at least two editorials) Hakim said he disagreed with the contents and even sent a letter to the newspaper stating his position on the issue.

"It was a criticism out of context. It said the OAS was a well run institution until Insulza arrived when all begun to go wrong. That is not correct. OAS is an institution of sovereign states which acts based on that sovereignty board, and which can't advance much without the agreement of all countries; that is the nature of multilateral institutions", argued the president of the Inter American Dialogue.

However he admitted that Insulza has "committed mistakes" and sometimes has acted with "a certain aggressiveness", but overall he has made OAS "more active and with greater exposure to the media"

Sanchez said that some of the criticisms against Insulza are "valid" particularly those related to the 2009 Honduras crisis, "undoubtedly at this point there was evidence of a lack of support or insufficient capacity to articulate interests", plus the "condescendence" towards the Cuban regime of the Castro brothers.

"I think that if Insulza manages to make OAS more pro-active in democratic consolidation, in creating spaces of political coordination in the region, that is the best hopefully that could happen", concluded the Chilean political scientist Sanchez.

Saturday, March 20th 2010 - 01:27 UTC

Gibraltar delegation at Europe-Latinamerica Liberal parties' forum in Cadiz

A delegation from the Liberal Party of Gibraltar will be in Cadiz this weekend to participate in an international political conference entitled "200 Years of a Common Liberal Identity: A Liberal Agenda for Europe-Latin America Relations".

The forum marks the 200th anniversary of the word "liberal" in a political document The forum marks the 200th anniversary of the word "liberal" in a political document

The conference is being held in the town of Cadiz to mark the 200th anniversary of the first written usage of the word "liberal" in a political document which occurred there in September 1810.

The delegates from Gibraltar will be Liberal Leader Dr Joseph Garcia MP, Steven Linares MP and Troy Jeffries. Dr Garcia has been invited to be a panellist in one of the discussions which will look at the continuing evolution of Liberalism in Iberia and Latin America.

The two-day conference will include politicians from Europe and from Latin America. It seeks to define new ways in which we can work together to ensure that the very basic principles of liberty continue to remain of paramount importance in the future.

Another objective of the conference is to inspire greater cooperation between Liberals in the Iberian Peninsula, Latin America and Europe as a whole. It will look towards the EU summit which will take place in Madrid in May because Spain has the rotating presidency of the European Union.

Among the subjects for discussion are "Liberal Economic Policies for Combating Poverty in Latin America", "Democratic Institutions Under Attack", and "Priorities and deficits of EU-Latin American Relations".

Monday, March 22nd 2010 - 21:21 UTC

Drastic reduction of glaciers in the Northeast sector of Antarctic Peninsula

There is a continuous and drastic reduction in all of the glaciers located in the Northeast sector of the Antarctic Peninsula," Argentine glaciologist Pedro Skvarca told local media last week.

A "World Water Day" is celebrated March 22 around the globe A "World Water Day" is celebrated March 22 around the globe

Skvarca, a leader of the Glaciological Division of the Trans-Andean Antarctic Institute, has worked for 38 years in Argentine bases and since 1994 has been a direct observer of the melting process in the Larsen ice barrier, which once lined the Antarctic's entire eastern coast, from North to South.

The collapse of the Larsen ice barrier started with a 1,600km loss of land mass in the summers of 1994 and 1995, in a matter of just two weeks, a phenomenon known as Larsen A. Then, in the summer of 2001, another large chunk of ice twice the size of the previous one broke off as well, coined Larsen B.

Larsen then continued to lose about 20 km of mass between 2007 and 2009, and what remains today is an unstable trace of the former great ice barrier.

Other glaciers such as Boydell and Sjogren have lost 73km, receding from the land line (where the ocean ends) nine and 11 km, respectively, toward the interior.

"In this sector we have calculated the loss of almost 400km of ice that have already begun contributing to higher ocean levels," said Skvarca.

The scientist recalled that in 1978 his U.S. colleague, John Mercer, first warned that the disintegration of the barriers at both sides of the Antarctic Peninsula would signal a very serious warming process, a phenomenon that has begun much sooner than Skvarca and most of the climate community initially expected. "These events have happened so fast that the scientific community was not prepared," he said.

Natural phenomena like these, along with the breaking off of a colossal iceberg the size of Luxembourg from the Mertz Glacier on February 26, call attention to two issues Chile and the world must deal with in the future: how handle rising sea levels and the coming scarcity of fresh water.

Skvarca's affirmation of continued, rapid glacier melt came just days before March 22 World Water Day event.

World Water Day, a United Nations initiative started in 1992 to raise general awareness of 21st century water issues, will be marked by conventions and scholarly discussion around the world. In Santiago the Comité Chileno para el Programa Hidrológico Internacional (CONAPHI) held its Water Day commemoration Monday in the Humberto Fuenzalida Auditorium at the University of Chile's School of Physical Sciences and Mathematics, located at 850 Beauchef. By Aaron Cantu - Santiago Times

Monday, March 22nd 2010 - 23:39 UTC

Argentine hake fishery and markets at risk because of over-fishing, says NGO

Argentina could lose 40% of its fish market if hake (*Merluccius hubbsi*) captures do not follow new requirements imposed by the European Union (EU) to import fish and shellfish, warned the Wild Life Foundation Argentina, (FVSA).

Eighty per cent of adult hake have disappeared from the Argentine sea as a result of overfishing, FVSA states. Eighty per cent of adult hake have disappeared from the Argentine sea as a result of overfishing, FVSA states.

The non government organization is demanding the "immediate implementation of measures that prevent the capture of juveniles and a 30% reduction in total allowable catch, TAC for 2010."

According to FVSA data, 80% of adult hake have disappeared from the Argentine sea as a result of over-fishing and juvenile catches, as detailed in its report: "Year 10; Hake 0".

According to the group, two measures are at stake this year that could worsen the state of Argentina's main seafood resource.

On the one hand, the Federal Fisheries Council, CFP, approved the possibility of fishing 30% more than recommendations to spur the resource's recovery. In addition, in February 2009 it suspended the use of the selective fishing device (DEJUPA) for juvenile catches.

"At the beginning of 2010, Wild Life filed a request for reports before the CFP and asked for corrections to both measures. Nevertheless, in spite of the corresponding deadlines, it has not yet received a response to its petition from the authorities," added the entity in an official statement.

"The hake, because of its characteristics, will not be extinguished, but it will reach such low numbers that it will become unprofitable to go out and fish it," the statement read.

FVSA director, Diego Moreno said "the first to suffer the full impact of insufficient hake are the companies and the fishermen". Moreno also recalled that the fisheries sector in Argentina generates close to a billion US dollars in exports and employs directly, 20.000 people.

"Argentina needs a sensible and sustainable fishing model, one that comprehends that economic, social, political and environmental dimensions go hand in hand. The fish, fishing and the fishers must be protected as a whole" Moreno explained.

"It doesn't turn out sustainable to fish more hake than what is renewed every year, as is happening at the moment. Nor is it rational to allow the indiscriminate catch of fish that have not yet achieved their first reproduction", said Moreno who added that Argentina's constitution, Environment legislation and the Federal Fisheries Regime, clearly sets out that the exploitation of natural resources must be rational and compatible with their conservation. For that reason, we contend that hake fishing, under the present conditions, could be in non compliance of the law."

"This puts the whole fishing activity in a high-risk situation before markets such as the European Union, ever more demanding as far as the sustainability of the products it imports," Moreno said.

Argentina's common hake TAC for this year was established by CFP at 338.000 tons. This surpasses 2009's TAC by 72,000 tons, or 27%.

According to statistics from the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sub-Secretariat, 34,372.8 tons of hake were landed in Argentine ports between January first and March 18, which is 4.1% less than between the first day of 2009 and 28 February of that year when 35,829.9 tons were landed.

Of total landings this year, 34,003.2 tons were fished to the south of parallel 41° and the rest, 369.6 tonnes, to the north of the same.

Tuesday, March 23rd 2010 - 03:43 UTC

Falklands' oil dispute: Argentina presents its case and backgrounds to OAS

Argentina presented before the Organization of American States, OAS, documents on recent British decisions and actions referred to the disputed Falkland Islands and requested they be made public to all members of the OAS General Assembly.

Argentine Ambassador before OAS, Rodolfo Hugo Gil
Argentine Ambassador before OAS,
Rodolfo Hugo Gil

Among the information delivered by Argentine Ambassador before OAS, Rodolfo Hugo Gil are reports on UK's "unilateral initiatives regarding hydrocarbons explorations in the Southwest Atlantic, and which have been going on since last October".

The information delivered also included the Argentine Decree 256 which establishes previous authorization from Argentina for all vessels planning to sail between continental Argentine ports and the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands or crossing Argentine jurisdictional waters or transporting freight to be Islands, directly or indirectly.

OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza received the documents and promised to deliver a copy to all country members of the organization.

The Falklands/Malvinas dispute between Argentina and Britain which dates back two centuries escalated last month with the arrival to Falklands' waters of an exploratory oil rig

"Ocean Guardian" that has seen since been drilling for hydrocarbons at an estimated 100 miles to the north.

Argentina considers that these operations are infringing on its sovereignty over the South Atlantic Islands and adjacent waters and has imposed restrictions on vessels travelling to the Islands from the continent.

UK argues there are no doubts about British sovereignty over the Islands and that Islanders have a right to self determination, and as such to issue oil licences in Falklands' waters and develop an oil industry.

Sources from the British embassy in Buenos Aires have repeatedly stated that UK kept Argentina informed of all the hydrocarbons exploratory activities in Falklands' waters even when Argentina unilaterally decided to reject a South West Atlantic joint oil exploration and production understanding dating back to 1995.

Wednesday, March 24th 2010 - 02:12 UTC

Peru, a strategic re-positioning of Argentine regional diplomacy

"The visit of President Cristina Kirchner and the re-launching of ties with Peru is strategic for Argentina: Peru is a very important country in South America and a historic ally of Argentina", said Argentine Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana following the signature of thirteen bilateral accords at Government House in Lima.

Jorge Taiana, Argentine Foreign Affairs minister
Jorge Taiana, Argentine Foreign Affairs minister

Regular political meetings at ministerial level were agreed as well as a closer integration in the private sector through the bi-national business council.

"Rebuilding traditional relations with Peru will help the President (Mrs. Kirchner) to balance her current closeness with Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador", said Argentine diplomatic sources further expanding on the motives for the visit.

"We hope to take the 'too-much-Chavez' presence in Argentina's foreign policy", added the sources recalling that Argentina and Peru have very close links dating back to colonial times, besides the fact "traditionally we've had a common adversary, Chile".

Peru has pending border disputes with Chile going back to 1870 and so did Argentina until the peace and friendship treaty of 1984.

In the Falklands conflict of 1982, it has now surfaced that Chile's Pinochet extended strategic support and information to the British while Peru was the only South American country to ship Exocet missiles and other military hardware to Argentina.

Although relations between Chile and Argentina under Michelle Bachelet and Cristina Fernandez have never been better, in spite of several trade and energy disputes, Buenos Aires and Lima share a common concern and that is the 'strong and modern rearmament' of Chile, allegedly financed with windfall earnings from copper.

According to Argentine sources Peruvian president Alan Garcia agreed with Mrs. Kirchner that in the next Union of South American Nations summit, Unasur, the two countries will jointly present a motion "to put a limit on the arms race in the region".

"I celebrate that we can work in Unasur to achieve peace and security, cutting expenditure on arms, which only generates poverty and greater inequality", said President García.

Mrs. Kirchner in her speech supported García's words saying that resources used in the arms race should be invested in "combating poverty and inequality".

"We need to consolidate unity in the region" and cut military spending because there are "too many poor people in the region" said Mrs Kirchner.

President García is in his second mandate and on taking office said that the goal of his administration was to reach and overtake Chile as a regional economic power. To great extent he has done this by opening the Peruvian economy and promoting foreign investment even in strategic areas such as energy, minerals and communications.

However this Garcia is the complete opposite of the first president Garcia, 1985/1990, a fire brand left winger, blend of Marxism with Catholic liberation theory that bankrupted Peru, helped promote one of the deadliest guerrilla movements in the region, Shinning Path, finally defeated by the authoritarian Alberto Fujimori in alliance with the Peruvian army.

Wednesday, March 24th 2010 - 02:54 UTC

Peru made available "Mirage aircraft, missiles and pilots" in Falklands 82 conflict

Argentine president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner thanked Peru for the military support and having made available aircraft, missiles and pilots in the conflict with Britain over the Falkland Islands back in 1982.

Mirage aircraft with Exocet missiles ready to take off
Mirage aircraft with Exocet missiles ready to take off

During an official two day state visit to Peru and talking on Tuesday before Congress Mrs. Kirchner also blasted the United Kingdom for insisting in holding on to "the last colonial enclave" in the continent and for which it should feel "ashamed".

"The last colonial enclave that subsists in our continent should make Britain feel shameful because we are living in the XXI century, and we still have to endure such situations", said Mrs. Kirchner to great applause from Congress members.

The Argentine president also underlined and praised Peru for the military support during the 1982 conflict with Britain over the Falklands, "with no hesitations Peru made available to our country Mirage aircraft, missiles and pilots to combat next to our Argentine pilots and boys".

In interviews with local radios Argentine Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana also talked extensively about the current Falklands' conflict pointing out that the "unilateral" British decision to exploit natural resources in Malvinas waters is a very serious incident which not only affects Argentina, but also the whole region.

"I believe that supporting Argentina in rejecting the British unilateral position, contrary to UN mandates, the whole region is acting in solidarity with legality, and is also defending itself", said Taiana.

He added that "the British unilateral attitude of exploring for hydrocarbons in an area which does not belong to them and is under documented litigation clearly and offensively ignores international law".

In her speech before Congress Mrs. Kirchner deplored that following Peruvian support to Argentina in the Malvinas 1982 conflict, "Argentina in 1995 sold arms and munitions to Ecuador in the midst of war with Peru" over border disputes and which after several weeks fighting ended in 1998 with a peace understanding.

Mrs. Kirchner recalled that at the time she was a Senator and severely criticized the government of President Carlos Menem for having engaged in such sales when Argentina was also a guarantor and mediator of the conflict which dates back to 1942.

"I was extremely critical because I considered it an institutional offence to a country that under the administration of President Fernando Belaúnde, whom I wish to honour, made available to Argentina Mirage aircraft, missile and pilots", underlined Mrs. Kirchner.

Thursday, March 25th 2010 - 03:13 UTC

Chilean navy clears of mines the most extreme south of islands

The Chilean Navy celebrated this week the destruction of the 200th antipersonnel mine in the extreme south Horno Island, thus eliminating Field 113 from the list of territories that were planted with mines in 1982.

The mined fields date back three decades when the Argentina-Chile conflict The mined fields date back three decades when the Argentina-Chile conflict

The Hornos Island is the last piece of Chilean continental territory before reaching Antarctica and was cleared of mines by Chilean marines from the Third Naval Zone, based in Punta Arenas.

"March 19 is a historic date because on that day the Chilean Navy with its Land Mines Operations Team removed and destroyed the 200th anti-personnel mine, clearing Field 113", reported the Third Naval Zone.

The de-mining task was begun a year ago, and the teams will now be moving to other islands and areas in the austral region that were planted with antipersonnel mines in the height of the conflict between Argentina and Chile in 1978/79 and later when the landing of Argentine forces in the Falkland Islands in 1982.

Chile feared that an Argentine victory in Falklands could tempt the Argentine military government to march in claim of disputed islands in the Beagle Channel.

"Working for such an important mission makes me proud of the Chilean Navy contribution to humanity, so people that visit this island at the end of the world can walk freely. We know this is only the beginning, and the challenge ahead is a major task", said Lieutenant Fernando Ulloa in charge of one of the de-mining teams.

The Hornos Island is visited by hundreds of tourists every week during the austral summer cruise season but from now on they will no longer see the fences or perimeters which protected them from the anti personnel mines.

The “humanitarian de-mining” operations are part of Chile’s commitment following the signing of the Ottawa Convention (for the banning and elimination of anti personnel mines) which were started back in 2002.

Thursday, March 25th 2010 - 02:50 UTC

Gibraltar defends “self-determination” before Latinamerican Liberal leaders

Gibraltar Liberal Party Leader Dr Joseph Garcia told international delegates at a conference in Cadiz this weekend that “the liberal and democratic solution for a decolonised status for Gibraltar was through the exercise of the principle of self-determination”, reports the Gibraltar Chronicle.

Liberal Party Leader Dr Joseph Garcia Liberal Party Leader Dr Joseph Garcia

Dr Garcia was invited to be a speaker and panellist at the event which took place under the theme “A Liberal Agenda for Europe-Latin America Relations”. The Liberal leader was part of the panel addressing the question of the “Continuing Evolution of Liberalism in Iberia and Europe”.

Dr Garcia, who is a Vice President of Liberal International, centred his contribution on the Iberian Peninsula speaking specifically about Gibraltar, Portugal, Spain and Andorra. He explained that since the collapse of the Centro Democratico y Social, there has been no strong Liberal party in Spain on a national basis, although there are strong regional parties with a Liberal tradition that have been in Government in places like Cataluña.

Dr Garcia explained that in Andorra the Partit Liberal were the Government from 1994 until 2009. He identified a vacuum in Portugal since in 1996 the PDS defected from the Liberal tradition and became Christian Democrats, although there were now new initiatives taking root in that country.

Dr Garcia then outlined the origins and development of the Liberal Party of Gibraltar over the last 19 years. He explained that there was a synergy with Liberal philosophy in the

aspirations for free and democratic decolonisation through self-determination where the rights and wishes of people are what matter most.

The Liberal leader said the speakers from Latin America "proved to be an eye-opener."

He continued: "There is normally very little reporting in Europe of the details of what happens in Latin America. Some speakers declared that in many of their countries what existed was a 'false democracy' in that people went to vote every four years but had a very poor quality of democracy in between elections.

"In some areas Governments were elected that did not apply the rule of law and in others people who wanted law and order or greater personal security were willing to sacrifice other freedoms in order to obtain this.

"Many useful contacts were made in the fringes of the conference and it was important that a Gibraltar point of view had also been put across in the lively discussions and questions which followed. It always provides a sense of perspective to listen to what is happening in other parts of the world and to share experiences with politicians from other countries."

Thursday, March 25th 2010 - 03:11 UTC

Die-off of whales along Argentine Patagonia alarm scientific community

The scientific community is alarmed by the die-off of southern right whales along the coasts of Argentine Patagonia. In the last three years some 300 specimens of these marine mammals have been found dead on the beaches of Valdes Peninsula on the Atlantic Ocean, a number far beyond what would be considered normal, according to scientific experts.

An International Whaling Commission taskforce analyzed the situation in Puerto Madryn
An International Whaling Commission taskforce analyzed the situation in Puerto Madryn

Until 2007, the annual average number of whales found dead on the peninsula, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was no more than 30, the president of the Argentine Whale Conservation Institute, Diego Taboada, said. That means that the annual average has gone from 30 whale deaths to almost 100, he added.

"It has been established that a die-off like this was a completely unknown phenomenon and nothing like it has been seen anywhere else in the world. It has alerted the entire scientific community," the expert said.

Sparked by the alert from Argentine specialists, the problem was analyzed this month by whale and health experts from several countries in the city of Puerto Madryn, 1,100 kilometres south of Buenos Aires, at a workshop sponsored by the International Whaling Commission.

"One of the main problems we have is that when whale fatalities are reported and we find them, they have already been dead for several days. The whales literally cook in their own fat, their organs decompose and that stops us from getting samples of their blood or from different organs that would allow us to perform an analysis to determine the causes of death" Taboada said.

In the bays of the Valdes Peninsula in the Patagonian province of Chubut, around 600 southern right whales gather every year, the fifth part of the world population, a phenomenon that attracts more than 100,000 tourists annually.

Veterinarian Marcela Uhart of the Wildlife Conservation Society said that experts analyzing the surge in the mortality rate have ruled out a number of factors that have impacted right whales in other parts of the world.

For example, she said they have ruled out the possibility of the deaths being caused by colliding with ships or being caught in fishing nets as happens to this whale species in other parts of the world where they are in danger of extinction.

Uhart said that there is no clear pattern of death among southern right whales, so that experts even doubt that there is a common cause of death, since there are "innumerable factors" that could have an influence.

Among the causes being analyzed are environmental factors that are changing significantly due to climate change and whale malnutrition.

"The common denominator in the cases analyzed is that the calves are too thin. That is due to the mothers suffering malnutrition because they haven't found sufficient resources to have an adequate diet" Taboada said.

It could also be that malnutrition "combines with a great number of primipara mothers whose first calves have a high percentage of mortality," the expert said.

In his opinion, having the International Whaling Commission call this meeting is "really very important" progress in beginning to address this problem and keeping the southern right whale from again facing extinction.

The report prepared at the Puerto Madryn meeting will be submitted for the consideration of the Committee of the International Whaling Commission at its annual meeting, scheduled for June in Morocco.

The Southern Right Whale (*Eubalaena australis*) is a baleen whale, one of three species classified as right whales belonging to the genus *Eubalaena*. Like other right whales, the Southern Right Whale is readily distinguished from others by the callosities on its head, a broad back without a dorsal fin, and a long arching mouth that begins above the eye. Its skin is very dark grey or black, occasionally with some white patches on the belly.

The right whale's callosities appear white due to large colonies of cyamids (whale lice).

It is almost indistinguishable from the closely related North Atlantic and the North Pacific Right Whales, displaying only minor skull differences. It may have fewer callosities on its head and more on its lower lips than the two northern species.

Approximately 12,000 Southern Right Whales are spread throughout the southern part of the Southern Hemisphere.

The maximum size of an adult female is 18.5 meters and approximately 130 tons. The testicles of right whales are likely to be the largest of any animal, each weighing around 500 kg. This suggests that sperm competition is important in the mating process. Right whales cannot cross the warm equatorial waters to connect with the other (sub)species and (inter)breed: their thick layers of insulating blubber make it impossible for them to dissipate their internal body heat in tropical waters.

Thursday, March 25th 2010 - 13:04 UTC

Falklands politicians an important resource says British Government official

"AN important international diplomatic resource" is how Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) official Colin Roberts visiting the Falkland Islands describes Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

Director of the Overseas Territories Directorate FCO Colin Roberts Director of the Overseas Territories Directorate FCO Colin Roberts

Director of the Overseas Territories Directorate FCO Colin Roberts encouraged MLAs to continue to attend the annual United Nations Committee of 24 in order to promote the Islanders right to self determination, saying, "It is important to recognise how effective their advocacy is."

He praised recent letters from MLA Jan Cheek to British newspapers The Times and The Guardian where she reiterated the Islanders' position and corrected points made by the authors of articles about the Falklands.

Mr Roberts' supportive attitude will be welcomed by the MLAs and is in sharp contrast to pre 1982 attitudes from the British Government towards Islanders.

He also confirmed that one of his primary reasons for visiting the Islands was to check the Islands Government was satisfied with the level of support being given by the British Government in relation to hydrocarbons exploration, as well as the way the British Government has coordinated the diplomatic response to the arrival of the rig.

He said the Prime Minister has been following the situation very closely, adding, the way it had been handled, "...should be very reassuring as the Prime Minister has made it clear that Great Britain remains committed to the principles of self determination..."

"The important and highly professional," work of the de-miners in the Falklands was also a subject for discussion, in particular, "...the process of communicating that information to the public."

Mr Roberts will have a very 'hands-on' role in this process today when he joins the Governor of the Falkland Islands and others, in walking through the first minefield to be cleared by the British de-mining company BACTEC.

The issue of public finances was also high on Mr Robert's agenda. He said he had been very encouraged by the state of the Falklands public finances and that they are in far better shape than other British Overseas Territories, "Nevertheless there are pressures on the economy and a deficit in the coming year."

He said it was recognised that finances, "remain vulnerable to external shocks," and he and the MLAs had discussed issues of resilience and challenges and planning ahead. By Lisa Watson – SeAledPR - Stanley

Friday, March 26th 2010 - 01:19 UTC

Falklands' fishery back to normal says Director

Falklands' fishery catches have returned to a more normal level in 2010, confirmed Director of Fisheries John Barton on Thursday.

Fishery Patrol Protegat docked in FIPASS, Stanley Fishery Patrol Protegat docked in FIPASS, Stanley

Approximately one month into the squid fishery season (Loligo and Illex) Falkland Islands Fisheries Department officials will be breathing a sigh of relief as a result of "some good catches," compared to the disastrously low catches of 2009.

Mr Barton said, "The Loligo fishery involves 16 trawlers, most of which are registered in the Falkland Islands. Catches were quite low in 2009 whereas catches in 2010 have returned to more normal levels..."

The short Loligo season is due to end in mid-April.

Speaking of the Illex fishery, Mr Barton said, "This year there has been significantly greater interest in licences, with some 70 vessels calling to collect licences. However, catching conditions are rather slow with average catches of 5-7 tons per night..."

The main fleets involved are from Korea and Taiwan: "There were so few squid in 2009, that the outlook for 2010 was always a bit uncertain. It is hoped that conditions will improve."

"Falkland Islands fishery patrol vessel Protegat has been concentrating on monitoring the Illex fleet" said Mr Barton, "with a good number of inspections achieved in the last patrol. There has also been an exercise with the Falkland Islands Defense Force to refresh operations with the gun installed on the Protegat."

Mr Barton also confirmed that one Korean jigger, Myung Jin 601, suffered a fire onboard last week. All of the crew was safely evacuated to another jigger, and the Myung Jin 601 has been towed away to Montevideo. By Lisa Watson –SeAledPR - Stanley

Friday, March 26th 2010 - 21:40 UTC

Falklands deployed HMS York celebrates 25 years at sea

HMS York, the Portsmouth-based Type 42 destroyer and currently patrolling the Falkland Islands as part of her South Atlantic deployment is celebrating her 25 years at sea. She was accepted into service on March 1985.

The Portsmouth-based Type 42 destroyer challenging the South Atlantic The Portsmouth-based Type 42 destroyer challenging the South Atlantic

To mark HMS York's special day, the ship's company is celebrating with a cake and candles as a special toast to her silver anniversary.

"To be in command of this fine old lady, the 12th warship to proudly wear the name York is a rare privilege indeed" said Commanding Officer Commander Simon Staley.

"She may be 25 years old, but to know I drive the fastest destroyer in the fleet, and that we still pack a significant punch via missiles and guns, gives great heart. The ship's company are really terrific too, and display all the grit, character and pride synonymous with the fine people of Yorkshire", added the Commander Staley.

HMS York sailed for the South Atlantic at the end of November last year, visiting Gibraltar and Rio de Janeiro en route. While in Rio, the ship's company did some much-needed building work at an orphanage for abandoned street children, and brightened up their festive season with Christmas presents and decorations.

After arriving at the Falklands, the destroyer has been on patrol with other Royal Navy vessels, conducted an exercise with a French naval task group, demonstrated naval gunfire support for an infantry company, given Army and RAF colleagues a day on board ship and helped in the rescue of a sick trawler-man.

But this was a week for celebration, as Commander Staley said: "We will have cake and candles, and I will toast her very happy birthday – I hope you will find time to do the same".

The present HMS York is the 12th to bear the name, which is one of the oldest ship names in the Royal Navy. Launched on 20 June 1982 at Wallsend, she was accepted into service on 25 March 1985 and commissioned on 9 August 1985 at Rosyth her base port at that time. Now she is based at Portsmouth. Her funnel badge, a red cross with lions passant is from the coat of arms of the City of York. The ship's crest is the White Rose of York. The motto 'Bon Espoir' means 'Good Hope' and her sponsor is Lady Gosling.

Saturday, March 27th 2010 - 03:25 UTC

Spanish minister defends Gibraltar friendly-approach policy before Congress

Spain is defending its interests in relation to Gibraltar “firmly and efficiently” Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos declared in a special session of Congress in Madrid. But he also underlined Spain’s commitment for police and judicial co-operation to stamp out crime in the area.

Miguel Angel Moratinos said the approach had created positive results Miguel Angel Moratinos said the approach had created positive results

According to the Gibraltar Chronicle, the remarks came in response to a question from the opposition Popular Party ‘Gibraltar’ MP Jose Ignacio Landaluce in relation to the Civil Guard’s ability to police the Bay of Gibraltar.

Moratinos declared that he defends “the interests of Spain and the Spanish people and, logically, the claim over Gibraltar.” He said that the ruling PSOE’s approach had produced better results than any PP predecessor.

Moratinos insisted that the relations with Gibraltar reflect a “system of working” appropriate for the 21st century in which the Spanish executive bats for “the interests of the Spanish people, the Spanish waters around Gibraltar and the best environment for all to live, both in Spain and, of course, in Gibraltar”.

Moratinos is a strong promoter of the tri-partite talks (UK, Spain, Gibraltar) and has been the first Spanish minister to visit the Rock.

Saturday, March 27th 2010 - 06:44 UTC

Falklands join Earth Hour, the 125th country to participate in the global event

The Falkland Islands are to participate Saturday in 'Earth Hour', a global awareness campaign on climate change organised by the World Wide Fund for Nature which spans thousands of cities around the world.

Lights at Whalebone Arch in Stanley are to be switched off for one hour
Lights at Whalebone Arch in Stanley are to be switched off for one hour

Individuals, commerce, governments and communities are invited to turn out their lights for one hour on Saturday March 27, 2010 at 8.30pm (local time) to show their support for action on climate change.

Matt Wilkins, Operations Manager at Earth Hour Global, welcomed involvement by Falkland Islanders, saying "This is great news! We are very excited to have the Falkland Islands on board – you are the 125th country/territory to participate."

The Falkland Islands involvement in Earth Hour is being co-ordinated by the Hon Emma Edwards MLA, who is also a geography teacher at the Falkland Islands Community School. Ms Edwards reported that students at the school are keen to take part and show their support for climate change initiatives.

The lights at Whalebone Arch in Stanley are to be switched off for one hour at 8.30pm Saturday, and all residents and businesses are encouraged to take part by switching off their own lights at the same time.

The event began in Sydney in 2007, when 2 million people switched off their lights. In 2008 more than 50 million people around the globe participated, and in 2009 participation swelled to hundreds of millions across 4159 cities and towns in 88 countries.

Sunday, March 28th 2010 - 04:56 UTC

Oil in Falklands but not in commercial volumes, reports The Times

The first well drilled off the Falkland Islands in 12 years has struck oil — but not enough for a commercial well, according to a report from the Sunday edition of The Times.

The exploration rig Ocean Guardian operating to the north of the Falklands The exploration rig Ocean Guardian operating to the north of the Falklands

Desire Petroleum, the UK explorer that contracted the exploration rig "Ocean Guardian" is expected to announce the disappointing findings this week, according to industry sources.

The Times speculates the news could defuse the political row that erupted between London and Buenos Aires after a group of British oil exploration companies led by Desire Petroleum announced plans to drill wells in the territorial waters of the Falklands which are claimed by Argentina.

President Cristina Kirchner claimed the campaign violated its national sovereignty. Hillary Clinton, US secretary of state, declined to side with Britain and suggested that the matter be referred to the UN.

Desire is expected to say that the well drilled at its Liz prospect was "technically successful", meaning it found oil, but that it is "non-commercial", meaning that there was not enough oil to justify developing the field.

According to The Times, the company declined to comment. Sources close to the situation said it had not finished drilling, but the signs were not encouraging.

A source said: "It's not a duster [a dry well], but it's not commercially successful." Desire has been working on the well for the past month.

Its disappointment is not the end of the Falklands oil story. Desire is one of four UK-listed firms that have raised £250 million from investors in recent months to fund an exploration spree around the islands.

Rockhopper Exploration will drill its Sea Lion prospect next month. That will be followed by one well from Falkland Oil and Gas, before Rockhopper takes the rig back to drill another.

Falkland Oil and Gas has linked up with BHP Billiton, the Anglo-Australian group that is one of the world's largest miners.

Borders & Southern, the other British firm, is further behind because its acreage in the deeper waters south of the islands requires a different type of rig — the other fields are in the north.

Desire's news is likely to depress its share price, and those of its Falklands-focused rivals. The firm has stakes in several other blocks that are expected to be drilled in the next 18 months.

Twelve years ago several companies, including Shell Oil, drilled wells but with similar limited success: not enough oil or gas for commercial exploitations.

At the time also, 1998, international oil prices plunged to 10 US dollars a barrel definitively discouraging any further exploration.

Monday, March 29th 2010 - 00:31 UTC

Argentine opposition blasts Nestor Kirchner's Unasur candidacy

One of the leaders of the Argentine opposition warned that it would be “tragedy for the Americas” if the ex President Néstor Kirchner is designated as General Secretary of the South American Nations Union (Unasur).

This time apparently Mr. Kirchner will have the full consensus This time apparently Mr. Kirchner will have the full consensus

“It would be a tragedy for America if Néstor Kirchner turns out to be designated as the head of the Unasur because the post should be occupied by a democratic man” said lawmaker Elisa Carrió, head of the Civic Coalition, during a political rally.

Ms Carrió considered that “it would be the same risk if Hugo Chávez was in charge. We have to be very careful with the new-born institutions because those in charge are part of a foundation and they can make it develop or die.”

Carrió reacted after the Bolivian President gave an explicit support to Kirchner's candidacy.

“I'm convinced that the integration of the Unasur is been accelerated, and I want to express our support for Argentina's ex President Néstor Kirchner so he can be designated as Unasur's general secretary” announced Evo Morales during last week's President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's visit to Bolivia.

Kirchner's candidacy to head the Unasur was launched by Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa. But the initiative was objected by the ex President of Uruguay Tabaré Vázquez, while Peru and Colombia did not announce their position. Any Unasur decision must be unanimous.

Uruguay and Argentina are divided over a pulp mill constructed along a shared border river. Argentina argues it was nor formally consulted on the issue, as demanded by a treaty dating back to the seventies, and sponsored pickets that have blocked for over three years an international bridge linking the neighbouring countries.

Former Uruguayan president Tabare Vázquez accepted to hold talks on the dispute but demanded that pickets be lifted. However the Kirchners said they could not interfere with people's right to protest. Vazquez then vetoed Kirchner nomination to Unasur and the dispute turned personally acrimonious.

But with the coming to office of Jose Mujica, a close friend of the Kirchners, things have changed and the Uruguayan president has promised discussions on "whatever is necessary" to overcome the dispute.

President Mujica would therefore not veto the former Argentine president as Unasur permanent secretary general. The recent visit to Peru of President Cristina Kirchner where she publicly apologized before President Alan García and Congress, for Argentina's supply of weapons to Ecuador in 1995, during an armed border conflict with Peru, is also expected to help change Lima's position.

Regarding Colombia, President Alvaro Uribe is soon leaving and with his successor there could be a new start, particularly since Mrs. Kirchner is intent in gradually distancing Argentine foreign policy from Venezuela's Hugo Chavez.

Cash and credit strapped Argentina is in the midst of a negotiation to return to global money markets and needs to show a less radical stance in international affairs: a more positive criticism of the world financial system and of the strong US military presence in Colombian bases.

Monday, March 29th 2010 - 04:33 UTC

Gibraltar-Madrid air-bridge in doubt after Spanish airline suspends flights

The future of the air bridge between Gibraltar and Madrid was in doubt following Ándalus Líneas Aéreas suspension last week of all flights in the face of unpaid debts running into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Conflicting versions about Andalus airlines real problems
Conflicting versions about Andalus airlines real problems

GE Capital Aviation Services [GECAS], an Ireland-based company involved in aircraft leasing and financing, leased two planes to Ándalus last June but claimed it had not been paid since November.

GECAS told the Gibraltar Chronicle that it was owed just over 611,552.71 US dollars by Ándalus. After issuing warnings to the Spanish company, GECAS moved to terminate the leases and insurance in early March due to the failure of Ándalus to settle the payment defaults.

"Despite the Notices of Termination the Lessee has refused to ground or return the aircraft and continues to operate them without legal title," a spokesman for GECAS told the Chronicle. He added that "because of the refusal of the Lessee to return the Aircraft, GECAS has taken legal action in Spain and in Gibraltar on March 10".

In a statement issued to the Spanish media, the Spanish Andalus airline insisted the suspension of service was for technical reasons. It made no mention of any legal action by GECAS.

"The temporary suspension is due to unforeseen circumstances relating to the maintenance of the aircraft used on this route," the Spanish company said. "The plane is currently in Casablanca and several components that need replacing are not currently available".

"Ándalus apologises for any inconvenience to its clients as a result".

The company said it would resume flights as from April 19, leaving passengers who had planned to travel to Madrid between now and then arrange alternative transport. Ándalus also stalled the start of a new service between San Sebastián and Madrid. The service was due to have launched last week but has been pushed back to mid April.

Monday, March 29th 2010 - 20:47 UTC

Falklands prepares for renewed UK Parliament with expected 50% turnover

Member of the Legislative Assembly Dick Sawle said the Falkland Islands have a lot of work and lobbying ahead to maintain the current level of support from British Parliament since almost half of MPs will be resigning at the coming General Election, which could take place next May.

MLA Dick Sawle visit to Westminster was "interesting and informative" MLA Dick Sawle visit to Westminster was "interesting and informative"

MLA Sawle on Tuesday returned from London where he participated at the annual two-week Westminster Seminar on Parliamentary Practices and Procedures organized by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association which offered him a privileged insight into Westminster's workings, strengths and weaknesses, a "learning experience".

Since half of the current Westminster's MPs will be resigning at the General Election (mostly because of the expenses scandal), this "gives us a difficulty in ensuring that new MPs are aware of our political situation and will continue to support us as has always been the case in the past", pointed out MLA Sawle.

"There is a lot of work going on in the background on this, via FIGO and Sukey Cameron. In my view, this type of lobbying and presence is vital if we are going to maintain the support that we currently have", added the Falklands lawmaker.

MLA Sawle pointed out that in several issues of the two weeks forum, which he described overall as "interesting and informative" the Falklands was way ahead, for example empowerment of women in politics, and the role and transforming economic effect played by internet, as was pointed out by the Queen during the Service of Observance for Commonwealth Day.

One of the most interesting issues was referred to the Westminster parliamentary system that given the low turnout in UK elections "no MP is ever voted in by a majority of their

constituents". Furthermore "public confidence in MPs has declined and as a consequence there is little faith in government and the democratic process is called into question".

This however is not the case of the Falklands "where we have over 80% turnout in the elections and our democratic process has been seen to be real and effective."

"To restore confidence, British MPs suggested that people should be educated into wanting to vote and to become engaged in the political system of the UK. The point was also made that if there is no opposition, then there is no effective democracy. In the absence of opposition, then the media become the effective voice of that opposition."

At a session on MPs expenses, it was suggested that the best way to avoid similar problems in future is to pay MPs a fair salary appropriate to the job that they do.

MLA Sawle said that Day 3 of the forum was a series of seminars on topics such as the cost and effectiveness of oral and written questions, public expenditure and the role of Parliament, scrutiny of the Prime Minister, legislative procedures, and the committee system.

"The highlight of the day was a reception at No 10 Downing Street for all delegates hosted by Harriet Harman, the deputy leader of the Labour Party. It is certainly an honour to visit No 10 and also a great opportunity to meet with a variety of MPs and Lords and reinforce the Falklands message of right to self-determination and also of course to discuss recent events concerning oil and Argentina's aggressive attitude."

Towards the end of the first week, Mr Sawle took the opportunity to meet Sir Nicholas Winterton, the outgoing chair of the Falkland Islands All Party Parliamentary Group, and to accompany Andy Love MP for Edmonton in London on a constituency visit.

"The visit was interesting – it struck me that whilst Westminster was heavily resourced, the constituency was the complete opposite with very few staff and very few resources and heavily relied on committed helpers and supporters."

Week 2 began with sessions with Serjeant at Arms Mrs Jill Pay on the security aspects of Westminster, and Speaker of the House of Commons Mr John Bercow MP. "Once again," said Mr Sawle, "the history and procedure, pomp and ceremony, splendour and magnificence of Westminster were amazing. It makes the Falkland Islands system look simple, clear, democratic and very transparent."

While in London, Mr Sawle took the opportunity to meet with Adam Dunlop of Cable and Wireless. "I discussed with him the current situation and people's dissatisfaction with the current service. I also emphasised that I was aware that there was a lot of work being carried out to get the Campo system especially working and reliable, but there is still a long way to go before it is acceptable."

Day 7 concentrated on the issues involved in broadcasting parliamentary proceedings, and how parliaments can be funded. In the evening Mr Sawle attended a presentation by Dr Lindsay Parson (Head of the Sea Law Group at the National Oceanography Centre in Southampton) to the All Party Parliamentary Group on the strategic value of the world's oceans.

"This is especially important to the Falklands as we have submitted our bid under the law of the seas to extend our ownership of the seabed to include our continental shelf," commented Mr Sawle.

"At present, we own the seabed within our EEZ, which measures some 750 km² of seabed. If our claim is successful, this would extend to the end of the continental shelf – an additional 1.2 million km² of seabed with potentially valuable resources. All of the Overseas Territories stand to potentially benefit a great deal with this. There are many valuable resources on and below the seabed."

Day 8 included a session on research and information facilities. It was chaired by Elizabeth Hallam Smith who is the Chief Librarian for the House of Lords, and trained the Falkland Islands Government's Archivist, the late Jane Cameron.

"We talked about the management of information within FIG," reported Mr Sawle. "One of the problems that I see is that information is scattered around various government departments. There is a lack of corporate knowledge as senior civil servants come and go

and we are constantly in danger of re-inventing the wheel as we do not have a simple and effective system for the storage and retrieval of information. It is relatively simple to provide a solution, but whether or not the cost of doing so would be justified is, of course, another matter, but it is something that is worth looking at."

Andy Richardson, the editor of Hansard (the official record of Parliamentary proceedings), encouraged the delegates to consider greater use of the internet to communicate with their constituents.

"I decided in fact to set up an account on Facebook and will see how it goes, but it will be an interesting experiment," said Mr Sawle.

Later the same day Mr Sawle attended a meeting of the UK Overseas Territories Association with the Falkland Islands Government's Representative in London, Sukey Cameron. The agenda covered a number of issues, including a motion by the Falkland Islands that Overseas Territories should be able to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph rather than have one laid on their behalf. Mr Sawle said that everyone present was also keen to explore ways in which Overseas Territories can work together to share information.

The seminar finished with two lively debates, the first about parliamentary democracy, procedures and the effectiveness of the Westminster system, and the second on climate change. Mr Sawle commented that, "I was pleased to point out that the Falklands led the way in the use of renewable energy but that, unlike other countries, it was not difficult to sell the idea to the people, as it had a direct financial benefit to the consumer."

Monday, March 29th 2010 - 18:54 UTC

Mrs. Kirchner will head Malvinas commemoration April 2 in Ushuaia

Argentine president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner will head next Friday April 2 in Ushuaia commemorations to honour Malvinas veterans and those fallen during the 1982 conflict over the Falklands with Britain, according to Tierra del Fuego press reports.

The monument to the Malvinas fallen in Ushuaia The monument to the Malvinas fallen in Ushuaia

The ceremony is scheduled at 11:00 Friday morning at the foot of the monument to the Malvinas fallen, next to the Beagle Channel. Mrs. Cristina Kirchner will lay a flower wreath on the plaque with names of all those who lost their lives during the Falklands conflict in 1982.

A representative from the Malvinas veterans, Tierra del Fuego governor Fabiana Rios and finally Cristina Kirchner will be making speeches on the occasion.

Apparently following the ceremony Mrs. Kirchner will walk up to the Beagle channel where she will drop flower petals to honour the over one thousand combatants who died during and after the conflict with the UK.

Argentina officially lost 649 combatants in the war but several hundred more have since committed suicide anguished by suffering, oblivion, stress and abandonment.

Most Argentine combatants are buried at the Darwin cenotaph which was officially inaugurated last year by two groups of Malvinas families that travelled on successive weeks to the Falkland Islands.

The presidential delegation includes Defence minister Nilda Garré and Interior minister Florencio Randazzo.

Monday, March 29th 2010 - 18:40 UTC

Falklands' Desire shares slump following disappointing first well

Shares in UK-Falklands Desire Petroleum slumped Monday as the company officially confirmed a disappointing result from the first drilling in its exploration campaign in the North Falkland Basin.

A full announcement is expected later this week A full announcement is expected later this week

In a brief release Desire Petroleum said that the Liz well, in the North Falkland Basin, reached a depth of 3570 metres and logging is underway.

"The primary Liz target was encountered at around 2550 metres with indications of hydrocarbons while drilling. Subsequent logging operations have shown that oil may be present in thin intervals but that reservoir quality is poor".

Deeper gas shows have also been encountered while drilling, particularly below 3400 metres and these have still to be evaluated by wire-line logging and sampling.

Desire Petroleum say that until the logging is complete and the results analysed it will not be possible to determine the significance of the hydrocarbons encountered and whether the well will need to be drilled deeper, suspended for testing or plugged and abandoned.

Operations are expected to be completed later this week when Desire will be making a full announcement.

Following the company's announcement, shares in Desire plunged by nearly 60% when trading began, down 58p at 41p. Rockhopper Exploration, which owns 7% of Desire's well, tumbled 35%.

Alan Sinclair, analyst at stockbrokers Seymour Pierce, argued that all may not be lost.

"On balance, whilst the market may have been looking for seagull-scorching test results from Liz, it should be borne in mind that this is the first of a potential six-well program by Desire. It is encouraging that initial indications suggest that potentially all the ingredients, reservoir, trap and hydrocarbons, are present in the general area," he added.

Monday, March 29th 2010 - 18:34 UTC

Falklands: "no return to the 80s", tacit UK/Argentine agreement

Foreign Office minister Chris Bryant said that UK and Argentina agree there is “no return to the eighties” regarding the Falkland Islands which he underlined are British as long as the Islanders so wish.

Chris Bryant says relations with Argentina are very close and strong Chris Bryant says relations with Argentina are very close and strong

In an interview with the Mexican daily Excelsior, Bryant also revealed he has had talks with Argentina’s Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana and relations with Buenos Aires, with the exception of the Falklands/Malvinas issue are very good and strong.

In perfect Spanish he also recommended Latinamerican countries to “open up” and stop blaming the US and Europe for all their problems. “Let’s face it, the anti Yank spirit does not help lift the poor or build hospitals”.

“We won the (1982) conflict and have had problems with Argentina for the last thirty years over the Falklands’ sovereignty, but as a country and as democrats we believe in self determination, and if the people of the Islands want to remain British, that is their choice and we will always support them”, said Bryant who insisted that “we have no doubts as to whom the Falklands belong”. Besides in the European Union Lisbon Treaty “it is clearly spelled out that the Falklands belong to Britain”.

He added that trade relations with Argentina remain very strong and good and both countries are working closely in many world affairs and challenges. “PM Gordon Brown and President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner work very closely in the G20 framework, UK and Argentina are strong allies; we only have this little problem over the Falklands”.

Bryant pointed out that contrary to media frondose coverage “there’s no return to the eighties. I was told so by Argentine politicians; Mrs. Kichner never said she’s planning to block the Falklands, so the situation is much calmer than what your read. The Falklands as such don’t belong to us but the people democratically want to be British and we respect and support that”.

The Foreign Office minister revealed he has a fluid dialogue with the Argentines: "I met and talked with Jorge Taiana during the inauguration of President Piñera in Chile. We have an active ambassador in Buenos Aires in regular contact; they have a consular officer in London; we are all the time in contact".

When asked about the recent Latinamerican and Caribbean leaders' summit with strong support for Argentina, Bryant said "it's normal. Since we have no doubts about the Falklands we don't need any lobbying. Besides this year is the independence bicentennial of several of the region's countries and the British helped with that struggle. For the last 200 years we have had very close links with many Latinamerican countries (Chile, Brazil) among others; we are working with Colombia and Venezuela in drugs control..."

Bryant recalled he spent six months in Buenos Aires in 1986, "I loved the city and love the Argentine spirit. I know all of (folklorist) Mercedes Sosa' songs and play them in the guitar". That was four years after the war, "so I understand very well when my Argentine colleagues say no return to the eighties".

Finally FCO Minister Bryant was asked about Latinamerica and the future.

"In my personal opinion one of the main problems in Latinamerica for the last fifty years has been that they blame their problems on the US and Europe. I'd say the anti-Yank spirit is useless: it doesn't help to lift the poor or build hospitals. Latinamerica has to open to the world, economically, politically, socially. You have to look inside to solve your own problems, not criticizing the US or Europe".

However he added that countries such as Mexico and Brazil have very strong and solid economies and will grow sustainedly. "Their importance and influence in world affairs is going to increase, but I still feel there's in Latinamerica an anti Yank stance which is totally distractive and non helpful".

Monday, March 29th 2010 - 18:48 UTC

Falklands training ground for UK troops to be deployed in Afghanistan

Eight thousand miles from the United Kingdom in the Falkland Islands more than 150 soldiers from 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment are preparing for war.

British troops with live munitions in Onion Range British troops with live munitions in Onion Range

Next year they will all be deployed to Afghanistan to fight against the Taliban, reports Nicola Rees for BBC under the heading: Yorkshire soldiers train in Falklands for Afghanistan. For now though, their battlefield training ground is the bleak and rocky terrain of the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic. They have joined British servicemen from the Army, Navy, and RAF at Mount Pleasant military base near the islands' capital, Stanley. Nicola writes that besides playing a vital role defending the Islands from any foreign invasion, "the infantry soldiers from the Battalion's A Company are also being put through some gruelling training regimes".

Cpl Anthony Brown, 26, from Beeston in Leeds, says it is one of the hardest environments he has trained in. "It's like everything out here is designed to hurt you, and as for the weather I've seen it all - rain, hail, snow, all in one day - and I've still managed to get sunburnt."

One of the toughest field exercises is the live firing that takes place at the top of Onion Range, so called because the journey up there alone is enough to make your eyes water. The soldiers set up camp on the exposed hillside, often for several weeks at a time, and the training takes place in a simulated battlefield environment.

Every machine gun, mortar and rifle that is fired contains live ammunition, and as the soldiers scramble over rocks and riverbeds in full body armour, it is the closest they can be to an all out war - everything but the enemy is real.

L/Cpl Lee Mullarkey, from Bradford, commands a section of frontline soldiers. For him the live firing exercise is crucial.

"This is the build up for Afghanistan next year, and the way I see it the harder we train now, the easier the fight will be out there," he said.

"My biggest worry is the IED (improvised explosive device) threat. Roadside bombs are a massive problem for the British army out there - they're the one thing that causes the most casualties.

"I think within the regiment there's going to be a lot of wounded, and there's going to be a lot of soldiers killed.

"I've just got to stay focused on keeping my men alive and getting them back in one piece."

Ms Rees goes on to explain that the Falklands are more than just a training ground for the soldiers of the Yorkshire Regiment. Many of them are too young to remember the 1982 conflict with Argentina, but the battle scars of that war are ever present.

More than 20,000 land mines were left behind, and 28 years on it is not hard to find the wreckage of fighter planes shot down during the conflict.

The Falklands War claimed the lives of 255 British soldiers and 655 Argentines, a fact that is not overlooked by 28-year-old Cpl Phil Horton from Keighley.

"I've been to Goose Green with the lads that I command, and there's something very sobering about us being here 28 years later.

"It's good for us to train on the same ground that the men fought and died on in 1982, and to appreciate just how tough it was for them.

"I lead a platoon of soldiers on daily patrols around the Islands. It's not that we think there's a real risk of an Argentine invasion, but we do know they have Special Forces trying to access the Islands.

"It's my job to make sure they don't make it ashore so that they can't stash kit or get information about our defences.

"To be fair I am really anxious about going out to Afghanistan, but the way I see it is if I don't do it someone else will have to.

"I miss everything about Yorkshire, but in particular I miss my wife obviously, and I miss Timmy Taylor's beer."

Despite the distance reminders of Yorkshire are everywhere, from the rugged moor-land and grazing sheep to the picturesque capital of Stanley, which is twinned with Whitby on the North Yorkshire coast.

Private Martin Wilks, 21, from Royston in South Yorkshire, managed to take a couple of hours out of training to visit the Islands' capital city.

"It's so surreal being here, it's more like a tiny seaside village in England than a capital city, but the locals are really nice.

"You do have to remind yourself how far away from home you are, and there are certain things that I really miss like the smell of my mum's washing and going out with my mates."

The piece ends pointing out that next year the environment will be very different for the infantry soldiers of the Yorkshire Regiment's A Company. The date for their deployment to Afghanistan is yet to be confirmed, but when the announcement is made they'll be ready, thanks to their battlefield training 8,000 miles from the UK in the Falkland Islands.

Monday, March 29th 2010 - 04:38 UTC

Malvinas Families Commission founder resigns: he was Army spy (1981/1983)

Hector Cisneros has resigned as president of the Malvinas Families Commission three days after it was revealed by a Buenos Aires newspaper ("Critica") that he had worked for Argentine military intelligence during the last dictatorship (1976/1983).

Hector Cisneros name appeared in a list of "agents" Hector Cisneros name appeared in a list of "agents"

The Malvinas Families Commission formalized his resignation, and replacement, which had been decided last Friday over the weekend. He was replaced as acting president by his deputy Delmiara del Cao.

The name of Cisneros surfaced in a list of 4.300 agents, civilians and military that worked for the notorious Batallion 601, the Argentine Army's intelligence branch, and which was

declassified last year. According to the documents Cisneros worked from 1981 to 1983 as head of support and data processing, with the specific task of classifying reports collected by different agents.

While working for the Army he founded the Families Commission of the fallen in Malvinas, three months after the June 1982 defeat of the Argentine troops by the British Task Force sent to recover the Falklands by then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

The NGO commission took the task of organizing the several next of kin trips to the Darwin Cemetery in Falklands where the remains of Argentine soldiers killed during the fighting with the British were laid to rest.

Malvinas veterans claim Cisneros was always against searching for the truth and human rights violations committed by Argentine officers during the conflict.

"He was always against investigating human rights violations linked to Malvinas and against DNA tests to identify the bodies buried in the Argentine cemetery in Darwin", said veteran Ernesto Alonso, quoted by the Argentine press.

Each Argentine grave in Darwin has a white cross and a plaque which reads, "Argentine soldier, only known to God".

However, on confirming the resignation of Cisneros, the Malvinas Families Commission said that the decision for the remains to stay in Darwin "was a unanimous decision from the fallen in Malvinas next of kin", adding that there are "no unidentified among the fallen, they all have been thoroughly identified".

Furthermore, "genetic probes have been rejected by relatives because they would be senseless and a repeat of unnecessary sufferings".

According to the Buenos Aires press the fact that the name of Cisneros was released came as a surprise since the former president of the Malvinas Families commission was

considered a "Kirchnerite", and as such was often pictured next to President Cristina Kirchner.

The Argentine press also anticipates that making public a list of former intelligence service agents (even from the time of the last dictatorship) could entail further surprises, since several rules were broken, most important "disclosing names".

Apparently "former spies" claim the 4.300 name list was "white-washed" so many of the deleted names could "unexpectedly" surface as the controversy advances. Besides, defence issue reporters say the list was made with names delivered, on request from the Argentine Defence ministry, by the Army and Air Force, but the Navy still has to comply with the instructions.

Tuesday, March 30th 2010 - 22:42 UTC

Mrs. Kirchner vows to lead "profound, cultural, diplomatic battle" to regain Malvinas

Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner at the opening Tuesday of a photographic exhibition honouring the Malvinas women vowed before to lead "a profound, cultural, diplomatic and political battle on every front," and to make use of "every resource made available by international law to regain the Malvinas Islands sovereignty."

CFK at the opening of the photographic exhibition honouring Malvinas women

"This is in honour of all mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, girlfriends and all those who resigned the most precious asset in the battle for the defence of our national sovereignty on the Malvinas Islands" expressed the Argentine president.

Mrs. Kirchner then vowed to lead "a profound, cultural, diplomatic and political battle on every front", and to make use of "every resource made available by international law to regain the Malvinas Islands sovereignty."

She then reaffirmed that "reclaiming the Islands" is an Argentine right and called the United Kingdom's intentions to keep its sovereignty over the Islands from 14 thousand kilometres away "downright colonialism."

The President then pointed to a photograph showing the Malvinas women located next to one portraying the Plaza de Mayo mothers, and explained that "there are invisible bonds uniting them. There's a connection among all those who are gone and everyone cries for that."

She then called for the population to remember the coming April 2 with "joy and optimism, since it is the best way to remember those who died for our country".

Before the official opening of the exhibition, Mrs Kirchner was distinguished with the "Malvinas-South American Union Distinction Honour" which was conferred by the Malvinas Families Commission.

"Argentine women did not want the war, because it's death, pain and suffering, but our boys taught us the lesson that it is worth while fighting for what belongs to us, and no matter how powerful the adversary, if on our side is the truth, reason and justice", said Delmira de Cao on making the presentation to Mrs Kirchner.

Mrs. Cao is the Malvinas Families Commission acting president, since last week Hector Cisneros was forced to resign when it was revealed by the Buenos Aires media that in the eighties he had worked for military intelligence.

"Another lesson is that the peoples are eternally grateful to those who are capable of assuming a collective struggle without measuring personal sacrifice, and this is why in such a special day that virtue prevails", added Mrs, Delmira de Cao.

She also thanked Mrs Kirchner for having facilitated the inauguration of the memorial at the Argentine cemetery in Darwin and for her long commitment to the Malvinas cause.

Mrs. Kirchner said the distinction was more “to the heart than to honour” and called to always have in mind “the fallen and their heroic example; not to cry for them but to remember them with the honour and glory they deserve”.

The ceremony took place this Tuesday in the Women of the Bicentennial room in the Government house. Interior Minister Florencio Randazzo and Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana, among others, were present.

APRIL

Thursday, April 1st 2010 - 05:53 UTC

Falkland Islands: Investors lose fortunes as oil shares plummet

LOCAL investors – reputedly one in ten of the population – saw the value of their oil shares plummet this week as Desire Petroleum confirmed media speculation that the first oil found by the Ocean Guardian rig was of poor quality.

Adam Cockwell: “I think it’s far too early in the campaign to be elated or upset”

The announcement came after more than 30 days of drilling on its Liz 14/19 well, 100km north of West Falkland, and stocks immediately nosedived as a result.

Desire Petroleum shares slumped by nearly 57 per cent, and shares in Rockhopper Exploration, which will be the next company to drill in the Falklands Northern Basin, also fell sharply.

Although relating to areas with different geology, shares in Falklands Oil and Gas fell 15.8 per cent and Borders and Southern dropped as much as 27 per cent.

According to the statement issued by Desire Petroleum Chairman Stephen Phipps, and its Chief Executive Officer Dr Ian Duncan, the well had reached a depth of 3,570 metres and logging was underway.

The report continued: "The primary Liz target was encountered at around 2,550 metres with indications of hydrocarbons while drilling. Subsequent logging operations have shown that oil may be present in thin intervals but that reservoir quality is poor.

"Wireline sampling is still to be carried out.

"Deeper gas shows have also been encountered while drilling, particularly below 3,400 metres, and these have still to be evaluated by wireline logging and sampling.

"Until the logging is complete and the results analysed it will not be possible to determine the significance of the hydrocarbons encountered and whether the well will need to be drilled deeper, suspended for testing or plugged and abandoned.

"Operations are expected to be completed later this week when a full announcement will be made."

Falklands investors greeted the news with a mixture of resignation and muted optimism that commercial quantities of oil might yet be found.

Rockhopper investor Laurie Butler said: "I'm not surprised they never found a lot of oil, not at all. I haven't got enough money in it to worry."

Jenny Luxton, who bought Desire shares when they were first floated in 1996, and Rockhopper shares about six years ago, said: "I don't have many shares. I'd like them to come up, so I have a little bit of spare cash, but if they don't I'm not losing a heck of a lot either.

"It would be jolly good for the Falklands if they did strike oil, though. I don't think we'd survive without."

Adam Cockwell, who invested in Rockhopper Exploration several months ago, said he was not particularly concerned: "I think it's far too early in the campaign to be elated or upset," he said.

"It's not entirely surprising the market reacts that way. It's the first hole, and we haven't even had any real information yet.

"It's a big loss for people, but equally in another couple of weeks it could go through the roof again.

"It's just a case of steady as she goes, I guess."

Those sentiments were echoed by FIG's Director of Mineral Resources, Phyl Rendell, who said yesterday that technically the drilling had gone well and would have yielded much useful information.

The rig will now go to Rockhopper Exploration and then to FOGL, giving Desire Petroleum two months to analyse data and refine their programme accordingly, before embarking on drilling their other prospects. (Penguin News)

Friday, April 2nd 2010 - 22:22 UTC

Mrs Kirchner blasts UN "double standards" on Falklands' resolutions

"Don't try to scare us with the ghost that we are going to take Malvinas militarily", said Argentine president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner at the main commemoration of the 28th anniversary of the Argentine troops landing in the Falkland Islands.

The Argentine president addresses Malvinas veterans The Argentine president addresses Malvinas veterans

Speaking on Friday from Ushuaia, capital of the Argentine province of Tierra del Fuego and the South Atlantic Islands, Mrs Kirchner said that Britain's sovereignty pretension over the Islands 14.000 kilometres away "is not sustainable by Law, geography or common sense". She added: "it is plain colonialism and evidence of the double standard of International law".

"You can't demand weaker countries, --for strategic reasons from developed countries--to abide international law and UN resolutions while one of them systematically violates them because they have a seat at the Security Council".

Mrs. Kirchner added that "we have the moral institutional and historic authority to demand respect for UN institutions, and claim that resolutions be complied with if we want to live in a civilized world and in peace".

The Argentine president then pointed her guns domestically and claimed there's a historic process of "de-malvinization", a subtle and intelligent strategy to convince Argentines to give up "what belongs to us because of history, geography and common sense".

At the ceremony which took place at the Islas Malvinas Plaza in the heart of Ushuaia, Mrs. Kirchner was accompanied by Defence Secretary Nilda Garré, Tierra del Fuego governor Fabiana Rios, the three commanders of the services and hundreds of veterans.

Meantime in Buenos Aires the extreme right picket leader Luis D'Elía together with other pro-Kirchner militants marched on to the British Embassy.

The march was peaceful and D'Elía during a brief intervention accused the "English pirates" of wanting to steal "our oil" but also blasted three opposition members of the Argentine congress for having accepted invitations from the Foreign Office.

However in spite of the bellicose attitude and his violent background D'Elía said that the solution to the Malvinas disputes is "political and peaceful".

"This is a moment of reflection, of prayers and profound love for the fallen and to demand our legitimate rights in Malvinas", said D'Elía.

He said that re-establishing dialogue was essential to again talk about sovereignty and quoted recent statements from Brazilian president Lula da Silva who allegedly said that "Malvinas is not an Argentine problem: it is now a problem of all Latinamerica".

Friday, April 2nd 2010 - 08:35 UTC

Argentina to see biggest anti-British protests for years

Britons have been warned to stay away from marches in Buenos Aires on Friday as thousands are expected to mass for Argentina's biggest anti-British protests in years.

The controversy surrounding plans to drill for oil in the waters surrounding the islands has stoked hostility in recent weeks.

Demonstrators will march on the British Embassy in the capital to mark the April 2 anniversary of the Argentina's brief occupation of the Falkland Islands during the 1982.

This year's memorial has been given extra impetus due to recent oil exploration off the islands' coastline undertaken by British companies, reigniting Argentina's historic claim to the 'Malvinas'.

The march has been organised by the Asociación Civil Combatientes en Malvinas and has the backing of several trade unions.

Marches in previous years have rallied only a few hundred people but organisers are predicting many thousands will take to the streets today to show their anger over the British exploration.

Organisers are demanding the complete block of the "pirate" oil platform Ocean Guardian, operated by the UK's Desire Petroleum and calling for a boycott of British companies within Argentina.

Two separate demonstrations will set off from different areas of Buenos Aires at 2pm today before marching towards the British Embassy in the city centre.

A British Embassy spokesperson wouldn't comment on the specific events organised for Friday but warned British nationals to stay away from all marches.

Javier Baliana, 48, an ex-infantry soldier, called Britain an "historic enemy" of Argentina. Sitting next to a flag proclaiming 'The Malvinas are Argentine', he said: "Recent events don't surprise me. I wouldn't expect anything less from the British who continue to exploit everything. They do what they want."

Earlier this week, Argentine President Cristina Kirchner talked of an endless fight to win back sovereignty of the sparsely populated archipelago.

The president, who will attending a memorial service in Ushuaia, southern Argentina, today, said: "The battle is going to be eternal but it is not going to be like in the past, with force.

"We're going to put up a cultural, political and diplomatic fight on all fronts and in all forums in defence of our heritage which is not just heritage but also the management of our resources."

Friday's protests are scheduled despite Desire Petroleum's announcement earlier this week that its initial explorations had revealed poor quality petroleum.

Desire is one of four British companies granted a license to drill for oil. The company is expected to give more detailed information on its finding by the end of the week.

Tensions between Argentina and Britain have reached new heights in recent months due to the exploration.

Argentina secured the backing of other South American countries recently over their Falklands claim and has also asked the UN to call the UK to talks.

Britain has insisted it will never discuss the sovereignty of the Falklands but is prepared to hold talks on oil exploration. By Ed Stocker - Buenos Aires - Telegraph.-

Friday, April 2nd 2010 - 00:48 UTC

Message from the Falkland Islands Government on the 28th Anniversary of the invasion by Argentina

Today we remember the events of 2 April 1982 which led to the deaths of over nine hundred people in the Falkland Islands over a period of 74 days.

For those personally involved in the war, and their families, today will bring back sad and painful memories.

In Britain, the Falkland Islands and in Argentina, the families of the fallen will be reflecting on the events of 1982. Two hundred and fifty five British servicemen, three Falkland Islanders as well as six hundred and forty nine Argentine servicemen lost their lives in the war. Many more were wounded, physically and mentally. Some will never recover.

For many years, Falkland Islanders have welcomed next of kin visits from both Britain and Argentina. Only last October, under the auspices of the Argentine Families Commission, three hundred and seventy five relatives visited the Falklands to rededicate the Argentine cemetery at Darwin. It is right and proper that these visits should continue.

Many veterans from both sides have also visited the Falkland Islands to ease the pain of that conflict. We welcome them and pay tribute to their courage.

Twenty eight years after the war, the Falkland Islands are a self-governing Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom with the inalienable right to determine our own future. It is appropriate that, on this day, we should re-emphasise our wish to seek peaceful co-operation with our neighbours as full participating members of the South Atlantic community, working with each other to ensure that never again will the tragedy of 1982 be repeated.

Those who made the supreme sacrifice on both sides would expect nothing less of us.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, Falkland Islands Government.-

Friday, April 2nd 2010 - 00:04 UTC

Desire Petroleum plc - Drilling Update

Desire Petroleum Plc (AIM:DES) the oil and gas exploration company, wholly focused on the North Falkland Basin, wishes to provide a further drilling update on the Liz 14/19-1 Exploration well, where wireline operations are continuing.

From the interpretation of the logs received to date, it appears that the deepest play type is still undrilled and Desire's intention is to drill around a further 200 metres to test this play subject to operational constraints.

Wireline logging and sampling have been completed on the lower section of the well, primarily below 3,400 metres where the deeper gas shows were encountered. Petrophysical interpretation indicates that gas pay has been penetrated but that the reservoir quality in this section is poor.

Wireline sampling and pressure recording has still to be carried out on the primary Liz target and a number of other zones where hydrocarbon shows were encountered.

Final completion of the well is expected late next week.

For further information please contact:

Desire Petroleum plc 020 7436 0423 020 7436 0423

Stephen Phipps, Chairman

Dr Ian Duncan, Chief Executive Officer

NB: This statement has been approved by Dr Ian Duncan of Desire Petroleum plc, who is a Fellow of the Geological Society, a member of the Petroleum Society of Great Britain and a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, with over thirty-five years experience in petroleum exploration and management.

Tuesday, April 20th 2010 - 21:11 UTC

"Argentina's environmental hypocrisy"

In its judgement on "Pulp mills on the River Uruguay (Argentina vs. Uruguay)", the International Court of Justice, (UN principal judicial organ) declared that Uruguay has not breached its substantive obligations for the protection of the environment provided by the Statute of the River Uruguay by authorizing the construction and commissioning of the Orion (Botnia) pulp mill.

Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk RP Bio Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk RP Bio

The Court notes that "the scope of the obligation to prevent pollution must be determined in light of the definition of pollution given in Article 40 of the 1975 Statute".

Article 40 defines pollution as "the direct or indirect introduction by man into the aquatic environment of substances or energy which has harmful effects".

The Court also notes that for the purposes of complying with obligations under the 1975 Statute and under general international law, the Parties are obliged, when planning activities which may be liable to cause trans-boundary harm, to carry out an environmental impact assessment, the content of which must be determined by each State within its domestic legislation or in the authorization process for the planned activity.

This means that "any decision on the actual location of such a plant along the River Uruguay should take into account the capacity of the waters of the river to receive, dilute and disperse discharges of effluent from a plant of this nature and scale".

The Court further observes that "the obligation to prevent pollution and protect and preserve the aquatic environment of the River Uruguay, laid down in the Statute and the exercise of due diligence implied in it, entail a careful consideration of the technology to be used by the industrial plant to be established".

On the basis of the documents submitted to it by the Parties the Court considers that "there is no evidence to support the claim of Argentina that the Orion (Botnia) mill is not BAT-compliant in terms of the discharges of effluent for each tonne of pulp produced".

Following a detailed examination of the Parties' arguments, the Court ultimately finds that "there is no conclusive evidence in the record to show that Uruguay has not acted with the requisite degree of due diligence or that the discharges of effluent from the Orion (Botnia) mill have had deleterious effects or caused harm to living resources or to the quality of the water or the ecological balance of the river since it started its operations in November 2007".

Argentina made its presentation before the International Court of Justice in May 2006. A year later (May 2007) MercoPress published a column by Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk R.P. Bio under the heading of "Argentina's Environmental Hypocrisy", which at the time caused an uproar.

Dr. Wayne Dwernychuk, R.P. Bio. is a senior environmental scientist with Hatfield Consultants in Canada and was a consultant for the IFC in its impact study on the Botnia mills.

Wednesday, April 21st 2010 - 17:24 UTC

Falklands' sovereignty: a bilateral issue between Argentina and UK, says Spain

Spain will not be supporting Argentina's Falkland Islands sovereignty claim during the coming European Union and Latinamerican summit to be held next May 18 in Madrid, according to Falklands Legislative Assembly Member Roger Edwards recently back from Brussels.

MLA Roger Edwards reports on his recent EU OCTs forum in Brussels
MLA Roger Edwards reports on his recent EU OCTs forum in Brussels

MLA Roger Edwards attended the Forum for Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) of the European Union in Brussels, from 23-26 March where he acted in representation of the Falklands.

During the forum the Spanish Government issued a press release stating that at the coming Latam/EU leaders' summit, the Spanish Government would not be supporting Argentina's sovereignty claim over the Islands, should Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner ask for it.

"The sovereignty of the Falkland Islands", the press release claimed, "was a matter for the British and Argentine Governments to decide without interference from other countries".

However MLA Edwards also admitted that support from other countries (OCTs) attending the forum for the Falklands' ongoing problems with Argentina "has not been realized".

"The other countries were not content with the proposal that we put forward and so we wrote another one asking for a statement of support for the Falkland Islands," he said. "Out of the 21 territories, I think we got seven votes in support.

"It's very difficult for some of them. Those that sit off the coast of Venezuela, for instance, because they have their own problems and difficulties and obviously don't want to rock the boat".

The week long forum brought together representatives from 27 European countries and 21 overseas territories.

With MLA Edwards were FIG's Senior Economic and Statistical Analyst Michael Poole and London Office representative Sukey Cameron.

Reference other issues addressed at the forum MLA Edwards said he was confident that by 2013 legislation favouring the Falklands' fishing industry would be implemented.

"Once enacted Falklands' fishing vessels would be able to land all their catch in Europe without being subject either to quotas, or to the necessity to have a certain percentage of the crew of European nationality", said MLA Edwards.

Currently this latter requirement is waived by means of an annual derogation. Development funding from the European Union over the years was another issue.

Now just finishing the ninth tranche of financial support, a tenth tranche of 4.1 million Euros has recently been awarded to be used in budget support for funding various developments within the Falklands.

MLA Edwards praised the efforts of Michael Poole in coming to grips with the detailed requirements of this award. Penguin News

Friday, April 23rd 2010 - 06:40 UTC

Whaling Commission unveils compromise proposal which includes Japan

The International Whaling Commission unveiled Thursday a draft proposal to bring all whaling operations under its full control and to strengthen and focus the work of the IWC on conservation issues including a compromise proposal which will cut Japan's annual Antarctic quota by three-quarters in five years.

Cristian Maquieira, Chair of the International Whaling Commission Cristian Maquieira, Chair of the International Whaling Commission

The 88 member governments of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) will have 60 days to review the plan before discussing it at their annual meeting in June where it could be changed or adopted. If adopted, the proposal for a 10-year peace plan keeps the moratorium on commercial whaling.

Importantly, the three countries that at present set their own catch limits (Japan, Norway, Iceland) will have agreed to IWC-set sustainable catch limits that are substantially below present levels as well as to a rigorous oversight and enforcement arrangement.

As proposed, several thousand less whales will be caught over the ten-year period than would have occurred if the present situation remained.

"If an agreement is reached this represents a great step forward in terms of the conservation of whales and the management of whaling. We are not there yet and much remains to be done but we truly wish this to be a consensus decision. It will be a major achievement if, despite some fundamental differences of views on whaling, our member countries can put these differences aside for a period to focus on ensuring the world has healthy whale stocks," said Cristian Maquieira, Chair of the International Whaling Commission.

"For the first time since the adoption of the commercial whaling moratorium, we will have strict, enforceable limits on all whaling operations. As a result, several thousand less whales will be killed over the period of the agreement. In addition, no other IWC countries will be permitted to start hunting whales during the period", he added.

"This proposal represents an historic step, a paradigm shift in how the Commission would operate," said IWC Vice-Chair Anthony Liverpool.

"Rather than the mistrust and confrontation that have led to little progress, we now have the opportunity to reconcile our differences and so strengthen actions related to our shared goal of maintaining healthy whale populations and recovering depleted stocks.

This consensus decision would represent a delicate balance of accommodations by all IWC members and establish a 10-year period of stability during which we can work to resolve our major long-term issues. We could put the focus where it belongs—on improving the conservation of whales and the management whaling".

But some conservation and animal welfare groups have already indicated opposition. "The fact that this proposal is even being discussed shows just how far out of touch the IWC is with modern values," said Claire Bass, manager of the Marine Mammal Programme at the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA).

"It is entirely missing the point that blasting conscious animals with exploding harpoons is grossly inhumane".

The initial reaction from the New Zealand Government was also negative arguing the cuts don't go far enough.

The NZ government says the proposal is not acceptable as the numbers of whales actually caught already fall short of the quota, meaning there will be no real reduction in whales killed. Greenpeace also says the IWC proposal is unacceptable.

Friday, April 23rd 2010 - 23:06 UTC

Falklands: Desire still upbeat on prospects

DESIRE Petroleum, the oil exploration company in which many Falkland Islanders are shareholders, has said it is hopeful of making a discovery, despite posting a £2.5 million pre-tax loss for the year ending December 31 2009.

The company still has a strong cash position, with some £57 million remaining of the £62 million raised to fund its oil drilling programme.

Share prices in Desire Petroleum, which had peaked earlier this year at 134p, plummeted after disappointing results from a first round of drilling. They currently stand at around 47p.

However, as well as locating some oil, there was an as yet unquantified and untested natural gas discovery at the Liz well.

Stephen Phipps, chairman of Desire, said: "It has been an exciting year for Desire and the company has made much progress in the period.

"Further detailed analysis on the Liz well is currently being carried out and we look forward to updating shareholders on the results when the analysis is completed within the next couple of months.

"We remain upbeat about the resource potential within the North Falkland Basin and look forward to recommencing drilling later this year."

As a cost-cutting measure, but also to allow them more time to consider the data from the first well before proceeding, Desire has subcontracted the Ocean Guardian rig, first to Rockhopper Exploration and later to FOGL and global exploration giant BHP Billiton. Penguin News.

Saturday, April 24th 2010 - 08:20 UTC

Chile/Argentina Agree on Military Cooperation and a Joint Force for UN Peace Tasks

Chile and Argentina agreed Friday an ample cooperation in military issues including the design and manufacturing of a joint aircraft for their respective air forces and the training of a rapid deployment force in support of United Nations peace missions.

Defence minister Ravinet in Buenos Aires Defence minister Ravinet in Buenos Aires

Chilean Defence Minister Jaime Ravinet visited his Argentine counterpart Nilda Garré to formalize the cooperation agreements that will begin with the creation of a joint commission for industrial cooperation between Chile's National Aeronautics Enterprise, ENAER, and Argentina National Airplanes Factory, FAA to manufacture a basic training aircraft to be flown by Air Force pilots from both countries.

A second understanding was reached regarding ship yards: Argentina's government-owned yard Tandanor will work to service Chilean Navy's yards, Asmar, clients that—because of the damages suffered during the February 27 earthquake—have been forced to join a long waiting list.

Chile's yards particularly those in Talcahuano suffered extensive damage during the tremors.

"It was also decided that together with Argentina we will cooperate in the recovery of the Chilean ship yards", said minister Ravinet.

Finally both countries reiterated their commitment to the recruiting and training of a combined joint peace force, Southern Cross, which is to be ready for deployment towards the end of the year.

The one thousand strong rapid deployment force will be ready in support of United Nations peace missions and of humanitarian tasks in Latinamerica.

Monday, April 26th 2010 - 05:51 UTC

Former Royal Navy Falklands' Patrols Sold to Bangladesh

Two former Royal Navy offshore patrol vessels built by Hall Russell in Aberdeen and which for years were on Falkland Islands service have been sold to Bangladesh's navy.

HMS Dumbarton Castle, out of service since 2005, sailing in Falklands' waters
HMS Dumbarton Castle, out of service since 2005, sailing in Falklands' waters

HMS Leeds Castle and HMS Dumbarton Castle entered service in 1982 and protected the fishing fleets and oil and gas fields in the North Sea before long-term duty guarding the Falkland Islands after the war. Ship repair yard A&P Tyne will overhaul the vessels and will train 66 Bangladeshi sailors to operate them.

The ships, fitted with flight decks capable of supporting Sea King helicopters, have been laid up in Portsmouth Naval Base since their retirement from service in 2005. They will be towed up to Tyneside next month to undergo a massive overhaul.

Delighted Managing director, Stewart Boak, said: "We have a tremendous amount of work to deliver over the next three months to ensure the two ships are completed and handed

over to the Bangladeshi Navy.” The A&P Group has been negotiating to clinch the contract for six months.

Mr Boak and colleague John Paine, A&P Group Technical Program Manager, flew out to Bangladesh to tie up the deal by signing the contract at a ceremony at the Naval headquarters in Dhaka.

Mr Boak, whose return was delayed several days due to the volcanic ash air crisis, said it was great to be bringing such a vital order back to Tyneside. He said: “It is a tribute to all the partners involved that we now have the opportunity to carry out the work in the North East, securing employment for up to 100 staff and subcontractors in the face of the recession.”

The project will include the overhaul of the vessels' main engines, gearboxes, shafts and motors, the installation of new diesel generators and deck cranes and an upgrade of the crew's accommodation. He said the yard—which has a workforce of 210 and boasts the largest dock on the east coast of England with two deep water berths—will be welcoming the ships and Bangladesh naval crew in May.

Monday, April 26th 2010 - 06:12 UTC

Malvinas and the Bicentennial: the Rule of Law Shadowed by the Logics of Power

In the Malvinas issue, the rule of the law has been shadowed by the logics of power, said Argentine ambassador before United Nations Jorge Arguello during the presentation Sunday of a book titled “The Malvinas question in the Bicentennial”.

Argentina ambassador in UN, Jorge Arguello Argentina ambassador in UN, Jorge Arguello

“Great Britain makes full use of all its weight not only before Argentina in Malvinas, but also before the United Nations since it refuses to abide by the General Assembly mandate, that for decades has been demanding on both sides to resume sovereignty talks on the Islands”, said Arguello.

The presentation at the annual Book Fair in Buenos Aires became a political event given the attendance of Education Minister Alberto Sileoni, Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Victorio Taccetti, the chairman of the Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee and the compiler of the book, Agustín Romero.

"We must say it clearly that in the maximum forum of world diplomacy, many times it's not the logics of the rule of law but the logics of power that prevails".

The book includes essays from Defence Minister Nilda Garré, Foreign Affairs Minister Jorge Taiana, Education Minister Alberto Sileoni as well as Ambassador Arguello, members of Congress and academics.

"The book looks to reflect the plurality of ideas, suggestions, and political positions referred to the Malvinas question" said Jorge Arguello.

The compiling of the book was done under the guidance of the Malvinas Question Parliamentary Observatory that operates in the Argentine Congress with members of all political parties with representation in the Legislative.

"The Observatory is basically a reflection environment on an issue which is extremely sensitive for Argentine public opinion. It's a space where politics and academia can get together to promote debate on the issue, in a spirit of tolerance and respecting the different opinions".

"The voice of President Cristina Fernandez and from 32 other heads of state from Latinamerica and the Caribbean was heard loud and clear from Cancún, Mexico. But it was also clear the existence at United Nations of a double standard: one thing are the five members from the Security Council and something very different the remaining 187 countries", underlined Arguello.

"For the UN all countries are equal, and each has a vote. But as is often said some are more equal than others", he complained. "For Argentina, democratizing the UN necessarily

implies eliminating the category of permanent member with the capacity to veto", continued Arguello.

Minister Sileoni celebrated the launching of the book and said it was essential to transmit this feeling to future generations and "educate to build our national identity".

Finally Taccetti pointed out to the importance of considering the Malvinas as a "national cause", and emphasized the significant support that this cause has echoed, increasingly, in the international community.

Monday, April 26th 2010 - 19:59 UTC

Majority of Gibraltarians Consider the Role of The Governor Relevant

A majority of Gibraltarians considers that the role of the Governor is important/ relevant in today's Gibraltar. That is the conclusion of the recent poll carried out by the Gibraltar Chronicle.

Gov. Sir Alan Johns. The new Gib constitution substantially reduces the power of the Governor Gov. Sir Alan Johns. The new Gib constitution substantially reduces the power of the Governor

Of the 588 sample, 58% said 'yes' to the question: "Do you think the role of the Governor is important/relevant in today's Gibraltar?"

But 30% said 'no' and 12 % did not know.

The view comes at a time when the position and power of the Governor has been substantially reduced by the new Constitution which reversed the definition of powers such that these are defined as foreign affairs and defence/security, although the reserve powers are ultimately retained.

The poll shows that a majority of voters of different political trends—i.e. whichever party they would support in an election—take the view that the Governor's role remains relevant.

It is the supporters of the governing Gibraltar Social Democrats (GSD) that most reinforce this view: 78% saying the role is important/relevant and 20% saying it is not (the remainder being "don't knows").

For the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party (GSLP/Liberals) the breakdown is 54% yes, 37% no, 9% don't know.

For Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) supporters: 72% yes, 23% no, 5% don't know.

Out of those who answered 'don't know' (in terms of the party they would vote for): 42% yes, 31% no and 27% don't know.

Tuesday, April 27th 2010 - 05:36 UTC

Scientists Discover Deep-Ocean Current Moving Northward from Antarctica

Work in Japan and Australia has revealed that a deep-ocean current is carrying frigid water rapidly northward from Antarctica along the edge of a giant underwater plateau.

The current flows at depths well below 3,000 meters, with hit speeds greater than 700 meters per hour and carrying volumes as high as 30 million cubic meters per second. The current flows at depths well below 3,000 meters, with hit speeds greater than 700 meters per hour and carrying volumes as high as 30 million cubic meters per second.

Other research teams had previously identified a deep current along the eastern edge of the Kerguelen Plateau, a more than 2,200-kilometre-long rise some 3,000 kilometers south-west of Australia. But estimates of its speed, taken as "snapshots" by instruments deployed from research vessels, had been "all over the place", says Steve Rintoul, a

physical oceanographer at the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystem Cooperative Research Centre in Hobart, Australia, and a co-author of the new study.

Yasushi Fukamachi, an ocean scientist at Hokkaido University in Sapporo, Japan, led a team effort to determine the exact nature of the current. The researchers moored over 30 current and temperature recorders across its probable path and left these in place for two years. When they retrieved their instruments, the scientists discovered that the current, which flows at depths well below 3,000 meters, sometimes hit speeds greater than 700 meters per hour, carrying volumes as high as 30 million cubic meters per second.

No other deep current in the Southern Hemisphere is known to move that quickly. The current is formed by cold water sinking in the Ross Sea and off the coast of Adelie Land, on the Australian-facing side of Antarctica. Once in the abyss, the water flows eastward along the coast of Antarctica before hitting the Kerguelen Plateau. Then, just as the Gulf Stream hugs the eastern edge of North America, Coriolis force from Earth's rotation causes the Antarctic water to embrace the plateau's eastern flank. The result is a narrow, and so fast-moving, stream, about 50 kilometers wide.

This is significant because it represents a "fast lane" by which climatic and environmental changes affecting the Southern Ocean can propagate northward, says Alejandro Orsi, a physical oceanographer at Texas A & M University in College Station, who was not involved in the study. Proof that this is already occurring, he adds, can be seen from the fact that the deep waters near the Kerguelen Plateau already show "clear signs" of reduced salinity relating to changes in the rate of melting of Antarctic ice sheets.

Understanding such currents could help scientists to predict how the world will react to increasing levels of carbon dioxide, says Richard Alley, a geoscientist at Pennsylvania State University in University Park. To begin with, he says, if heat goes into warming the deep ocean rather than surface waters, it will have less effect on sea-level rise because cold water in the ocean's depths expands less than warm surface waters. Similarly, heat and carbon dioxide contained in deep-ocean currents are sequestered from the atmosphere until the water rises back the surface, many years later.

Similar flows in the North Atlantic account for the fact that Europe is warmer than comparable latitudes in Japan, Fukamachi says. But the currents could change. "We're not saying this could happen instantaneously, like the movie *The Day After Tomorrow*," Fukamachi says, "but understanding this kind of current is very important to understanding global climate."

Nature may recently have provided an opportunity to test our understanding of how changes in these processes work. In mid-February, a giant block of ice 78 kilometers long broke off the tongue of ice spilling into the sea from the Australian Antarctic Territory's Mertz Glacier. Previously, that tongue had blocked icebergs from collecting on its western side, creating an open area where winds blowing off the Antarctic interior could rapidly produce extremely cold water that would sink to the depths and feed the deep currents.

News reports hyped the event as a disaster that could radically affect global ocean circulation, but nobody knows what the effect will be, Rintoul says. "It's like a natural experiment. I think it will teach us a lot about the processes responsible for forming this dense water".

MAY

Saturday, May 1st 2010 - 00:59 UTC

Iceland Displeased with Whale Hunting Quota Threatens to Pull Out of IWC

Twelve member countries of the International Whaling Commission (IWC)—an 88-country organization created in 1946 to monitor the whaling industry—have proposed catch quotas for the next ten years for countries that hunt whales.

Conservation of whales remains a highly controversial issue
Conservation of whales remains a highly controversial issue

Currently, there is a moratorium on whale hunting, but Japan, Norway and Iceland continue to hunt in the Antarctic Ocean, through loopholes in the current law or by claiming to hunt for "scientific purposes." Iceland Fisheries Minister, Einar K. Gudfinsson

released this week a statement noting that his country is not satisfied by the quota proposal submitted by IWC's president, Chilean Cristian Maquiera.

Gudfinsson said Iceland will pull out of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) if the proposition is passed, meaning it would not be restricted to the rules or quotas of the organization and could hunt as much as it desired.

New Zealand and Mexico have also issued strong statements against the whaling quotas. The Chilean government, so far, has been quiet on the proposal. Previously, the Chilean government had promised to do what it could for the whales in the country's surrounding waters.

In 2008, President Michele Bachelet said "that means that Chile is committed to the whales and will do as much as we can—in Chile and in the world—to support the fight for the conservation of the whales and against their extinction."

The IWC touts the quotas as a way to be more open with all countries about whale hunting. Environmental organizations see the quotas as a step backwards in preserving endangered whale species. The IWC will meet again to discuss, change or accept the quotas at the end of June. By Laura French – Santiago Times

Monday, May 3rd 2010 - 08:15 UTC

Annual Antarctic Treaty Conference Opens Monday in Uruguay

Uruguay is hosting two Antarctic Treaty meetings which will officially be opened Monday May 3 in Punta del Este by Foreign Affairs minister Luís Almagro. Uruguayan authorities expect an attendance of over 350 foreign officials at the Thirty three Antarctic Treaty Consultative and the Thirteenth Committee on Environmental Protection meetings.

Climate change, tourism, Sea of the Law among the issues to be debated Climate change, tourism, Sea of the Law among the issues to be debated

According to the official release from the Uruguayan Antarctic Institute, delegates from the 48 Antarctic Treaty member countries, plus one guest and 16 international and inter-government organizations will be present during the event, which is scheduled to last until May 14.

The Consultative Meeting is the official deliberation forum of the Antarctic Treaty and holds annual meetings, last year in the United States and in 2011 in Argentina.

The meeting in Punta Del Este, Uruguay, is likely to be high level, as some hanging issues involve national interests. The Treaty internationalized and demilitarized the frozen continent for cooperative exploration and use. However it did not foresee the increasing and rival demands on the territory or the impact of tourism and the consequences of climate change are most visible in this pristine landscape.

Eleven countries have claimed sovereignty over slices of Antarctica to secure contiguous offshore oil, gas and mineral rights. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) confers on all coastal states sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting the natural resources of its continental shelf. In the Treaty—which was ratified on 23 Jun 1961 by 48 countries—Antarctica is defined as all land and ice shelves south of 60 degrees south latitude.

A new report shows that the ice shelves are shrinking leaving more sea bed to fight over. With dozens of claims before it covering both the Arctic and Antarctic, the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf has become swamped with work, and it could take decades for it to finish reviewing the rival claims.

The conference that begins Monday in Punta del Este will also continue to explore ways to protect the vulnerable Antarctic environment from increasing tourism.

More information: <http://www.atcm2010.gub.uy/>

Tuesday, May 4th 2010 - 04:26 UTC

Bolivia, Chile, Argentina and Peru Coordinate Mine Clearance Activities

Defence officials from Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Argentina will be participating in a high level meeting to coordinate efforts for the elimination of anti-personnel mines which still remain in border fields of the four countries involved.

The mines date back to the days of the Pinochet regime The mines date back to the days of the Pinochet regime

According to the Bolivian daily Cambio, the Bolivian Consul in Santiago de Chile, Walker San Miguel said the meeting is scheduled for next June under the auspices of United Nations. As part of that coordination effort, Bolivian Defence Minister Ruben Saavedra Soto recently visited Chile to visit on-field mine sweeping activities undertaken by the Chilean Army special groups.

Under the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty, over a hundred countries are obliged to mine clearance in their territories, including areas along borders. Chile is currently involved in mine clearance activities in the south of the country, close to the Argentine border. The explosives—both anti personnel and anti tank—date from the seventies, when the two neighbouring countries almost went to war over three disputed islands in the Beagle Channel, Tierra del Fuego.

Chile adhered to the Ottawa Treaty on de-mining in December 1997 and all the explosives planted during the regime of dictator Augusto Pinochet (1973/1990) begun to be cleared in 2005. "There has been a great advance on mine clearance along the Bolivian/Chilean border," said Bolivian diplomat San Miguel quoted by Cambio.

Only a few weeks ago the Chilean Army announced the clearance of 5,799 mines in the extreme south of the country, to the north of Tierra del Fuego, next to the so called Primera Angostura (First Narrow) of the Magellan Strait. The field task was under the command of Captain Christian Wheeler Damianovic, head of the Chilean Army Demining Unit, belonging to the Vth Division, Pudeto Regiment.

Operations continue at neighbouring areas to Primera Angostura, identified as Bahía Azul and Faro Méndez. The next demining task involves the Province of Ultima Esperanza,

particularly the road leading from Puerto Natales to the world famous Torres del Paine National Park, an area running parallel to the Argentine border.

Tuesday, May 4th 2010 - 19:53 UTC

Falklands' Stamps Commemorates Battle of Britain and 10 Spitfires Donation

A new stamp issue for the Falkland Islands and Ascension Island has been announced by Pobjoy Mint, commemorating the Battle of Britain and Churchill's "Few".

The historic and colourful stamp issue The historic and colourful stamp issue

The Falkland Islands have a special link with the Battle of Britain after a donation of ten Spitfires to the Royal Air Force (RAF) in October 1940. Over 114 days, from July 10 to October 31 1940, almost 3,000, brave young airmen from no less than 14 Allied countries—Churchill's "Few"—took to the skies to defend Britain from Nazi tyranny in the Battle of Britain, 544 did not return.

At the start of 2010, it was believed that there were only 90 of "the Few" remaining.

This stamp issue recognises the pilots and aircraft—not only of the RAF—but some of the other services and countries that were involved. Usually, it is only the Hurricane and Spitfire that are remembered as the aircraft that took part in the Battle, however pictured with this series are three of the others: the Boulton Paul Defiant (a night fighter), the Fairey Fulmar, and the Gloster Gladiator biplane.

The border of the sheet shows a solitary member of the Observer Corps on a rooftop of London, watching an air battle develop above his head, ready to report positions, heights, courses and speeds to Fighter Command who would then send the Fighters to intercept and attack the approaching enemy. The first day cover depicts Allied fighters closing to attack the invaders.

It is planned the stamp issue will be available to buy in Stanley's post office on May 7. Along with all recent stamps of Ascension Island, the Falklands and South Georgia, they

are also available from the Pobjoy Mint Stand 35, at the London 2010 Festival of Stamps from May 8 to 15.

More information: London 2010 - The Battle of Britain.-Penguin News

Wednesday, May 5th 2010 - 02:49 UTC

EU Wants to Reactivate Negotiations with Mercosur for Association Agreement

The European Commission (EC) has proposed to reactivate its negotiations with Mercosur, stagnant since 2004, with the objective of reaching an association agreement. In its weekly meeting, the EU executive decided to re-establish discussions with Mercosur since it considers "that an eventual pact could generate economic benefits for both parts," according to an EC communiqué.

EC president, José Manuel Durao Barroso: "we need to strengthen global economy" EC president, José Manuel Durao Barroso: "we need to strengthen global economy"

For the European Union (EU) Spanish presidency, an agreement with Mercosur is a priority. Spain seeks to boost the commitment to conclude a treaty in the near future with the Latin American bloc during the EU-Latin America and the Caribbean summit to be held in Madrid on May 17 and 18.

European Comission (EC) president, José Manuel Durão Barroso, declared that the reactivation of negotiations is an important opportunity: "Given the fact that we seek to strengthen the global economy after the crisis, a successful result could offer benefits in terms of employment and growth for both parts."

However, Barroso said this is just a beginning and that the EC will put conditions on the negotiations, among them those regarding intellectual property rights or those relating to the appellations of origin. Likewise, the EC will study the measures needed to ameliorate the "adverse impact" in sectors such as agriculture, which is the main point of discrepancy and a topic in which Mercosur asks for concessions from the 27 community countries.

More precisely, in the discussion within the EC there have been commissaries who have warned of the damage that an agreement could produce to European agriculture, such as the Interior Market Commissary, Frenchman Michel Barnier, and the Investigation Commissary, Irish-woman Máire Geoghegan-Quinn.

However, European Commissary of Commerce, Karel De Gucht, manifested in a communiqué that any agreement “should be ambitious and should increase the access to EU businesses that Mercosur nations have, including agriculture markets.” The EC calculates that for the EU, a pact would bring an annual economic benefit of 4.5 billion Euros in exports, and that Mercosur would obtain similar earnings.

The EU will pursue the liberation of trade in the greater part of the industrial products and in the services sector.

Thursday, May 6th 2010 - 12:08 UTC

Falklands: Sea Lion Exploration Well - 14/10-2 Oil Discovery

Rockhopper Exploration (LON:RKH), the North Falkland Islands Basin oil and gas exploration company, is pleased to announce that well 14/10-2 on the Sea Lion prospect has reached a depth of 2,744 metres. Initial data collected indicate that this well is an oil discovery, which would be the first in the North Falkland Basin.

Rockhopper Exploration (LON:RKH) has run a suite of wireline logs and logging data collected thus far indicate that the oil well has encountered a 150 metre gross interval of sand and shales. The data show that the well has 53 metres of net pay distributed in multiple pay zones, the thickest of which has a net pay of 25 metres. These pay zones have an average porosity of 19%.

The company now intends to collect additional logging information prior to making a decision whether to plug and abandon the well, or to suspend the well for future testing. It is also considering whether to drill an appraisal well on Sea Lion later during the current drilling campaign. Further information will be distributed in due course.

It remains the intention of the company to drill the Ernest prospect in the fourth slot of the overall Falklands drilling programme.

Samuel Moody, Managing Director, commented: "We are extremely excited by the results of this well. While we are presently acquiring additional data, current indications are that we have made the first oil discovery in the North Falkland Basin. We will now focus on analysing in more detail the data gathered from the well, in addition to continuing preparations for the drilling of our Ernest prospect later in the year."

Thursday, May 6th 2010 - 00:20 UTC

Greenpeace Condemns Spain's Fishing "Armada" for Plundering World Oceans

Spain's fishing fleet, Europe's largest, is using massive European Union (EU) subsidies to "plunder" the oceans of the world, environmental group Greenpeace charged this week.

Vigo port. (Pictura AFP) Vigo port. (Pictura AFP)

"Despite a collapse of European fish stocks and decades of promises to reduce capacity, Spain's industrial fishing has actually grown, fuelled by European Union (EU) subsidies and short-sighted Spanish policies," Greenpeace said in a report. The report was released as about 200 European government officials, industry professionals and NGO representatives met in the north western city of La Coruña to discuss reforms of the sector ahead of a ministerial conference in the city of Vigo.

It said some 400 Spanish vessels, representing more than half of the country's gross tonnage, fish outside the EU for at least 90% of their time. "Spain's fleet has grown into a voracious armada representing nearly a quarter of the entire EU fishing capacity," it said. The fleet is twice the size of Britain's and three times Italy's—the next biggest fishing nations—and its largest trawlers "can haul in 3,000 tonnes of tuna per trip, double the annual catch of some Pacific nations."

Spain "is now plundering waters as far away as Antarctica and Africa, using European taxpayers' money," Greenpeace said.

Between 2000 and 2006, the country received 46% of EU subsidies to the sector, ahead of Italy and France, which got 11 and nine per cent respectively, Greenpeace said. The bulk of EU fisheries subsidies went to the country's largest vessels, "instead of being used to support the much larger group of small-scale fishermen, generate employment or promote more environmentally-friendly fishing methods," it said.

The European Commission's official in charge of fisheries policy, Cesar Deben, warned at the conference in La Coruña that the status quo cannot be maintained. Within 10 or 15 years, "there will be a disastrous scenario, with the collapse of the sector and the risk of undermining the economies of entire regions," he said.

But representatives appeared divided over proposed reforms. Some countries, such as France and Ireland, expressed concerns over the use of transferable quotas, Deben said. He said a plan to boost aid to small-scale or inshore fishermen, whose work is more respectful of the environment, was also controversial as several states wanted to include small trawlers, which was unacceptable to the Commission. The conclusions are to be presented to the EU fisheries ministers in Vigo later this week.

As the conference was under way, Greenpeace activists hung a banner on the Tower of Hercules, an ancient Roman lighthouse near La Coruña, urging EU ministers to "Save Our Oceans". "If Europe wants fish tomorrow, Spain must stop over-fishing today," said Greenpeace oceans campaigner Farah Obaidullah. "Ministers gathering here should immediately take steps to reverse Spain's ocean destruction at this critical time". /MP

Thursday, May 6th 2010 - 19:23 UTC

Strong Argentine Reaction to Falklands' Rockhopper Oil Discovery Announcement

The Argentine government rejected British oil company Rockhopper Exploration's earlier announcement regarding the finding of oil in Falklands/Malvinas Islands, warning that the

government "will take the necessary actions to avoid Great Britain from taking illegal possession of Argentina's non-renewable resources."

Jorge Taiana, Argentine Foreign Affairs minister
Jorge Taiana, Argentine Foreign Affairs minister

In a statement released by the Argentine Foreign Ministry, the government warned "Argentina will continue condemning this British illegal action before the international courts."

British oil company Rockhopper Exploration (LON:RKH) earlier said it believed it had made an oil discovery in Falklands North basin, the first oil find of a controversial exploration program in the Falklands waters.

Saturday, May 8th 2010 - 01:23 UTC

Falklands' Rockhopper "High Quality Reservoir" Oil Find Boosts Shares

Rockhopper Exploration (LON:RKH) oil discovery in the Falklands Islands is of "good" quality said on Friday a release from the company. The announcement had a positive impact on shares of all Falklands' oil explorers.

Managing Director Samuel Moody promised a flow test for Sea Lion prospect.-

New data from the Sea Lion prospect confirmed "53 meters of net pay in multiple zones, with the thickest sand at about 25 meters of net pay and average porosity of 19 percent," said the company. "These are further encouraging results; the logs clearly indicate that we have encountered a high quality reservoir interval with very good porosity and permeability. This increases the likelihood that we will return to this well later during the campaign to carry out a flow test," said Managing Director Samuel Moody according to an official release from the company.

Data released Friday by Rockhopper Exploration (LON:RKH) means "the reservoir is good and shares are bound to rise on the back of this," said Richard Rose an oil analyst at Oriel

Securities Ltd. On Thursday, following the "discovery of oil" announcement, the company's shares ballooned 153%.

The oil exploration rig Ocean Guardian, contracted by Desire Petroleum (LON:DES) for the current round, spudded the 14/10-B well on 16 April on license PL032, which Rockhopper operates with 100% interest. The well was drilled to 2744m, and its oil shows make it the first oil find in the North Falkland Basin.

Rockhopper said it will now proceed with additional log analysis and collect fluid samples and intends to run a liner to allow the well to be suspended for future testing. The company also confirmed it intends to drill its 100%-held Ernest prospect in the fourth slot of the overall Falklands Drilling program.

The "good quality" oil discovery follows Desire Petroleum's experience that at the end of March announced it had also discovered signs of hydrocarbons but "commercially non viable". The Liz prospect was sealed and abandoned. However, Desire is expected to drill a total of four wells in the North Falkland Basin before the end of the current round. Two other companies have licences, Borders & Southern Petroleum (LON:BOR) and BHP Billiton (NYSE:BHP) in association with Falkland Oil and Gas (LON:FOGL), and are also planning to drill with the Ocean Guardian rig.

Argentina, which disputes the Falklands/Malvinas Islands, rejected Thursday in a strongly worded statement the "illegal" UK exploration for hydrocarbons in the Islands' waters and anticipated it would address the issue at the coming Madrid Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union Summit (LAC-EU) on May 17/18. Argentina "will take the necessary actions to avoid Great Britain from taking illegal possession of Argentina's non-renewable resources," underlined the release.

Meantime in London, Rockhopper, following the Thursday 150% increase in share price to 93.50p, then settled back on profit taking. Other explorers in the region rose substantially but profit taking on those stocks seem to have taken hold Friday. Desire Petroleum, an old favourite amongst the Falkland's explorers, rose 63% yesterday to 61.5p but was down 3.5p to 58p; Falkland Oil and Gas up 14% Thursday was down 11p (-7%) to 145.50p and

Borders and Southern Petroleum up 20%, was down Friday 1.75p to 52.25p.

Saturday, May 8th 2010 - 06:36 UTC

Tories and Lib Dems Hold Coalition Talks; Agree PM Brown Should Walk Down

Conservative leader David Cameron has reached out to the Liberal Democrats in an effort to form a government after the UK general election resulted in a hung parliament. The Tory leader, whose party won most seats but was short of a majority, said he wanted to make a "big open and comprehensive offer" to the Lib Dems.

Mr Brown had "lost his mandate to govern", says Cameron
Mr Brown had "lost his mandate to govern", says Cameron

BBC political editor Nick Robinson said it could include Lib Dems in cabinet. Labour leader Gordon Brown has already stressed his party's "common ground" with the third biggest party.

Mr. David Cameron spoke to his Lib Dem counterpart Nick Clegg by phone on Friday afternoon in what has been described to the BBC as a "very constructive" conversation. However, there was little discussion of details.

Further talks are due on Friday evening, during a meeting involving the Conservatives' George Osborne, William Hague, Oliver Letwin and Mr. Cameron's chief of staff, Ed Lewellyn. Chris Huhne, Danny Alexander, Andrew Stunnell and David Laws will represent the Lib Dems.

With results from all 649 constituencies contested on 6 May now declared, the Tories have got 306 seats—or 307 including the previously Tory-held Thirsk and Malton, where the election was postponed after the death of a candidate. It leaves the party just short of the 326 needed for an outright majority.

Labour has finished with 258 MPs, down 91, the Lib Dems 57, down 5, and other parties 28. The Conservatives got 36.1% of votes (up 3.8%), Labour 29.1% (down 6.2%) and the Lib Dems 23% (up 1%).

Past practice under Britain's unwritten constitution sees the sitting prime minister in a hung parliament having the right to make the first attempt at forming a ruling coalition. But Mr. Cameron said Mr. Brown had "lost his mandate to govern" after the Conservatives won the most votes and the most seats. And Nick Clegg, leader of the third biggest party, the Lib Dems, said he believed the result gave the Tories the right to seek to govern first.

Mr. Cameron referred to the "outgoing Labour government" in his speech. But Mr. Brown said he was making his statement "as prime minister with a constitutional duty to seek to resolve the situation for the good of the country."

The Conservative leader said talks would begin with other parties. He said one option was to offer them reassurances about certain policy areas, then try to govern as a minority Conservative government. But he said it might be possible "to have stronger, more stable, more collaborative government than that."

"I want to make a big, open and comprehensive offer to the Liberal Democrats. I want us to work together in tackling our country's big and urgent problems—the debt crisis, our deep social problems and our broken political system," he said.

While there were policy disagreements between the Tories and Lib Dems—including on the European Union and defence—there were also "many areas of common ground." The Conservatives agreed with the Lib Dem on ideas such as a "pupil premium" in schools, a low-carbon economy, tax reform and shared opposition to Labour's ID cards scheme.

But he did not pledge a referendum on changing the voting system—a key concern of the Lib Dems—instead offering an all party committee of inquiry on political and electoral reform. "I think we have a strong basis for a strong government. Inevitably the negotiations we're about to start will involve compromise. That is what working together in the national interest means," Mr. Cameron said.

Monday, May 10th 2010 - 03:36 UTC

Falklands Attends Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference

Legislative Assembly member Sharon Halford is attending the annual British Islands and Mediterranean Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in the Isle of Man which opens Monday until May 14.

Legislative Assembly member Sharon Halford
Legislative Assembly member Sharon Halford

The theme of the conference is "Technology and Democracy: Successes and Challenges". This is Ms. Sharon Halford's second visit to the Isle of Man this year. Ms. Halford said: "Hopefully I will gain an insight into how we could better communicate with our constituents and also other bodies worldwide."

The Conference will be addressed in plenary session by expert speakers on three aspects of the theme:

1. The possibilities for democracy created by new technologies including, in particular, recent developments in information technology.
2. The challenges faced by Governments wishing to exploit new technologies when running large-scale projects.
3. The challenges presented by information technologies in terms of protecting important rights and freedoms such as the right to privacy.

Following each speaker session, delegates will join breakout groups to share their thoughts and experiences on each topic, after which a representative of each breakout group will report back to the plenary.

Monday, May 10th 2010 - 20:38 UTC

Falklands Government to Take Stronger Stance at UN Meeting in June

The Falkland Islands Government intend to take a, "stronger and more productive stance" at next month's UN meeting in New York of the United Nations 'Special Committee of 24' on decolonisation.

In preparation for the June meeting, in mid May, Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Emma Edwards will visit Noumea in New Caledonia to attend a seminar organised by the United Nations (UN) committee. The purpose of the seminar is 'an assessment of the decolonization process in today's world'.

The seminar aims to cover three main areas. First, the role of the Special Committee in facilitating the decolonisation of the remaining 'non-self-governing territories' will be examined. (The definition of non-self-governing territories includes all those British Overseas Territories which have permanent populations, such as the Falkland Islands, St. Helena and Gibraltar.)

Second, delegates will consider the perspectives of the Special Committee, the various 'administering powers' and 'territorial governments', as well as the views of experts and civil society on what the Committee itself describes as "the resolution of the remaining challenges".

Finally, the seminar will address the role of the United Nations system in providing developmental assistance to non-self-governing territories on the way forward.

The seminars are held annually but Falkland Islands Government does not always send a representative.

Miss Edwards stated, "This year, given the increasing prominence given to its territorial claims by Argentina, Members of Legislative Assembly felt that it was appropriate that the Falkland Islands Government's stance be aired in the international arena as much as possible. Attendance at the seminar will give the Falkland Islands a greater insight into what the aims of the Committee of 24 are, enabling us to take a stronger and more productive stance at next month's meeting in New York.

"It will also allow us to network with other territories in a similar position to ourselves, as well as meeting member countries of the Special Committee. It is important for the Falkland Islands to raise their profile on the international scene."

The Honourable Gavin Short, MLA will also attend the annual meeting of the Special Committee of 24 in New York in June. Falkland Islands Government representatives have taken the opportunity to speak directly to the United Nations and refute the Argentine sovereignty claim to the Falkland Islands every year since 1987. By Lisa Watson — SeAledPR — Stanley

Monday, May 10th 2010 - 18:44 UTC

**Falklands' Oil Discovery Announcement Has Rockhopper Shares up 32%
Monday**

Shares in Rockhopper Exploration (LON:RKH) soared by 32% on Monday morning, after the latest results of its Sea Lion oil discovery in the Falkland Islands suggested a good quality reservoir.

The oil exploration rig "Ocean Guardian" operating in Falklands waters The oil exploration rig "Ocean Guardian" operating in Falklands waters

The AIM-listed group said that after completing wire-line fluid and pressure testing at exploration well 14/10-2 located on the North Falkland Basin, all samples pointed towards moveable oil.

"All current indications are that the oil recovered is moveable which, if confirmed, would be further positive news. We will now wait for confirmation of the quality of the fluid as a result of the laboratory analysis," according to Rockhopper Exploration (LON:RKH) Managing Director Samuel Moody.

The group said that the ability of the sample chambers to fill rapidly was suggestive of a good quality reservoir with no evidence of any free water. Furthermore, pressure data

came up “good” with pressure readings indicating two separate oil columns and no water sands.

However, the Ocean Guardian rig is not equipped to analyze the fluid samples, the group said in a statement, so further testing in a laboratory will take place.

The news comes just five days after the group watched its shares more than double in value as it announced news of the first oil discovery in the North Falkland Basin. Rockhopper attracted investors with news that it had discovered 53 meters of net pay in the well, after drilling to a depth of 2,744 meters.

The company now intends to run a liner and suspend the well for further testing and told investors that operations are expected to take a further week to ten days to complete. Fellow companies operating in the region were also enjoying the fruits of Rockhopper's discovery, with the likes of Desire Petroleum (LON:DES) shooting up 40%, while Borders & Southern Petroleum (LON:BOR) shares climbed by 17%.

News of last week's discovery came as a relief to investors who were left reeling after Desire Petroleum drew a blank at its Liz well at the start of April, in which Rockhopper owns a 7.5% working interest.

Monday, May 10th 2010 - 03:24 UTC

Falklands' HMS Clyde Rescues Family from Sinking Iceberg Hit Yacht

A British family has been rescued by the Falkland Islands Protection Vessel in the south Atlantic after their yacht hit an iceberg and began to sink. Carl Lomas and Tracey Worth, who are also known as Lord and Lady Hollinsclough, and their two daughters were sailing 300 miles north-east of South Georgia when their 18-metre boat hit the low-lying iceberg.

HMS Clyde, is permanently deployed to the South Atlantic HMS Clyde, is permanently deployed to the South Atlantic

Falmouth Coastguard helped the Falkland Islands authorities locate the vessel Yacht Hollinsclough which had taken on water and suffered engine failure. In turn, the HMS Clyde, 200 miles away, was alerted and reached the family five hours later. The family is now safely in the Falklands, although they were forced to abandon their yacht. The vessel is expected to sink.

The couple is understood to have left Britain over five years ago, with their teenage daughters Caitland and Morgause joining them during school holidays. Steven Gill, a fellow sailor who met the couple on their travels described them as "extremely competent sailors" with an "extremely well equipped" yacht. "No expense had been spared in the upkeep," he said.

The coastguard was alerted to the family's predicament on Friday evening after their emergency radio beacon was activated. Their position was pinpointed as 285 miles north-east of South Georgia and the Falmouth team contacted the Falkland Islands, where authorities coordinated the incident in liaison with teams at Falmouth and Kinloss.

The South Georgia newsletter reports the visit to the Island of the family Yacht Hollingsclough. According to the March edition South Georgia postal Officer Ruth Fraser and Doctor Susan Woodward were both Brownies and Girl Guides when they were younger and were glad to show sisters Caitland & Morgause Lomas around.

The sisters were also hosted aboard both the visiting RFA Waver Ruler and HMS York.

Caitland wrote a piece on a football match played in the Island between HMS York and Grytviken International FC, with Lady Hollinsclough acting as referee. You can read all the details of the match and "tea and biscuits" at half time in www.sgisland.org.

The family is now en route to the Falklands aboard the Clyde, which is expected to arrive Stanley by Wednesday or Thursday.

Tuesday, May 11th 2010 - 21:48 UTC

PM Cameron Ends 13 Years of Labour Rule; First Coalition Government in 70 Years

Conservative leader David Cameron became on Tuesday the new UK prime minister after the resignation of Gordon Brown. Mr Cameron, 43, entered 10 Downing Street after travelling to Buckingham Palace to formally accept the Queen's request to form the next government.

Difficult decisions ahead says Cameron in his first speech on the steps of Downing Street
Difficult decisions ahead says Cameron in his first speech on the steps of Downing Street

He said he aimed to form a "proper and full coalition" with the Lib Dems to provide "strong, stable government". His party won the most seats in the general election last week, but not an overall majority.

In a speech outside his new Downing Street home, David Cameron said he and Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg would "put aside party differences and work hard for the common good and the national interest." He paid tribute to outgoing Prime Minister Gordon Brown for his long years of public service and pledged to tackle Britain's "pressing problems"—the deficit, social problems and to "rebuild trust in our political system".

Mr. Cameron's arrival in Downing Street marks the end of 13 years of Labour rule and sees the first coalition government in the UK in 70 years. It is also the first Liberal Democrat and Conservative power-sharing deal at Westminster in history. Mr. Cameron is the youngest prime minister since 1812—six months younger than Tony Blair when he entered Downing Street in 1997—and the first Old Etonian to hold the office since the early 1960s.

US President Barack Obama was the first foreign leader to congratulate Mr. Cameron in a brief telephone call.

Mr. Cameron has begun the work of appointing his first cabinet—with George Osborne confirmed as Chancellor and William Hague as Foreign Secretary. There are expected to

be top jobs for Lib Dems in the new coalition, with speculation that their party leader, Nick Clegg, will be the Deputy Prime Minister.

In his speech on the steps of Downing Street, Mr. Cameron eschewed the high flown rhetoric or even poetry favoured by some of his predecessors. Instead he stressed there would be "difficult decisions" but said he wanted to take people through them to reach "better times ahead".

He said he aimed to "help build a more responsible society here in Britain [...] Those who can, should and those who can't, we will always help. I want to make sure that my government always looks after the elderly, the frail, and the poorest in our country. We must take everyone through with us on some of the difficult decisions we have ahead. I came into politics because I love this country, I think it's best days still lie ahead and I believe deeply in public service."

"I think the service our country needs right now is to face up to our big challenges, to confront our problems, take difficult decisions, lead people through those decisions, so that together we can reach better times ahead."

The Conservatives have been in days of negotiations with the Lib Dems—who were also negotiating with Labour—after the UK election resulted in a hung parliament. Mr. Clegg must get the support of a majority of his MPs and his party's ruling body, the federal executive, before he can enter into a coalition.

Earlier, the Lib Dems said talks with Labour had failed because "the Labour Party never took seriously the prospects of forming a progressive, reforming government." A spokesman said key members of the Labour team "gave every impression of wanting the process to fail" and the party had made "no attempt at all" to agree a common approach on issues like schools funding and tax reform.

"Certain key Labour cabinet ministers were determined to undermine any agreement by holding out on policy issues and suggesting that Labour would not deliver on proportional

representation and might not marshal the votes to secure even the most modest form of electoral reform," he said.

However, Labour's Lord Mandelson told the BBC they had been "up for" a deal, but the Lib Dems had "created so many barriers and obstacles that perhaps they thought their interests lay on the Tory side, on the Conservative side, rather than the progressive side."

After it became clear the talks had failed, Mr. Brown tendered his resignation and said he wished the next prime minister well. In an emotional resignation statement in Downing Street, Mr. Brown thanked his staff, his wife Sarah and their children, who joined the couple as they left for Buckingham Palace.

Mr. Brown said it had been "a privilege to serve" adding: "I loved the job not for its prestige, its titles and its ceremony—which I do not love at all. No, I loved the job for its potential to make this country I love fairer, more tolerant, more green, more democratic, more prosperous and more just, truly a greater Britain."

He also paid tribute to the courage of the armed forces, adding: "I will never forget all those who have died in honour and whose families today live in grief." Later, he thanked Labour activists and MPs for all their efforts and told them Labour's general election performance was "my fault, and my fault alone."

The Lib Dem and Conservative teams met for hours of negotiations at the Cabinet Office on Tuesday—four days after the UK general election resulted in a hung parliament. The talks resumed after Lib Dem negotiators met a Labour team, which followed Mr. Brown's announcement on Monday that he would step down as Labour leader by September. But there were signs throughout the afternoon that the two parties—who together would still not command an overall majority in the House of Commons—would not reach a deal.

Education and career

David Cameron was born in 1966 and educated at Eton College before studying Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford, gaining a first class honors degree. Before becoming an MP for Witney since 2001, Mr. Cameron worked in business and government.

He worked as a Special Adviser first to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and then to the Home Secretary. Afterwards he spent seven years at UK media company, Carlton Communications, and served on the management Board. David Cameron was elected Leader of the Conservative Party in December 2005.

Tuesday, May 11th 2010 - 03:40 UTC

PM Brown Steps Down to Open Way for Labour Government with Lib Dems

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has announced he will step down as Labour leader by September, as his party opens formal talks with the Lib Dems about forming a government.

Foreign Secretary David Miliband; Schools Secretary Ed Balls potential candidates to replace Brown as leader Foreign Secretary David Miliband; Schools Secretary Ed Balls potential candidates to replace Brown as leader

Gordon Brown's continued presence in Downing Street was seen as harming Labour's chances of reaching a deal. Labour and the Tories are both trying to woo the Lib Dems with promises on electoral reform as the battle to run the country reaches its critical phase. No party won a Commons overall majority at the Thursday's general election.

The Tories—who won the most seats and votes—reacted to Mr. Brown's announcement that he was standing down as Labour leader by making a “final offer” to the Lib Dems of a referendum on changing the voting method to the Alternative Vote (AV) system. Labour is offering to put the AV system into law and then hold a referendum asking voters to approve it.

It is now understood the Lib Dems are seeking a full coalition with either Labour or the Conservatives. A senior Lib Dem source indicated that he expected a resolution to the process of shaping the new government to be reached within the next 24 hours, saying that tomorrow was “crunch time”. A meeting of the party's MPs continued beyond midnight and ended with no firm decisions taken, the BBC understands.

BBC political editor Nick Robinson said Mr. Brown's resignation was an audacious bid by Mr. Brown to keep Labour in power—and himself in power for a limited period—and that Tory MPs would be furious.

In his statement, Mr. Brown said Britain had a “parliamentary and not presidential system” and said there was a “progressive majority” of voters. He said if the national interest could be best served by a coalition between the Lib Dems and Labour he would “discharge that duty to form that government”.

But he added that no party had won an overall majority in the UK general election and, as Labour leader, he had to accept that as a judgement on him. “I therefore intend to ask the Labour Party to set in train the processes needed for its own leadership election. I would hope that it would be completed in time for the new leader to be in post by the time of the Labour Party conference [...] I will play no part in that contest; I will back no individual candidate.”

He has urged potential candidates, such as Foreign Secretary David Miliband and Schools Secretary Ed Balls, not to launch their campaigns yet. Harriet Harman has ruled herself out of the race, saying she wants to continue as deputy leader.

Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg had requested formal negotiations with Labour and it was “sensible and in the national interest” to respond positively to the request, Mr. Brown said. It emerged earlier that the Lib Dem negotiating team—who have held days of talks with the Conservatives—had also met senior Labour figures in private.

But it was understood that one of the stumbling blocks to any Labour-Lib Dem deal was Mr. Brown himself. Mr. Clegg said he was “very grateful to David Cameron and his negotiation team” and they had had “very constructive talks” and made a “great deal of progress”.

However, he said they had not “reached a comprehensive partnership agreement for a full Parliament” so far and it was the “responsible thing to do” to open negotiations with the Labour Party on the same basis, while continuing talks with the Tories. “Gordon Brown has

taken a difficult personal decision in the national interest," he said, "and I think without prejudice to the talks that will now happen between Labour and the Liberal Democrats, Gordon Brown's decision is an important element which could help ensure a smooth transition to the stable government that everyone deserves."

Tuesday, May 11th 2010 - 23:59 UTC

Chile Denies "Arms Race"; Praises Homologation Process with Argentina

Chilean Foreign Affairs Minister Alfredo Moreno Charme said he does not see an "arms race" in the continent and suggested following the Argentine–Chilean experience of "homologating military expenditure".

Alfredo Moreno, sees good relations with Bolivia and Peru Alfredo Moreno, sees good relations with Bolivia and Peru

"Chile currently has made all its military expenditure transparent and known to the Organization of American States, to the United Nations and I think all countries should follow along the same path", said Foreign Affairs Minister Alfredo Moreno.

The Chilean official said he offered the same proposal to his Peruvian counterpart Minister José García Belaúnde and he replied "it was interesting to keep talking on those terms about the issue". More specifically on the Chilean–Peruvian relation, Moreno said that both countries have expressed willingness "to take all the steps we consider convenient" so as to improve relations, but with no fixed date yet to retake regular bilateral meetings of foreign affairs and defence ministers.

Regarding Bolivia, Moreno said that the Bolivian consul in Chile, Walter San Miguel proposed that next July "we hold a meeting at deputy foreign affairs ministers level" to review the 13 points agenda and others that "could be added".

"We said we agreed to such an initiative. Relations between Chile and Bolivia are going probable through one of its best moments and this means both countries evaluate positively what is being done", added Moreno.

Additionally, Moreno said that President Sebastián Piñera's opinion of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and his administration "has not changed" and recalled that the following day to the electoral victory last January the two leaders had "a strong verbal exchange".

Wednesday, May 12th 2010 - 03:56 UTC

Falkland Islands Represented at London Festival of Stamps

The Falkland Islands is attending the 2010 International Stamp Exhibition, one of the highlights of the London Festival of Stamps—a year long celebration of stamps, stamp design and postal heritage which also marks the centenary of the accession of George V, the philatelist king.

Air Attachè's from USA, Poland, Canada and France join Moira Eccles (Postmaster Falklands) & Tim Underwood (Creative Direction) to present Falkland Islands and Ascension Islands London 2010 stamp issu Air Attachè's from USA, Poland, Canada and France join Moira Eccles (Postmaster Falklands) & Tim Underwood (Creative Direction) to present Falkland Islands and Ascension Islands London 2010 stamp issu

The 2010 International Stamp Exhibition contains approximately 150 stands manned by postal services and stamp dealers from around the world. Falklands' Postmaster Moira Eccles is representing the Falkland Islands and its long postal and stamps tradition.

In 1869, the Falkland Islands introduced a frank to show that postage had been paid. The first stamps were sold in Stanley in 1878. To mark the centenary of this event—and in acknowledgement of the growing popularity of Falklands' stamps worldwide—the Falkland Islands Government established its own Philatelic Bureau in 1978.

The Philatelic Bureau is responsible for the sale and production of Falkland Islands stamps, frequently commissioning art-work from local artists. From its inception it has operated an international mail order service.

During the 1980s, the sale of Falkland Islands stamps and philatelic material was one of the Government's largest earners. Whilst other revenues have grown, and this is no longer the case, Falkland Islands stamps remain extremely popular. The Postmaster has responsibility for the production and sale of stamps on behalf of the Government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, and the Bureau also acts as a sales agent for the British Antarctic Territory.

During the summer, tourists throng its offices with staff frequently visiting the larger cruise-ships to offer an 'on-board' philately service.

Last May 7, the Falkland Islands stamp issue commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain was released, to celebrate the achievements of 2,927 brave young airmen from no less than 14 allied countries who over 114 days from 10 July to 31 October 1940 took the skies to defend Britain from Nazi tyranny. Sadly, 544 did not return; at the start of 2010 it was believed that only 90 of 'the Few' (as Churchill named them) were still alive. Mrs. Eccles was delighted to be able to hold the official launch for the Battle of Britain stamp issue at the Royal Air Force Club in London.

The launch was attended by the Military Attaches of the USA, Poland, Canada, Australia and France, among others. Also present was Tim Underwood, managing director of Creative Direction, which manufactures stamps on behalf of the Falkland Islands Government.

The Falkland Islands are a United Kingdom overseas territory with a population that has risen from 1,800 in 1982 to around 2,500 in 2006 (the latest Census). Nearly 96% of the population is British and 79% of the population is aged 55 years and under.

The majority of young Islanders studying overseas chose to return to the Islands to live and work, contributing to its thriving private and public sectors.

Wednesday, May 12th 2010 - 18:58 UTC

Healthy Surplus in South Georgia Finances, Spurred by Fishing, Tourism and Stamps

The financial statements from the government of South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands ending December 2008 show a healthy surplus with fisheries licences, tourism and stamps, the three main sources of revenue.

According to the April edition of the South Georgia Newsletter the format of the financial statements accounts have changed from the previous cash basis to a more modern resource accounting basis. The new format includes fixed assets, debtors, stock and creditors. The accounts show a surplus of £1,271,000 for the year ending December 31st 2008 and a General Revenue Balance of £12,680,000.

Overall revenue for 2008 was just over £1 million more than the estimate at £5,974,355. By far largest income (69%) was from the sale of fishing licences at just over £4 million.

Tourism landing charges (16%) and customs and harbour dues raised more than £1.1 million, with the third most important specific economic activity for the Island being the sale of stamps and seignorage on coins, raising £141,000. The extra revenue was mainly from fishing licence revenue and landing charges.

Total expenditure was within the budget of £4.7 million. The greatest expenditure (66%), at nearly £3 million, was spent on fisheries management. Half a million was spent on the running costs of King Edward Point. After depreciation expenses, the other major expenses were the provision of medical services, and the environmental program.

Thursday, May 13th 2010 - 11:04 UTC

The New "British Foreign Policy" Promised by Secretary William Hague

The new British Foreign Secretary William Hague lost no time in declaring that he would run a "distinctively British foreign policy."

William Hague said the UK must have a "solid but not slavish" relation with the US
Hague said the UK must have a "solid but not slavish" relation with the US

However, this overtly nationalist approach is likely to be constrained by his Liberal Democrat coalition partners, who are far more European and internationally-minded. In one key area where the Liberal Democrats' influence might be felt is not in what does happen, but in what does not.

It is very hard to see them agreeing to some new international military operation—not that the Conservatives will necessarily press for one.

William Hague's words, on the steps of the Foreign Office on his first morning there, echoed what he said during the election campaign: that he had not waited in opposition for so long in order “to oversee the management of Britain's decline.”

He faces a big task in fulfilling this ambition. By his own admission, Britain will probably drop out of the top 10 world economies by 2015. His answer is for Britain to use its assets “to uphold our enlightened national interest.”

One immediate reform is the establishment of a National Security Council to bring together the main figures in the foreign policy, defence and security fields—rather like the American one—which met for the first time on Wednesday evening .

The British system, until now, has been far more informal. The Foreign Office has secured the role of National Security Adviser for one of its senior officials, Sir Peter Ricketts. A strategic defence review will be held and, in the meantime, defense spending will remain as it is.

But one decision from the previous government stands, one the Liberal Democrats opposed at the time: the upgrade of the Trident sea-based nuclear weapons system.

These are some foreign policy areas to watch:

Europe

The Eurosceptic Tories and the pro-EU Liberal Democrats seem to have arranged a truce. Their agreement says that Britain will be a “positive participant” in the EU. Neither will

support joining the Euro or the transfer of further powers (this is not such a big deal because after the Treaty of Lisbon no new proposals are likely for a long time). They have also agreed that if there is such a transfer, a British referendum will have to be held.

Mr. Hague promises to be “active and activist” in the EU external relations field. This is not hard for him because in foreign affairs, the EU acts very much as a collection of nation states. He (and the equally Eurosceptic new Defence Secretary Liam Fox) are not inclined to join in EU-wide undertakings, and are more open to bilateral ones, with France as the most likely partner. However, Mr. Hague has also said that international efforts in Bosnia—where the EU is active—must be stepped up.

As part of the EU truce, the Conservatives will drop their plan to seek an opt-out from some social legislation, especially the working time directive, but will seek to “limit (its) application.”

Relations with the US

Both President Barack Obama and Mr. Hague have used the phrase “special relationship,” but for how much longer? As long as Britain is fighting alongside the US in Afghanistan, neither side can afford to be dismissive but Mr. Hague also says that the UK will be “solid but not slavish.”

Afghanistan

The British role in the war will continue, though both parties in the coalition hope that conditions will allow for the start of a British withdrawal in the not-too-distant future. If they do not, there could be tensions.

Iran

Mr. Hague will be plunged immediately into the process of trying to get the UN Security Council to agree new sanctions. Britain will support this. The big potential question is what attitude the British government would adopt if the US and/or Israel attacked Iran's nuclear plants.

Middle East

The government will support a two-state solution and will call on Israel to freeze settlements and on Palestinians to end violence. Israel will watch Nick Clegg closely because he has been critical of Israel's actions in Gaza.

The wider world

Mr. Hague seems determined to develop closer ties with China, India, Brazil and others "where the economic action is," as he puts it. Whether these countries reciprocate beyond warm words remains to be seen. He is keen on the Commonwealth. He also says that "the door will be open to Russia."

On foreign aid, both parties support the target of giving 0.7% of national income in aid. So no change there.

Thursday, May 13th 2010 - 21:20 UTC

Falklands' Government Congratulates PM Cameron and New Secretaries

The Falkland Islands Government has congratulated the new British Prime Minister David Cameron, Foreign Secretary William Hague and Defence Secretary Liam Fox on their appointments.

The letters were signed by the Hon. Emma Edwards Member of Legislative Council (MLA) on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of the Falkland Islands as she travels through London on her way to New Caledonia to attend a seminar on de-colonisation organised by the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization.

The letters note, "The people of the Falkland Islands greatly appreciate the support that we have received from the Conservative Party over the years. As we continue with our economic development, we appreciate the robust stance on our sovereignty and our right to self-determination."

She said the Falkland Islands Government are delighted that Mr. William Hague and Mr. Liam Fox have already visited the Falklands, and look forward to working with them and their colleagues to the benefit of the British Government and the Falklands.

Miss Edwards has also sent a letter of appreciation on behalf of the Legislative Assembly to Gordon Brown, to thank him for the robust stance that he and his Government took on the rights of Falkland Islanders to self determination, his refusal to entertain any discussion of sovereignty, and the strong messages that he gave in relation to oil exploration around the Falklands. Members sent Mr. Brown and his family their very best wishes for the future.

Speaking to MercoPress, the Hon. Bill Luxton MLA said, "We are quite content that the new British Government will continue to support our rights to political self-determination and economic development just as previous British Governments have done."

On April 4 this year, David Cameron said in The Mail on Sunday "It is completely non-negotiable. The Falkland Islanders want to remain British and that is absolutely clear and we should have absolutely no truck with people who say otherwise. It's a very clear-cut case if you believe in self-determination. I was only 16 at the time but I remember thinking that the war was entirely justified. The Falkland Islands are now much better defended and they should always be well defended, in my view, so that you don't ever give any hint to the Argentinians that there is any prospect of their status changing."

Mr. Luxton confirmed that Sukey Cameron—the Falkland Islands Government Representative in London—"... will continue to make contact with Members of Parliament and brief them on Falklands issues as we always have done. There will be no change in the focus of our activities in London."-Lisa Watson – SeAledPR – Stanley

Friday, May 14th 2010 - 02:47 UTC

Punta Arenas Students on Three Week Learning Visit to the Falklands

Eight Chilean students and a lady teacher from Punta Areas public school system will be travelling on Saturday to the Falkland Islands for a three week English practice course.

Falklands School complex in Stanley Falklands School complex in Stanley

The air tickets and insurance policies were delivered to the travellers on Wednesday at the office of Punta Arenas Mayor, Vladimiro Mimica during a brief ceremony.

The trip is partly financed by LAN (NYSE:LFL), Punta Arenas Town Hall, the British Consulate and the Punta Arenas Municipal Corporation.

"This is a most encouraging experience and I want to congratulate you all on your coming venue which I'm sure you will make the most of it," said Mimica who added that the idea is that in following years "we can send a greater delegation of Punta Arenas 'ambassadors' to the Falkland Islands, with which we have been long linked."

The criteria for choosing the eight students was their academic performance, particularly in English language. According to Punta Arenas press the students will attend school regularly in the Falklands during three weeks where they will also be visiting some emblematic references of the Islands.

The following step is for a delegation of Falklands' students to spend time in Punta Arenas to polish their Spanish and get in touch with Chilean customs and way of life. Jorge Cabezas, head of Education in Punta Arenas revealed that in a near future the plan is to program visits by Chilean teachers to the Falklands.

Present at the ceremony were Paola Contardo, Lan airlines regional manager; Jorge Cabezas from the Education Department and the Municipal Corporation Secretary General Orlando Estefó Harambour.

Saturday, May 15th 2010 - 13:56 UTC

Antarctic Treaty Governments Progress on Climate Change and Marine Protected

Punta del Este, Uruguay. Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition welcomed steps at the 33rd Antarctic Treaty meeting to make climate change a major item on the agenda, and to keep momentum going on a network of Marine Protected Areas in the Southern Ocean.

Areas: Fail on Biological Prospecting, Polar Code and Tourism Areas: Fail on Biological Prospecting, Polar Code and Tourism

The governments endorsed thirty recommendations produced at a meeting of Antarctic climate experts held in Norway in April, and a Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) report on Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment, a synthesis of the latest climate science from Antarctica. They agreed to formally forward the report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for use in the global negotiations. Climate change will be a major work item at the Antarctic Treaty meeting next year.

"We welcome these important steps," said Tina Tin, Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) climate campaigner. "Climate research in Antarctica provides crucial information for the international community as it decides how to avoid dangerous climate change. The governments have started to take significant steps to lower the carbon footprint of their Antarctic research stations and logistics, but there is much more that can be done."

The governments endorsed development of a comprehensive and representative network of marine protected areas in the Southern Ocean, including the Ross Sea, by 2012. The importance of protecting the Ross Sea region was particularly highlighted in terms of its biodiversity and function as a climate change reference area and ecological refuge for many Southern Ocean species.

"Now that CCAMLR (Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources) has designated the South Orkneys MPA, the Antarctic Treaty System must now ensure that marine protection measures are harmonized without duplicating effort," said Rob Nicoll of WWF. "To achieve the 2012 target we need to see the Antarctic Treaty Parties working closely with CCAMLR including introducing new MPA proposals and bodies of work to enhance Southern Ocean Protection," added Sam Leiva of Greenpeace Chile.

ASOC criticized the failure of the governments to take any action on biological prospecting. SCAR introduced a report on the burgeoning biological prospecting taking place in

Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, which is going on with no oversight or control. "The governments are not complying with its 2005 Resolution requiring Parties to share all information about their own bioprospecting and patenting of Antarctic life forms," said Jim Barnes, ASOC Executive Director. "It is shocking that they couldn't even agree to continue intersessional work to prepare a regulatory framework for this rapidly emerging industry."

Another missed opportunity was development of the Polar Shipping Code. This is under negotiation at the International Maritime Organization (IMO). "The Antarctic Treaty Parties have failed to provide any concrete detail about the substance of the Code, which we hope will set higher standards for all vessels operating in the Arctic and Antarctic," said Sian Prior, ASOC's IMO representative.

The meeting also discussed Antarctic tourism. Rapid growth over the past decade has resulted in greater diversification of the industry and increasing use of large vessels carrying up to 3000 passengers, which are not built to sail in Antarctic waters, and new forms of land-based tourism. The industry has been affected by several recent incidents, including the sinking of the MS Explorer in November 2007. However, rather than taking action on the most pressing issues, the ATCM focused its attention primarily on yachts, a growing but small number of which visit the region each year. More info: www.atcm2010.gub.uy.-

Saturday, May 15th 2010 - 04:29 UTC

Gibraltar Celebrates: Hague and Fox "Could not be Better Choices"

Gibraltar Chief Minister Peter Caruana gave the warmest welcome the Rock could give to a new Foreign Secretary as he described William Hague, former Tory leader, as a "safe pair of hands" from Gibraltar's perspective.

Chief Minister Peter Caruana praised Hague's strong stand in self determination
Minister Peter Caruana praised Hague's strong stand in self determination

Peter Caruana said he will be "a good Foreign Secretary for Gibraltar" and described him as a friend. Mr. Caruana and William Hague have met regularly in Gibraltar and in London.

But Mr. Caruana confirmed to the Gibraltar Chronicle that a ministerial tripartite meeting is unlikely to take place in July although a non-ministerial in Gibraltar is a possibility by then. The ministerial meeting could be pushed to September once the new UK Government has settled in.

Mr. Hague, also well profiled as a TV personality in Britain, was a key figure in the Conservative campaign to win local votes at last year's elections to the European Parliament, in which Gibraltar forms part of the South West constituency.

Mr. Caruana highlights Mr. Hague's public support for the principle of self-determination in Gibraltar and said that this is not a Foreign Secretary who would give in to pressure over Gibraltar for advantages in Europe or the like.

Liam Fox—also a regular visitor from the Tory party to Gibraltar and Mr. Caruana—was pleased at his appointment as Defence Secretary, given Mr. Fox's robust and supportive stance on Gibraltar. He recognised that this will not immunise Gibraltar from the effects of MOD cuts, but he believed Mr. Fox's sympathy for Gibraltar would benefit The Rock. "They could not be better choices," he said.

Last June, Mr. Hague arrived in Gibraltar on his first ever visit with a clear message for the people of Gibraltar from David Cameron, the Conservative leader: "A Conservative government will always cherish the relationship with Gibraltar and will have nothing to do whatsoever with any shared sovereignty deal over Gibraltar."

Mr. Hague said then this is as true of the next Conservative government as it was of the last and this was felt very strongly. "That is our pledge."

In a Chronicle interview he said "I also believe we owe it to the people of Gibraltar to work with them to maximise rather than suppress their economic opportunities as well as standing up for their rights to be associated with Britain." He later said that "there will be no taking risks with Gibraltar."

According to the Gibraltar Chronicle, Europe will be a sensitive issue in the new coalition, given that many Conservatives are deeply opposed to greater ties with Europe, while the LibDems are strongly pro-European. Nick Clegg, the LibDem leader and new deputy prime minister, is a former member of the European Parliament who wants Britain to adopt the Euro currency—but only when the economic conditions are right.

Conservative leader David Cameron said in February Britain “would never join the euro” while he is prime minister.

For Gibraltar the appointment of the Minister for Europe, who specifically is tasked with the Rock's affairs, is an important appointment. A Europe Minister's interest in Gibraltar, positive or negative, can impact considerably.

Saturday, May 15th 2010 - 03:51 UTC

“Nick and I Don’t Talk about Gibraltar at Home”

Miriam González, the Spanish wife of recently appointed United Kingdom Deputy Prime Minister Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg, has captured the imagination of the media, especially in her native country.

Miriam González, Spanish wife of UK Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg
Miriam González, Spanish wife of UK Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg

According to a report in The Guardian, Spaniards wanted Nick Clegg to win the election so that his Spanish wife could move into N° 10. The British daily said that Miriam, a lawyer by profession, “has already dashed hopes she might be influential in negotiating the return to Spanish sovereignty of a piece of land that many Spaniards feel strongly about.”

“Nick and I don't talk about Gibraltar at home,” one Spanish newspaper quoted her saying.

The three young Clegg boys all have Spanish first names—Antonio, Alberto and Miguel. Miriam's father was a politician, senator and a former Partido Popular Mayor in the town of Olmedo near Valladolid.

Saturday, May 15th 2010 - 02:50 UTC

PM Cameron Reaffirms Falklands' Sovereignty and Supports Local Oil Industry

London reaffirmed British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands rejecting a call Friday from Argentine President Cristina Kirchner to new Prime Minister David Cameron to halt all oil exploration in the waters around the Falklands.

Cameron has no doubts the Falklands Islands Government is entitled to develop a hydrocarbons industry Cameron has no doubts the Falklands Islands Government is entitled to develop a hydrocarbons industry

A Foreign Office spokeswoman said: "We have no doubt about our sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The Falklands Islands Government is entitled to develop a hydrocarbons industry within its waters and it is longstanding UK government policy to support this."

Cristina Fernández de Kirchner called on Cameron to stop the oil exploration around the Islands in the South Atlantic "in favour of fruitful cooperation with my country."

According to the Argentine government, Mrs. Kirchner sent a letter to PM Cameron upon his appointment this week, wishing him success and reaffirming her government's willingness to resume negotiations on the Falklands' sovereignty.

"Recently, unilateral oil exploration activities have begun in the disputed area, which has been rejected by my government, and I hope it will be possible for you to stop these operations in favour of fruitful cooperation with my country," Mrs. Kirchner wrote in a note released Friday. The existence of the letter had not been made public by the new British government.

Argentina was outraged when an oil exploration round began in the Falkland Islands waters in late February. Tensions rose further on May 6 when British firm Rockhopper Exploration announced a first discovery of crude oil in a well off the islands.

Three other British oil companies are involved in the at least six month exploration round with the "Ocean Guardian" rig: Desire Petroleum (LON:DES), Borders & Southern Petroleum (LON:BOR) and Falkland Oil and Gas (LON:FOGL) in association with BHP Billiton (LON:BLT). All companies are operating with licences awarded by the government of the Falkland Islands.

Rockhopper Exploration (LON:RKH) confirmed the "discovery of oil" in the North Falkland basin at Sea Lion prospect after drilling a well of 2.744 metres.

Tuesday, May 18th 2010 - 00:40 UTC

HMS Portland on South Atlantic patrol after successful visit in Brazil

HMS Portland has taken up station in the British Forces South Atlantic Islands Joint Operations Area in the Falkland Islands. The Type 23 frigate took over from HMS York South Atlantic patrol duties.

The Type 23 frigate HMS Portland launched in 1999 The Type 23 frigate HMS Portland launched in 1999

Her last call was in Brazil where HMS Portland carried out a very successful official visit to Rio de Janeiro. As well as hosting numerous events, the stay in the Brazilian city also provided the Ship's Company with some well-earned downtime leading up to the handover with HMS York.

The ship hosted a lunch party for the British Ambassador to Brazil, Mr Alan Charlton and his guests. A very enjoyable cocktail party was held in the evening for a hundred guests consisting of local dignitaries and people from the Brazilian Defense and Military community. In the finest of naval traditions the assembled guests were treated to the first ceremonial sunset of the deployment.

The main reason for the visit was for HMS Portland to host a UK Trade & Investment sponsored Defense Industry Day. Twelve British companies were represented during the event, with stalls and displays set up in the ship's hangar.

The final day alongside saw a number of high ranking Brazilian Military and Defense officials visit the ship for the Defense Industry Day. The guests enjoyed tours of the ship, capability demonstrations and a working lunch on the flight deck. The event cemented the already good relations between the two countries and in addition helped secure some future contracts and British jobs.

Tuesday, May 18th 2010 - 00:16 UTC

European Commission launches discussions on fishing limits and sustainability

The European Commission published Monday its report launching discussions on fishing opportunities in EU waters in 2011. The document sets out how the Commission intends to act on the scientific advice it receives on the state of fish stocks when proposing catch limits and quotas for next year.

Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Commissioner Maria Damanaki
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Commissioner Maria Damanaki

Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Commissioner Maria Damanaki wants to bring EU fishing limits back to sustainable levels in 2011 – in line with the EU international commitments and recommendations from the authoritative science bodies which advice the Commission.

"I want to be clear that the quota levels set must respect all the European Union's commitments to sustainability, our commitments to nearby States, and the commitments we have made under the long-term plans" said Ms Damanaki.

Back in 2002, all the Member States of the European Union agreed that fish stocks should be exploited so that they could deliver the highest possible sustainable catches, and that

this should be done by 2015. There has been progress since then, with 11 stocks meeting the target in 2009 compared with only two in 2002. Yet most stocks are still over-fished.

The Commission draws up a report on fishing opportunities every year to explain to fishers and their industry what common rules will be used to set the quotas. Common rules are put in place to ensure that all fleets are treated equally and fairly.

The Commission will base itself on the following guiding principles when making proposals: environmental sustainability; stability in quotas as far as possible; implement long-term plans; meet international commitments; reduce over-fishing and rebuild stocks; use international consensus scientific advice; where there is uncertainty, use more caution.

The Commission relies on scientific advice from two international committees of experts when proposing fish quotas: the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, based in Copenhagen, and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries. This advice will be available in June/July.

The Commission will now send the report to the fishers, others concerned with the industry and Member States for consultation and examination. After taking account of their replies, the Commission may adapt the strategy before using it to propose the fishing possibilities for next year.

Catch limits for the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the North-East Atlantic (including the North Sea) are set annually by fisheries ministers upon proposals by the Commission to come out in the autumn. For fisheries targeting deep-sea species, they are fixed every two years. Fisheries in the Mediterranean are not managed through catch limits, except in the case of bluefin tuna.

Tuesday, May 18th 2010 - 12:21 UTC

Jeremy Browne: "No doubt about our sovereignty over the Falkland Islands"

Foreign Office Minister Jeremy Browne has said there "cannot be negotiation on sovereignty unless and until the Falkland Islanders so wish," following a statement by the Argentinean President.

Foreign Office Minister Jeremy Browne Foreign Office Minister Jeremy Browne

'I would like to ask, on behalf of my country and the countries of Latin America... please reopen our negotiations over the sovereignty of the Malvinas,' Ms Kirchner said in a speech at the opening ceremony of the Madrid summit.

Foreign Office Minister of State for Latin America, Jeremy Browne said:

"We have no doubt about our sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. The principle of self determination as set out in the UN charter applies. There cannot be negotiation on sovereignty unless and until the Falkland Islanders so wish.

"The Lisbon Treaty clearly reaffirms the EU position that the Falkland Islands is an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom.

"While we disagree with Argentina over the Falkland Islands, we have a close and productive relationship on a range of other issues, including on economic issues in the G20 and on climate change, sustainable development and counter-proliferation."
(FCO/PR)

Tuesday, May 18th 2010 - 15:39 UTC

HMS Scott back in Davenport after six months tour in Antarctica

The Royal Navy survey ship HMS Scott returned to Devonport this week after six months on deployment in the southern hemisphere. The deep-water survey ship deployed on 26 October 2009 replaced stricken HMS Endurance in Ice patrol duties.

HMS Scott completed operations in Antarctica HMS Scott completed operations in Antarctica

As well as carrying out her primary role of ocean surveying, the ship completed operations in Antarctica and the Atlantic. Her final port of call was Simon's Town in South Africa before heading home.

"It is good to be back home with our families. It has been a demanding yet hugely successful deployment and indeed shows that we have a truly flexible and global Royal Navy" said her Commanding Officer, Commander Gary Hesling.

In total HMS Scott steamed 31,275 miles (50,332km), issued 425 sea sickness tablets, served some 6,487 English breakfasts, and encountered sea temperatures between one and 31 degrees Celsius.

She will be back at sea to carry out survey operations in June after visiting Cardiff to commemorate Antarctic explorer Captain Scott's ill-fated journey to the South Pole.

HMS Scott can operate in a variety of environments, almost anywhere in the world, a fact that she proved by surveying between Antarctica and the equator.

HMS Scott is the Royal Navy's deep-water ocean survey vessel. She is the sixth largest vessel in the Royal Navy fleet, at 13,500 tons. Her size is a consequence of her unique sonar fit, capable of surveying the deepest oceans in continuous lines of up to 400 miles (644km) in length. She was commissioned in 1997.

According to the Royal Navy the ship operates crew rotation, with 52 onboard at any one time during a standard 35-day operational cycle. The ship therefore maximizes its operational availability, being at sea for 307 days a year.

Tuesday, May 18th 2010 - 21:58 UTC

Spanish maritime guidelines acknowledge British Gibraltar territorial waters

Spain's Popular Party opposition has complained after a Spanish ministry issued guidelines to maritime rescue services that appear to acknowledge British Gibraltar territorial waters.

Brid's eye view of Gibraltar Brid's eye view of Gibraltar

According to a report in El Mundo newspaper, the guidelines from the Ministry for Development set out patrol limits for Spain's Salvamento Marítimo and also pilotage services.

The guidelines state that rescue vessels should only sail beyond those boundaries in the event of a maritime accident or emergency.

According to El Mundo, the boundaries set in the waters around the Rock delineate a maritime border that is "very similar" to the waters claimed by Britain.

For the PP, this represents "a step back" in the "battle" over the waters, according to the party's general secretary in Andalucía, Antonio Sanz.

"Spain has always said that the only waters that belong to Gibraltar are those inside the port," he told reporters. Sanz said the Spanish government's attitude toward Gibraltar-related issues was "shameful".

Tuesday, May 18th 2010 - 22:02 UTC

Britain's stance on the Falklands a "mistake"; UN resolutions must be complied

Argentine president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner said that Britain's stance of declaring sovereignty over the Falklands/Malvinas sovereignty "non-negotiable" is a "mistake" dictated by "unilateral practices" that have created insecurity in the world.

Mrs. Kirchner blamed "unilateralism" for global insecurity Mrs. Kirchner blamed "unilateralism" for global insecurity

Speaking at the Madrid leaders' summit after the new Conservative-Lib.Dems coalition under Prime Minister David Cameron rejected for a second time in less than a week requests to negotiate the Falklands sovereignty, Mrs. Kirchner recalled that the "United Nations has repeatedly called on the two nations to establish a dialogue".

"The United Kingdom is a very important country among those belonging to the European Union and the United Nations as well, and they should be setting an example and listen to the UN resolutions" insisted Mrs Kirchner during a press conference.

She requested both nations to "respect the treaties, the international law and not to impose unilateral decisions". It is precisely multilateralism that is being appealed in all world forums, added the Argentine president.

"Unilateralism has given us too many bad moments and has created a far more insecure world regarding security and also much more uncertain when it comes to economics, and not to mention political uncertainty", insisted Mrs. Kirchner.

"To uphold sovereignty at a distance of 14.000 kilometres is even geographically quite difficult, and this not only means the appropriation of non renewable natural resources, which is in itself a very bad example for a world that claims dialogue, cooperation and abiding by international law".

Earlier in the day Mrs. Kirchner had called for new British PM Cameron to re-open talks on the sovereignty of the disputed Malvinas Islands.

"In the name of my country and greeting (Britain's) new prime minister, I would like to request that we please resume our negotiations on sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands," Mrs. Kirchner said at an EU-Latin America summit in Madrid.

"A double standard on the United Nations resolutions cannot be accepted," she stressed. "Please, I'm asking for negotiations to be resumed on the Malvinas British-Argentine administrations issue" she insisted.

"We have no doubt about our sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. There cannot be negotiation on sovereignty unless and until the Falklands Islanders so wish," Britain's Foreign Office Minister of State Jeremy Browne said in a statement in response to Mrs. Kirchner's comments.

Wednesday, May 19th 2010 - 05:50 UTC

Madrid summit committed to a "multi-polar" world; rejects protectionism

The European Union-Latin America-Caribbean leaders' summit wrapped up on Tuesday in Madrid with unanimous agreement about the need to develop new instruments of global governance for a multi-polar world and a commitment "to reject any form of protectionism".

Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, host of the summit
Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, host of the summit

The event brought together the heads of state and government of 60 countries in a conference dominated by the international economic crisis and the decision to move toward a strategic partnership that will help to combine efforts to encourage development and recovery.

Argentine President Cristina Kirchner emphasized as the event's main conclusion the confirmation that multilateralism is the "most suitable method to deal with not only financial problems, but also those of the political order".

"There was unanimity in understanding that multilateral entities date from the post-war (era) and from a world that today doesn't exist any more," she said.

Along the same lines, Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero said that at the meeting "we established that changing the financial model is indispensable".

"We will be more sovereign if we cooperate more among ourselves each day; we will obtain more freedom and development for our peoples if we open our borders without fear and with justice, if we understand that the development and inequalities of one country affect all countries in the international community," he said.

"We are committed to reject any form of protectionism" said the summit leaders in the final declaration. "We want to favour a multilateral open and non discriminatory trade system, based on rules" and which helps "to promote recovery from the economic crisis" plus "growth and development".

Regarding the Doha Round talks to further liberalize world trade, currently stalled, the EU/Latam summit reiterated its commitment to "a quick, ambitious and balanced conclusion".

The 60 countries represented at the Madrid summit have a combined population of more than 1 billion and account for half of the G-20, an organization of both rich and developing nations that is meant to take the lead in addressing the global economic crisis.

The president of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy, said that the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean must "do what is necessary" so that the great potential of their relationship may make itself felt.

He said that this group "will continue to remain below its potential if the two parties do not involve themselves on the political level. We must take advantage of the opportunities to convert ourselves into true strategic partners in a globalized world."

The Latin American governments insisted that European countries should not close their doors to immigrants.

"We are seeing with much concern the discriminatory way that in different countries, particularly the most developed, are dealing with immigrants", said Mrs Kirchner adding that "discriminatory practices and legislation against immigrants must be rejected".

The Madrid Summit ended with the adoption of a roadmap for the development of the strategic partnership, the launching of the Eurolat foundation and the approval of a new fund, provided initially with 125 million Euros to support infrastructure projects in Latin America.

Within the framework of the summit, the participants agreed to resume talks between the EU and Mercosur – Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay – on a trade accord, in the context of an association and cooperation agreement, an effort that has been bogged down since 2004.

In addition, the participants concluded an Association Accord with Central America, and on Wednesday a trade pact with Peru and Colombia will be signed.

The European and Latin American leaders also renewed their commitment to solidarity with Haiti after the Jan. 12 earthquake that left more than 200,000 dead and some 1.5 million people homeless.

Wednesday, May 19th 2010 - 17:20 UTC

Falklands' government thanks FCO minister Browne for strong support

The Falkland Islands Government (FIG) sent Wednesday a letter of congratulations to the new Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth, Jeremy Browne MP, who has responsibility for South America and the Overseas Territories.

FIG also thanked Mr. Browne for his strong stand in support of Falklands' interests.

Liberal MP Jeremy Browne Liberal MP Jeremy Browne

In the letter Members of the Falklands' Legislative Assembly said they looked forward to working with Mr. Browne for the mutual benefit of the British government and the Falkland Islands and hoped that his schedule would allow him to visit the Islands soon.

The letter also thanked Mr Browne for his strong statement of support following to Argentine President Cristina Kirchner's call for sovereignty negotiations at the opening session of the EU-Latin American summit in Madrid Tuesday.

In his statement, Mr Browne said: "We have no doubt about our sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. The principle of self determination as set out in the UN charter applies. There cannot be negotiation on sovereignty unless and until the Falkland Islanders so wish. The Lisbon Treaty clearly reaffirms the EU position that the Falkland Islands is an overseas territory of the United Kingdom."

The letter was signed by Member of the Legislative Assembly Spokesperson Bill Luxton.

Mr Luxton said that MLAs are very pleased at Mr Browne's appointment, as he has demonstrated an interest in Falklands' affairs for some time.

Mr Browne had met with Sukey Cameron, the Government's Representative in London, for a briefing meeting on issues of concern to Islanders.

According to the FCO website Jeremy Browne was appointed Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 14 May 2010. He has been the Member of Parliament for Taunton Deane since May 2005.

He has held various positions in the Liberal Democrat party, including as spokesman on Foreign Affairs and most recently as Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Mr. Browne has also been a member of the cross-party Home Affairs Committee.

Jeremy grew up in many different countries including Iran and Zimbabwe. He studied politics at Nottingham University and has worked in the private sector in finance and global communications.

Jeremy relaxes by watching Somerset play cricket at the County Ground and suffers the regular frustrations of being a Queens Park Rangers supporter.

Thursday, May 20th 2010 - 03:03 UTC

Falklands' oil discovery potential to be announced in next fifteen days

A British company which recently announced it had struck oil in Falkland Islands waters expects to provide initial estimates of the potential size of the discovery in the coming two weeks.

Rockhopper exploration announced it had struck oil on the North Falkland basin

Rockhopper Exploration, which operates in the North Falkland Basin said that physical samples extracted from well 14/10-2 on the Sea Lion prospect are currently en route by freight plane to the United Kingdom for their analysis.

Based on this timetable, Rockhopper "anticipates making a further update within the next 10-15 days at which point it expects to be able to provide initial estimates of the potential size of the discovery".

Precisely for that reason Rockhopper which is an oil and gas exploration company also announced that the well on the Sea Lion prospect has been successfully suspended for future testing. The well was drilled to a total depth of 2,744m and the duration of the rig hire was 35 days.

"I would like to thank the Company's staff, consultants and contractors for running such a professional and seamless operation during the drilling and suspension of our Sea Lion discovery" said Pierre Jungels, the company's executive chairman.

He added that the outcome "is great news in itself, but it also demonstrates that small operators, with the correct planning by the company, combined with the right support from outside experts and quality contractors, can work to the highest industry standards in terms of health, safety and respect for the environment whilst achieving excellent operational results. We can never be complacent in this regard and will seek to maintain this standard with the drilling of our Ernest prospect in the coming months".

Rockhopper was established in February 2004 and a 100% interest in four offshore production licences: PL023, PL024, PL032 and PL033 which cover approximately 3,800 sq. km. The exploration company has also farmed in to licences PL003 and PL004 which are operated by Desire Petroleum in which it holds a 7.5% working interest.

All licences have been granted by the Falkland Islands government.

Thursday, May 20th 2010 - 03:36 UTC

Spanish fishing companies could leave Patagonia: high costs and poor catches

Spanish fishing companies, mostly from Galicia, operating in Argentina Patagonia are seriously considering leaving the country because of standing labour unrest, lack of national and provincial fisheries policies, the end to export reimbursements and above all a dramatic drop in common hake and squid catches.

Norberto Yahuar: "I'll pay their air fares if they want to leave" Norberto Yahuar: "I'll pay their air fares if they want to leave"

However the only official Argentine government reaction has been from Fisheries Director Norberto Yahaur who was quoted saying that if the Galician companies want to leave, "they can do so; I'll buy them the airline tickets and accompany them to the airport".

According to Vigo's La Voz de Galicia, closely linked to the region's fishing industry, competing in Patagonia is extremely costly, almost 50% higher than in Buenos Aires. Besides the incentive policy for the companies to operate in Patagonia, the furthest from the Argentine capital the higher, after fifteen years has expired.

But in those fifteen years the regional government did not adopt any alternative policies to ensure that at the end of the period they would be cost competitive with Buenos Aires and Mar del Plata. Not only the Argentine government has eliminated tax reimbursements to

fisheries exports from Patagonia, they must now also contribute with a 10% levy. (Not as skimming as with the oil seed and cereals exports that can reach 35%).

Labour unrest because of unions' internal infighting in 2007 led to the torching of several Galician processing plants in Patagonia, and intimidation of the top staff from Galician fishing companies in Puerto Madryn "is quite common", reports La Voz de Galicia.

The last demand from the unions is that Spanish companies ensure sufficient hake and other resources to keep the fleet and the processing plants operating, which is hard to comply given the total allowable quotas system and even more discouraging the "dramatic fall in common hake and squid catches" experienced in the last few years. This year's squid season is considered the worst in the last twenty years.

"This season the jiggers came back with only 300 tons of squid, of which 100 of the catch was processed and the rest had to be sold whole because it was too small (SS). So we are virtually paralyzed, how can we then increase salaries or conditions?" a Spanish company director is quoted.

"And how in this country all is done by putting pressure, bullying, I guess we'll end signing a new contract which we can't honour, since even the prawn season has not been as near as good as we expected", he added.

Apparently some unions could be prepared to consider lower salaries but this is not sufficient since the longshoremen (different union) and port costs keep increasing and the federal government levy on sanitary and quality controls has been increased 400%, points out the article in La Voz de Galicia.

Finally the article warns that the Galician companies could move to "friendlier" ports but this would be dramatic for Patagonian ports and the thousands who depend from the fisheries industry.

Thursday, May 20th 2010 - 06:52 UTC

PM Cameron reaffirms support for Tripartite Forum Dialogue in Gibraltar

Newly appointed British Foreign Secretary William Hague has declared that the Conservative Government's position on the Gibraltar issue "is well known and has not changed."

British Foreign Secretary William Hague British Foreign Secretary William Hague

In a statement to the Spanish press, Mr Hague who was attending an EU-Latinamerican – Caribbean leaders' summit in Madrid, said that Prime Minister David Cameron will continue to support the Tripartite Forum of Dialogue between UK, Gibraltar and Spain.

Meanwhile Morocco's Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi, sensing the weakness of the Spanish government of President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero has reopened Rabat's long standing claim over the sovereignty of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

Speaking in the Moroccan parliament on Tuesday, Abbas el Fassi called on Spain to establish a process of dialogue with Morocco, "to end the occupation of the colonies of Ceuta and Melilla."

"We call on our Spanish friends to participate in dialogue with us to end the occupation of these two Moroccan cities as part of a framework that looks at the future", said the Moroccan minister.

Thursday, May 20th 2010 - 18:34 UTC

Argentina revives long time border dispute with Chile in Patagonian ice fields

Old wounds were reopened between Chile and Argentina this week: a long-time border dispute in the nations' southern Patagonia regions.

Senator Hernán Larraín: in some countries Chile is becoming the “scapegoat for local political problems” Senator Hernán Larraín: in some countries Chile is becoming the “scapegoat for local political problems”

The dispute is over 100 miles of contested land known as the Southern Icefields, which contain the second largest reserve of potable water in the world. The area was only one of two left with undetermined status during the demarcation of 24 disputed borders in 1990, and now remains the only contested area. Discussion regarding the land began again in 2006, when Argentina began creating maps to demarcate the icefields.

The debate’s resurgence was triggered by Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner announcement of the completion of the maps in September 2009. This prompted concerns within the Chilean government because of discrepancies between Chilean and Argentine maps.

While all signs point to trouble, members of Chile’s government have assured the public that the issue will be taken care of calmly.

“There is not a conflict,” said president of the Chilean Senate Jorge Pizarro. “There is a procedure that is being carried forward and is agreed on by both countries. It is a technical process that requires time and must be addressed jointly.”

Despite these reassurances, the Chilean Senate’s External Relations Committee called a hearing Wednesday to address the issue. During the meeting, the committee assessed the information coming out of Argentina to see if there is a possible threat of an unfavourable estimate of the border. The government’s main concern is that the agreement would primarily acknowledge Argentine claims, as happened in a dispute settled by an international tribunal in 1994.

Regrettably for the Chilean government, this dispute comes on the heels of Peruvian demands for the settlement of a coastal land dispute that has been under debate since the Pacific War more than 100 years ago.

Mrs Kirchner and Peruvian President Alan García were seen discussing the matter at the recent Europe-Latin America and Caribbean Conference in Madrid. Some Chilean senators have expressed their opinions that the timing of two controversies is more than a mere coincidence.

"It seems that, in some countries, Chile has changed into a scapegoat for local political problems," said Senator Hernán Larraín. "But we are not going to fall into that game."

For the time being, Chilean president Sebastián Piñera has not announced his policy on the two disputes. He has simply said that the government will be working to resolve them quickly.

"We are working on these two issues in a reasonable way, with evidence based in international law and international treaties, and with the willingness to solve these problems," Piñera told media recently. By Lindsay Fendt – Santiago Times.-

Thursday, May 20th 2010 - 13:59 UTC

UK rejects Argentine decision regarding Falklands' shipping

The United Kingdom presented Wednesday a note verbale firmly rejecting the Argentine government's recent decisions which imposes the request of official authorization for shipping to and from Argentina, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands.

Foreign Office has no doubt that Falklands' surrounding maritime areas are not Argentine jurisdictional waters Foreign Office has no doubt that Falklands' surrounding maritime areas are not Argentine jurisdictional waters

According to the text of the note presented to Argentina's Chargé D'affairs in London, UK considers that Argentine Presidential Decree 256/2010 and Disposition 14/2010 "are not complaint with International Law including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea".

Furthermore the UK in the note not only reaffirms sovereignty over the Falklands and South Atlantic islands, but has "no doubt that the surrounding maritime areas of the

Falkland Islands, and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands are not Argentine jurisdictional waters”.

Earlier this year to protest the current round of oil exploration in Falklands’ waters, the Argentine government decreed that all vessels sailing to and from Argentina, the Falklands, South Georgia and South Sandwich islands must request a previous authorization from the Argentine government. The implementation of the decree was left to the Argentine Coast Guard.

In the note London reminds the Argentine government that under International Law and the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea, “ships of all States enjoy the right of innocent passage through territorial waters and freedom of navigation in the waters beyond the territorial sea”.

With respect to the Straits of Magellan the UK note recalls that “the rights of international shipping to navigate these waters expeditiously and without obstacle are affirmed in the 1984 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Chile and Argentina with respect to the Straits of Magellan”.

Article 10 of the Treaty of Magellan further provides “The Argentine Republic undertakes to maintain, at any time and in whatever circumstances, the right of ships of all flags to navigate expeditiously and without obstacles through its jurisdictional waters to and from the Strait of Magellan”.

In diplomatic jargon a note verbale is described as a communication prepared in the third person and unsigned: less formal than a note but more formal than an aide-mémoire.

Friday, May 21st 2010 - 02:09 UTC

Fourth oil company confirms Falklands’ exploratory drilling early 2011

British oil exploration company Borders & Southern Petroleum (BOR) announced Thursday the launching of its exploration campaign in Falkland Islands waters at the start of next year.

The decision was taken after the AIM listed company raised 184 million US dollars.

Borders & Southern raised 184 million USD through a share placement in November
Borders & Southern raised 184 million USD through a share placement in November

Borders & Southern thus becomes the fourth company to announce exploration activities in the Falkland Islands following the current round launched by Desire Petroleum last February and which sent bells ringing when Rockhopper Exploration last month announced the discovery of oil in its Sea Lion prospect.

After spending much of 2009 concentrating on consolidating its prospect inventory and initiating well planning, BOR has chosen the Darwin and Stebbing wells at its "best first tests" of its acreage.

In the Thursday statement the company which is concentrated solely on the Falklands' Southern Basin, said it was focusing on securing a deep water rig to be active in the back end of 2010 and the first quarter of 2011.

"Although exploration risk can never be eliminated, we are particularly excited about drilling these prospects. The two prospects are completely independent of each other except that they require the same source rock to be working.

"We will therefore be learning as much as we can about the geology and petroleum systems of our acreage," the group said.

In order to fund its drilling campaign, Borders & Southern raised 184 million USD through a share placement in November at the same time as being granted a three-year extension to its first exploration phase of its production license.

The extension was granted on the basis that it committed to drilling one exploration well during that period.

"Our successful capital raise in November allows us to comfortably fund a drilling program on our exciting prospects in the South Falkland Basin. We continue to progress our understanding of the prospects with additional technical work but the principle focus is now on drilling" said Chairman Harry Dobson.

The news came as the group reported it had swung into profit of \$3,150,736 in 2009, compared to a loss of \$4,727,900 a year earlier.

Earnings per share rose to 1.54 cents versus a loss of 2.43 cents in 2008, while losses from operations narrowed to \$1.2 million from the previous \$1.3 million.

Borders & Southern, which has seen its shares rise over 11% in the last month alone on the back of renewed confidence in the Falkland Islands following Rockhopper's discovery on the North Falkland Basin, said it had witnessed a noticeable change in sentiment within the oil sector.

At the start of the year, the oil price was around 35 USD a barrel, with global exploration scaled back and company shares depressed. Fast forward a year and the price of oil more than doubled and was accompanied by a "change in appetite for exploration risk, including frontier exploration", it said.

Another company Falkland Oil and Gas Ltd in partnership with mining giant BHP Billiton is planning to drill the first well in the South Falkland Basin shortly.

Saturday, May 22nd 2010 - 00:28 UTC

UN Environment Program questions 'free market' policies for global fisheries

UN's top environment official has echoed warnings that commercial fishing could be destroyed within 50 years. "It is not a science fiction scenario. It is within the lifetime of a child born today," said Achim Steiner, head of the UN Environment Program (Unep).

Achim Steiner, head of the UN Environment Program (Unep). Achim Steiner, head of the UN Environment Program (Unep).

He made the remarks at a conference in New York previewing a new study on how to make the global economy more environmentally sustainable.

His colleague, Dr Pavan Sukhdev, said if current fishing practices continued “then we are in a situation where 30 or 40 years down the line we effectively are out of fish”.

A similar warning was first aired several years ago by an international team of researchers led by the ecologist Boris Worm, of Dalhousie University in Canada.

However, in more recent studies Dr Worm has noted that efforts to rein back over-fishing are having some success, so the 2050 prediction may have to be revised.

As for the UN's figures, Dr Steiner said the report, which is due to be released formally in October, had not yet gone through the final stages of the peer-review process. However, he said the UN felt “very confident on these elements already”.

A preview of the report says for fish stocks to be saved, up to 22 million jobs involved with fishing may have to be axed, and up to 13 million boats removed from service.

The UN calculates that 35 million people around the world are directly employed in fishing, and up to 500 million are indirectly employed through related industries.

However, the UN says its projected lay-offs are a worst-case scenario that would only be necessary if untargeted cuts were applied across the world.

Officials hope instead that western countries, whose heavily-subsidised industries are responsible for the bulk of the problem, would make the heaviest reductions. The authors estimate that annual subsidies to the fishing industry are currently worth 27 billion US dollars.

They suggest that much of this aid could be redirected into training and education programmes for the fishermen who would be affected by the cuts. They also suggest billions could be poured into "sustainable" fishing initiatives, such as Marine Protected Areas, where depleted fish species could recover.

Dr Steiner said continuing to subsidise the current "dead-end strategy" would also affect western consumers. He pointed to the case of bluefin tuna, which experts warn is being driven to the point of extinction through high demand.

Dr Steiner criticised the assumption that the free market would somehow "sort it out".

He said: "The market rewards those who will go out and go even further and get the last fish out the sea". Instead, the UN hopes the new study will prompt further international regulation.

The report suggests up to 220 billion dollars may be needed over 40 years to address the situation. However, it also estimates that this would help make the global fishing industry more effective and productive.

Saturday, May 22nd 2010 - 00:15 UTC

An estimated 26 million tons of fish illegally landed every year, warn researchers

Global measures to regulate the fishing industry lack the capability to tackle illegal catches, warn researchers. Writing in the journal Science, they say that up to 26 million tons of fish, worth an estimated 23 billion USD are landed illegally each year.

They add that a global monitoring and information sharing network is needed to crack down on illegal operators. Eighty percent of the world's fish stocks are deemed to be fully or overexploited.

"Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is a global problem and it needs a global answer," said co-author Kristin von Kistowski, a senior adviser to the Pew Environment Group, a US-based think tank.

"By creating this first comprehensive overview of port state performance, we have identified the weaknesses and problem in the system."

Under the UN's Convention on the Law of the Sea the control of a vessel's activities is the responsibility of the "flag state", the nation where the boat is registered.

But in November 2009, in an effort to strengthen measures to tackle IUU fishing, the UN approved a legally binding Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) that would require the "port state" to close its ports and ban the landing of fish of any vessel listed as being involved in illegal or unregulated activities.

To date, 15 nations and the EU have adopted the PSMA, but it needs 25 nations (the EU counts as one nation in this case) to ratify the agreement in order for it to take effect.

"All of the problems we encountered as we attempted to compile data - on the vessels, their movements and the actions taken by ports they visited - were telling in themselves as far as the weaknesses of the system are concerned," Dr von Kistowski told BBC News.

The research highlighted three key concerns: Insufficient vessel information - only one third of the vessels on the IUU list could be tracked over the six-year period reviewed by the study; Lack of compliance - port states only fulfilled their obligation in one out of four cases; Regional focus - IUU listed vessels simply landed their fish in ports where strict observance of the measures were not in place.

Chatham House, the London-based international affairs think tank, says IUU fishing has a number of "serious consequences".

It states that it “not only leads to depletion of fishing stocks, which can have serious knock-on effects on ecosystems, but it also deprives often poor communities of their livelihoods and can cost governments millions of dollars in lost revenues”.

“It is not enough to have something on paper,” Dr von Kistowski told BBC News.

“We saw that there was inadequate implementation... and compliance was far from perfect.

“Even when the legally binding port state agreement comes into force, it does not mean that it will be ratified by all countries, so there will be loopholes.

“This worldwide problem of IUU fishing will need to have a system with greater transparency, accountability and global reach in order to be effective.”

The findings, compiled by an international team of researchers, will be presented at the UN headquarters in New York next week during a review conference of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement. (BBC).-

Saturday, May 22nd 2010 - 02:58 UTC

Falklands' dispute: Argentina sends diplomatic reply to latest UK note verbale

Argentina's Deputy Foreign Minister Victorio Tacetti confirmed on Friday there is a formal presentation on the way in reply to the note verbale from the British government to the Argentine presidency in which restrictions applied to all Falklands-Malvinas-bound maritime transit are rejected.

Victorio Tacetti said Argentina will continue to mobilize “international pressure”

“The British position is more of the same, but a diplomatic response is on the way” revealed Mr. Tacetti interviewed by a radio in Buenos Aires.

In the Foreign Office note verbale delivered to the official in charge of the Argentine embassy in London, Britain rejects the Argentine Government's decision to impose restrictions on all Falklands/Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich-bound ships, which were implemented after several British companies started a round of oil exploration in Falklands' waters.

The diplomat said oil drilling around the Islands "doesn't help negotiations because if the Islands turn to be an income source the British will defend them even more vehemently". He added that if defending the Falklands was only a matter of prestige for the British and it cost them money, "the discovery of oil further complicates the issue".

However Deputy Foreign Minister Tacetti considered the British position to be "pragmatic, not ideological."

Regarding the British note Tacetti regretted that "Great Britain rejects all sorts of dialogue," and added that the Argentine response will "vindicate the country's position regarding the Islands sovereignty."

While at the EU-Latinamerica-Caribbean leaders' summit in Madrid this week, President Cristina Kirchner told British Prime Minister David Cameron that "she would insist on the importance of complying with the UN resolutions" after he had pointed out the Falklands/Malvinas sovereignty was "nonnegotiable".

Tacetti advanced that the Argentine policy of taking the Malvinas issue to all possible international forums would continue and "at some point under international pressure it is going to become shameful to be against bilateral discussions as recommended by the UN and other multilateral organizations"

"Our objective is for that consensus to keep growing. These are not one-day policies, we've been on this for years and we will continue, and have no doubts that finally we are going to reach our goal, but we must be patient", added Tacetti.

Argentina has repeatedly presented its sovereignty claims over the Falklands and other South Atlantic islands before the United Nations, Organization of American States, Unasur, Mercosur and has even requested Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to encourage discussions on the issue between Buenos Aires and London.

However the new Conservative-Liberal Democrats coalition since taking office earlier this month has confirmed and on several occasions British policy regarding the Falkland Islands and the right of Islanders to develop their own oil industry.

"We have no doubt about our sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. The principle of self determination as set out in the UN charter applies. There cannot be negotiation on sovereignty unless and until the Falkland Islanders so wish", said Jeremy Browne Foreign Office minister for Latinamerican affairs.

He added that "the Lisbon Treaty clearly reaffirms the EU position that the Falkland Islands is an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom".

Monday, May 24th 2010 - 05:43 UTC

Argentina's May celebrations with multiple parades included Malvinas veterans

"Let the Bicentennial festivities begin" Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner announced on Friday and Argentina put its best military and musical display on Saturday in the build-up toward Tuesday's 200th anniversary of the country's nationhood Tuesday May 25.

Malvinas veterans joined the celebrations and received enthusiastic support
Malvinas veterans joined the celebrations and received enthusiastic support

On Saturday the big absentee at the military parade, including Malvinas war veterans, was Mrs. Kirchner leaving Cabinet Chief Aníbal Fernández to preside over ceremonies.

The colourful march of nearly 5,000 servicemen and police officers down Buenos Aires 9 de Julio avenue was witnessed by many more thousands, many of whom had arrived early to secure a privileged place to witness the parade, which started shortly after mid day and lasted over two hours.

Tanks had been ruled out in advance and adverse weather conditions prevented a flyover by Air Force jets but in many ways the absence of modern military technology was in keeping with the historic character of the Bicentennial march. Contrary to previous speculation that equine flu would rule out any horses, mounted units formed part of the parade (and also police dogs).

Aside from the presidential absence, virtually the entire Cabinet was present, except for Economy Minister Amado Boudou — absent with leave since he has been busy promoting his debt bond swap abroad.

Government sources explained that Mrs. Kirchner's presence had never been scheduled with her main role in the first days of the celebration limited to opening the festivities on Friday.

Aníbal Fernández said that the parade belonged to all Argentines, claiming it had taken 200 years for "a woman (CFK) to give the provinces what they deserved." His remarks also included a tribute to Argentina's founding father Juan José Castelli.

The parade not only included units of the three main armed forces (Army, Navy and Air Force) and the three main security forces (the Federal Police and the Border and Coast Guards) and but also Malvinas war veterans, the Atlantic Command and Blue Helmets (United Nations peacekeepers).

The Malvinas veterans (many of them marching with their families) closed out the parade — a moment of great emotion. The banner of every unit which fought in the 1982 conflict was on display.

Nor was the parade limited to Argentine units but included representatives of the "greater fatherland" of 1810 — military representatives of Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Uruguay, Ecuador and Venezuela all paid tribute to Argentina's milestone with their respective flags.

Military bands had no monopoly to mark the Bicentenary. At midday tango icon Rodolfo Mederos, Bruno Arias and Los Carabajal visited the Gandolfo Hospital. In the early evening the Rosario Flag Memorial was honoured by a performance of the National Symphonic Orchestra directed by Carlos Vieu with tenor Drio Volonté, mezzo soprano Vera Cirkovic and a cross-section of Argentine music by Oscar winner Gustavo Santaolalla.

Monday, May 24th 2010 - 02:04 UTC

Falklands' diplomatic exchange escalates: Argentina summons British ambassador

British Ambassador in Buenos Aires Shan Morgan has been summoned for a meeting on Monday with Argentine Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana to receive a formal reply notice to the escalating diplomatic exchange between the two countries over Falklands and other South Atlantic Islands sovereignty which Argentina claims.

British ambassador in Buenos Aires Shan Morgan is to meet Taiana Monday
British ambassador in Buenos Aires Shan Morgan is to meet Taiana Monday

The recently appointed British Prime Minister David Cameron since taking office this month has reiterated UK sovereignty over the Falklands and rejected through a note verbale an Argentine presidential decree and disposition, which imposes previous request of a formal authorization for shipping to and from Argentina, the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands. The decree is to be implemented by the Argentine Coast Guard.

The meeting with Ambassador Morgan is scheduled for Monday afternoon. The invitation document was sent by the Foreign Ministry Cabinet Chief Alberto D'Alotto.

The administration of President Cristina Kirchner in reprisal for the launching last February of a “unilateral” oil exploration round in Falklands’ waters involving four British companies, signed Decree 256/2010 and Disposition 14/2010 which pretend to control shipping in the South Atlantic but which Britain pointed out “are not complaint with International Law including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea”.

Two of the companies have already drilled wells in the North Falkland basin and one of them Rockhopper Exploration announced it had discovered oil. The two others, one of them in partnership with the mining giant HP Billiton have announced similar drilling plans, to the south and east of the Falklands.

The exploration licences in Falklands’ waters have been issued by the Falklands government and the new British government has also reiterated that it is UK policy to encourage and support the development by the local elected government of its own hydrocarbons industry.

During last week's Mercosur and European Union leaders' summit, Mrs Kirchner had claimed the necessity of Great Britain to sit and discuss diplomatically the Falklands/Malvinas and other South Atlantic Islands sovereignty issue as has been repeatedly asked by the United Nations.

Likewise, London which has refused to hold talks said that the British government has no doubt about British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the surrounding coastal and maritime areas, --where the drillings are taking place—and specifically underlined that these are not within Argentina's jurisdiction. London affirms that the right to self determination is enshrined in the UN Charter and the people of the Falklands, in the free exercise of that right, have long decided to remain British.

The Argentine government argues that Decree 256 signed by Mrs Kirchner defends the interests of the Argentine people, and it looks to guarantee the protection of sovereignty and also that of all of its resources.

Argentine Deputy Foreign Affairs minister Victorio Tacetti last Friday had anticipated that a formal reply to the latest UK note verbale was "on the way".

He added that oil drilling around the Islands "doesn't help (Argentine-UK) negotiations because if the Islands turn to be an income source, the British will defend them even more vehemently".

Tacetti said that if defending the Falklands was only a matter of prestige for the British and it cost them money, "the discovery of oil further complicates the issue".

However Deputy Foreign Minister Tacetti considered the British position to be "pragmatic, not ideological.".-

Tuesday, May 25th 2010 - 05:59 UTC

Argentina rejects UK complaints, demands Falklands' sovereignty talks

Argentina rejected Monday Britain's complaints about maritime controls in the South Atlantic and again condemned the "unilateral and illegitimate acts" of the UK regarding hydrocarbons exploitation in the continental shelf of the Malvinas/Falklands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands.

Ambassador Shan Morgan Ambassador Shan Morgan

The Argentine government note was handed to Britain's ambassador in Buenos Aires Shan Morgan by Foreign Affairs ministry cabinet chief ambassador Alberto D'Alotto at the Palacio San Martín.

Britain had complained that Argentine Presidential Decree 256/2010 and Disposition 14/2010 which state all vessels sailing to and from Argentina, the Falklands, South Georgia and South Sandwich islands must request a previous authorization from the Argentine government "are not complaint with International Law including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea" and other international treaties signed by the Argentine government.

Argentina replied that those norms regulate coastal maritime traffic between ports in Argentine territory and therefore comply with the Law of the Sea. Furthermore the note

reaffirms Argentine sovereignty over the disputed insular territories and adjacent maritime spaces, and recalls that all Argentine democratic governments have favoured talks with Britain to reach a peaceful and fair solution to the sovereignty dispute over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands, and again invites the new British government to resume talks.

In the note Argentina severely condemns the current oil exploration round in Falklands' waters, organized by the local Falklands government and fully supported by London.

"Argentina reiterates its condemnation of unilateral and illegitimate acts undertaken by the United Kingdom regarding hydrocarbons exploitation in the continental platform of the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, which are contrary to International Law and United Nations pronouncements"•

The diplomatic exchange between Argentina and Britain has been escalating since the announcement of the launching of the oil exploration round last February.

However more than the diplomatic formality of Monday's summoning of Ambassador Morgan, are the remarks from Deputy Foreign Affairs minister Victorio Tacetti and the interpretation of the escalation by Buenos Aires daily La Nacion, which historically has had close links with Argentina's diplomacy.

Tacetti who had anticipated that a reply to last week's UK note verbale was "on the way" earlier in the day was particularly critical of Britain's attitude regarding oil exploration.

"The United Kingdom seems to believe that the law can only be applied to others and not to them. We want the British government to respond for the illegal activities that are being conducted in Malvinas."

Tacetti explained that the formal invitation sent to Ambassador Morgan "was delivered out of necessity as the British government formally complained before our diplomatic representatives in London, believing that legal codes do not apply to them".

"The reply is part of our strategy of standing defence of our national interests and rejection of groundless British pretensions; Britain's position is based on sheer force and ours in international law" he underlined.

Tacetti went further and remarked that "those living in Malvinas were not colonized; they were sent by the UK, thus displacing the original inhabitants by the use of force".

With Argentine bi-centennial celebrations very much in mind, Tacetti also complained that for the past 200 years "Argentines have not been allowed to live in Malvinas, at some point only teachers and labourers were allowed to lead some activities. Such a thing means that the UK has been constantly violating the people's universal right to move freely and settle wherever they consider best".

Buenos Aires daily La Nacion quoting reliable ministerial sources says that Argentine diplomacy is feeling "a slight but substantial change" in the strategy of the new British government under PM David Cameron, probably because of "the potential hydrocarbons reserves in the area".

The note verbale from the Foreign Office turned on an alarm bell, an event the Argentine government tried to downplay its impact, but the fact is "the UK is showing a more pro-active policy towards the Falklands/Malvinas" at a time when expectations of hydrocarbons commercial reserves are increasing.

Meantime in Washington US Secretary of State Spokesperson Philip Crowley said the US was not considering any mediator role in the Falklands dispute. "This is a matter for Argentina and the UK. At this moment we for see no role for the US unless both sides so request it".

Wednesday, May 26th 2010 - 05:50 UTC

Falkland Islands joins International Association of Prosecutors

The Falkland Islands Government legal department has been granted organisational membership of the International Association of Prosecutors (IAP). Membership is considered a recognition that rule of the law and independence of prosecution in that country complies with internationally accepted standards.

IAP was established in 1995 with the support from United Nations IAP was established in 1995 with the support from United Nations

The Attorney General fulfils the function in the Falkland Islands of Director of Public Prosecutions, and his or her independence from executive control is guaranteed by the 2008 Constitution.

The IAP is the only world wide association of Prosecutors and was established in 1995 with the support of the United Nations. There are currently over 130 organisational members from all regions of the World. Its main purpose is to develop cooperation between prosecutors to enable offenders to be brought to justice more effectively whilst promoting the implementation of universal standards for the Rule of Law.

Argentina is an organisational member, and recently hosted the IAP Latin American Regional Conference in Buenos Aires.

Attorney General David Pickup, who is also responsible for the operation of the Falkland Islands' Registry and the regulation of statutory monopolies, said: "I am delighted that the Attorney Generals Chambers has been granted membership of the IAP. Chambers is committed to delivering a high quality prosecution service within the Falkland Islands which brings offenders to justice, helps reduce crime, and promotes public confidence in the rule of law. The IAP with its emphasis on the promotion of effective, fair and impartial prosecutions and the promotion of standards and principles which are necessary for the proper and independent prosecution of offences fits very well with what we are committed to achieving in the Falkland Islands, and the opportunity of working with the IAP and with prosecutors worldwide is something we are really looking forward to."

Member of Legislative Assembly Dick Sawle, whose portfolio responsibilities include the work of the Attorney General's Chambers, welcomed the news, saying: "This demonstrates that the International Association of Prosecutors has recognised that the rule of law in the Falkland Islands complies with internationally accepted standards – standards which have stood up to rigorous tests of quality and law as applied to a plethora of other countries around the world. This type of recognition or quality assurance is important to a country which is so much smaller in terms of resources than all of the others in the Association."

Wednesday, May 26th 2010 - 06:21 UTC

Argentina, full of confidence at home and abroad, including the Malvinas Islands

Argentina formally appealed to the British government to discuss sovereignty over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands in a column signed by Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana, published Tuesday in The Guardian in coincidence with the commemoration of Argentina's bicentenary.

Argentine Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana Argentine Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana

The column, "The Spirit of Argentina" with a brief introduction of the events of May 1810 when the people of Buenos Aires disregarding Spanish colonial authorities established the first autonomous government council, then unravels a long eulogy of current Argentina and the achievements of the Kirchner couple's seven years in office consolidating democracy, human rights and the economy.

The column also outlines Argentine foreign policy identifying Falklands' sovereignty as one of its pillars.

A paragraph is dedicated to current Argentina's foreign policy, full respect for international law and an effective multilateralism to address the challenges of the modern world. There

is a mention to regional integration, Mercosur, Unasur and Argentina's participation as a member of G-20.

Taiana before ending the column calling for "the people of the world to join our celebration as we share the best of our own people, our culture and our history" makes the invitation to the British government.

"And so our appeal – formally supported by the United Nations – to the British government to discuss sovereignty over the Malvinas islands, reflects the spirit of the Argentine people, and is one of the pillars of our foreign policy".

Follows the complete text:

The spirit of Argentina

Our nation is full of confidence at home and abroad – including over the Malvinas Islands.

Argentina is turning 200 years old today. The commemoration of the bicentenary is a time in which celebration goes hand in hand with reflection. On 25 May, 1810, in Buenos Aires, the then capital of the Viceroyalty of the River Plate, a group of patriots decided to disregard the Spanish colonial authorities and establish the first autonomous government council. This challenge to the colonial order set in motion the process that would eventually lead to the declaration of independence, and we pay tribute to those heroes who founded our nation.

So where does Argentina stand in this bicentennial year? Our democratic political system has prevailed for nearly three decades and has now reached maturity. The commitment to human rights has received new impetus after the repeal of amnesty laws and the reopening of trials of civilians and members of the military responsible for crimes against humanity.

Since 2003, Argentina's economic growth has been higher than in the whole of the preceding period that began in 1810. Its exceptional growth rate and positive balance of trade has made it possible to service external debt commitments. Over the last seven

years, public education and health have received the attention they deserved, regaining their priority status as institutions for social integration, trebling their share of public expenditure. Reversing poverty is a priority for President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, who has introduced measures to help create jobs, and social policies to protect children.

The state has resumed its leading role in the promotion of research in science and technology, earmarking substantial amounts to pay teachers and researchers in the public university system, which in the 20th century trained the five Argentine citizens who went on to become Nobel prizewinners.

The Argentine people are the result of a meeting of highly diverse cultures. The coexistence of migrants from all over the world has been a feature of our history that we continue to embrace. In spite of the global economic crisis, we have implemented the Greater Homeland program, based on state-of-the art legislation for the regularization of foreign workers.

We also advocate full respect for international law. Multilateralism is the most effective instrument for promoting peace and security and winning the fight against poverty, disease, drug trafficking and environmental degradation.

The promotion and defense of human rights is a state policy that strengthens our national identity and our leadership in the international community. We are actively integrated into trade within Mercosur – the “common market of the south” – and believe in the need to advance towards greater institutionalization of this bloc. We politically support the Union of South American Nations as a key forum for maintaining peace and democracy. We also take an active part in the G20.

And so our appeal – formally supported by the United Nations – to the British government to discuss sovereignty over the Malvinas islands, reflects the spirit of the Argentine people, and is one of the pillars of our foreign policy.

Our country still has unpaid debts. They go back a long time, and we are intent on achieving recognition of the rights of vast sectors of our population that have been

relegated. Foreign commitments remain, however, a priority for the Argentine government.

Today we invite the people of the world to join our celebration as we share the best of our own people, our culture and our history.

Wednesday, May 26th 2010 - 19:50 UTC

Falklands hopes for stable relationship with Argentina

THE Falkland Islands Government still hopes for a stable relationship with Argentina stated Falklands Governor Alan Huckle in his Government budget address today. He told assembled Members of Legislative Assembly, "It remains the hope of both the British and Falkland Islands Governments to have a stable, co-operative relationship with the people and Government of Argentina."

Governor Alan Huckle who this year concludes his period Governor Alan Huckle who this year concludes his period

Mr Huckle said there are many areas of possible co-operation and trade that could be of mutual benefit, but added, "But it is the Government of Argentina that in 2003 imposed a ban on charter flights to the Falklands and has since restricted air travel here; that in 2007 withdrew from the 1995 Agreement that allowed co-operation on hydrocarbons exploration in a special co-operation area to the south-west of the Falklands; that is no longer prepared to co-operate on fisheries conservation in the south-west Atlantic, effectively preventing the establishment of a multilateral fisheries conservation organisation in an area that is increasingly being over-fished; that has sought to penalise companies wanting to do business in both the Falklands and in Argentina; and that now seeks to control the sea lanes to the Falklands."

Mr Huckle noted that relations with Argentina had become more difficult since the start of the new round of hydrocarbons exploration in Falklands waters. He said the Argentine Government, "...has reacted by pressing its sovereignty claim more actively in international

fora and has, by virtue of Presidential Decree 256, sought to disrupt our legitimate shipping business with South America.”

He said he was pleased that the new British Government had reasserted its strong stance on British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and its firm support for the Falkland Islands Government’s efforts to develop a hydrocarbons industry.

Mr Huckle condemned Argentina for arguing that Falkland Islanders are just like British Citizens living in the UK. He said this ignores the fact that Islanders are a community quite distinct from the UK. The Falkland Islands are not part of the UK and Islanders have their own identity and separate government.

He also criticised the Argentine government for portraying Argentina as a weaker nation having to deal with a stronger, more powerful Britain when advancing its sovereignty claim. He said “Yet, seen from here, it is a mirror image – of the Falkland Islands with its tiny population of 3000 souls facing a much larger Argentina, which fails to recognise the democratically expressed wishes of the people of these Islands to remain British, under their own self-government, free of Argentine sovereignty and control.”

Finally he said, “Whilst it may be naïve to expect Argentina to give up its sovereignty claim ...I would hope that it is not naïve to hope that we can work towards a situation where both Argentina and the Falkland Islands can maintain a sensible relationship of mutual harmony and respect without the spectre that Argentine sovereignty and control might at some stage be imposed on an unwilling population.”

By Lisa Watson – SeaAledPR - Stanley

Thursday, May 27th 2010 - 23:47 UTC

Argentina confirms poor squid season and closes fishery south of parallel 44

Argentina's squid fishery to the south of parallel 44° was closed last Friday. The measure adopted by the Federal Fisheries Council (CFP) follows scientific information furnished by the National Institute for Fisheries Research and Development (INIDEP).

Squid seems to have disappeared Squid seems to have disappeared

The decision was based on data available up to last 14 April and referred to catches, fishing effort, biological sampling and operational areas, among others.

"As of week seven, there were numerous attempts along the entire region to the south of 44° S to locate the Southern Patagonian Stock (SSP) but all of them proved unfruitful" is was explained.

The scarce abundance of the SSP coincided with the advancement of the fleet towards the north, which is why the Council did nothing more than confirm officially what was effectively happening in the area.

"In general terms, the greatest proportion of catches fell on the Spawning Summer Stock (SDV) with the best yields (10.7 tons p/day) during the month of February" disclosed INIDEP researchers.

This means another dismal season, with barely 36,000 tons landed, not enough to compensate for the price rally on the international market. The discouraging season is reflected in the number of jiggers still operating in Argentine waters: six, according to the Fisheries Sub Secretary registry.

"Squid catches are insufficient to cover costs. For different reasons we have been experiencing a slow agony for the last four years" said fishing companies.

The scenario is no better at mile 201, to the south of parallel 44°, where according to INIDEP estimates, only 10.000 tons were captured. (FIS/MP).-

Thursday, May 27th 2010 - 09:15 UTC

Falklands happy as British Overseas Territory and 'don't like being told by others what to do'

The Falkland Islands are happy with the current status of British Overseas Territory, based on the right to self determination and do not like being told by others what to do, Falklands' Legislative Assemble member Emma Edwards told a United Nations decolonization seminar held in New Caledonia.

MLA Emma Edwards said "full independence, free association or integration" are not suitable options MLA Emma Edwards said "full independence, free association or integration" are not suitable options

"We are happy with the status quo, and do not like being told by others what to do. The Falkland Islands are currently not ready for independence, but we do express our right of self-determination with almost all of the people of the Falkland Islands wishing to remain and enjoy our British Overseas Territory status" said MLA Edwards during the UN seminar to mark the 50th anniversary of the General Assembly's Declaration on Decolonisation.

A key objective of the seminar was to help the Special Committee on Decolonisation (the 'Committee of 24') to assess progress towards decolonisation, particularly in the Pacific region.

The situation of the Falkland Islands was discussed on the second day of the seminar and MLA Edwards underlined that Falkland Islanders have repeatedly expressed their firm view that they are content with their current status, and noted that "for a variety of reasons the alternative options of full independence, free association or integration with an independent State are not suitable for the Falkland Islands".

Outlining aspects of the healthy democracy enjoyed by Falkland Islanders, MLA Edwards informed the seminar that they included elections in November 2009, and a new Constitution, which had entered into force in January 2009, and "enhanced local democracy, establishing a greater degree of internal self-government and providing mechanisms for transparency and accountability".

Miss Edwards also revealed that while the Falkland Islands had, like elsewhere, been affected by the global financial crisis "its economy remained strong" and cited a number of programs and initiatives in the areas of transport, telecommunications, energy, production, health care and education which benefited Falkland Islanders.

Looking back following the conclusion of the seminar organized and financed by the UN, MLA Edwards said it was "a very useful opportunity to meet representatives from other overseas territories and to discuss their issues with them, as well as meeting C24 member representatives".

The seminar was entitled 'The eradication of colonialism in the first decade of the 21st century' and was attended by 48 delegates including representatives of non-self-governing territories, member nations of the Committee of 24, observers and experts on colonialism.

The final day of the seminar included a very interesting debate, which centred on how little progress on decolonisation has been made in the past ten years, with only New Caledonia expressing a wish to become a new nation.

There was also discussion on whether the word 'eradication' was too ambitious when discussing colonialism, with some delegates strongly of the view that the Special Committee should be finding ways to help the remaining territories on the UN Decolonisation List achieve more governmental autonomy rather than full independence.

On her return journey home to the Falkland Islands, while travelling through London, Miss Edwards attended the state opening of Parliament along with Falkland Islands Government Representative Sukey Cameron. This was followed by a reception hosted by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

New Caledonia is a French overseas territory in the Pacific Ocean, discovered and named by Captain Cooke. It has a population of about 300,000 people, with 28 languages spoken across the Islands, although French is used as a common Language. The economy is based on nickel, with New Caledonia being the world's second largest nickel exporter.

Thursday, May 27th 2010 - 09:18 UTC

Taiana admits Tories are 'tougher' on Malvinas but promises a 'hot' June

Argentine Foreign Affairs Minister Jorge Taiana admitted that the new conservative British government of PM David Cameron is taking "a tougher stance" than its predecessors towards the Argentine claim on the Falkland/Malvinas Islands' sovereignty.

Actors dressed as soldiers perform the Malvinas war chapter during the Bicentenary commemoration
Actors dressed as soldiers perform the Malvinas war chapter during the Bicentenary commemoration

But he insisted that the British position on the issue is "colonial and anti-history," and repeated that Argentina will continue "to look after the Argentines' heritage and non-renewable resources."

"I'm sorry that the United Kingdom insists on maintaining a clearly wrong and somewhat anti-history attitude," since they "insist in keeping a colonial position," he said. The Foreign Minister added that in general, "conservatives have held a tougher stance and refused" to discuss the Islands' sovereignty.

However, Taiana said he was surprised, because "British governments usually tend to reject any sort of dialogue with Argentina", and remarked that President Cristina Kirchner's government would "insist" on the matter in every international forum.

"We know we're right, we know that the way to move forward on this issue is the UN, and that the UK has to comply with international law and the UN resolutions," he added.

The official recalled that they will take the matter to the Organization of American States, OAS, summit in the next few days in order to make both countries begin talks. The OAS

general assembly convenes June 7/8 in Lima, Peru and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is expected to attend.

"June is a very active month regarding this issue, and we will maintain our claim and our actions in defence of our rights and our natural resources," he highlighted.

Taiana explained that the Argentine Government must "look after the Argentines' heritage and non-renewable resources and people should be "on high alert", albeit always through the means of international law.

Taiana's latest statements follow several days of strong positions and appeals from both sides. On Tuesday during the inauguration of the Latinamerican Patriots Gallery in Government House, as part of the Argentine bicentenary celebrations, President Cristina Kirchner before seven South American leaders reiterated the sovereignty claim over the Falklands.

"We are doing it with the strength and conviction of knowing that as subjects of International Law we must respect norms to which all of us, big and small, weak and powerful, are compelled to abide", said Mrs Kirchner.

Presidents attending included Brazil, Lula da Silva; Chile's Sebastián Piñera; Bolivia's Evo Morales; Paraguay's Fernando Lugo; Venezuela's Hugo Chavez; Ecuador's Rafael Correa and Uruguay's Jose Mujica.

The Malvinas conflict was also present at the 200 years parade of Argentine historic events which was one of the highlights of the bicentenary commemorations.

A battalion of fully clad soldiers with helmets and protected with ponchos marched under pouring rain, as part of the theatrical representation, and at a given moment at the sound of a bomb explosion has the combatants "killed" face on the ground while a white cross flops up from their back packs in what seemed a re-edition of the Argentine cemetery in Darwin. An impressive performance.

Together with the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, and their white head scarves, (mothers and grandmothers of the disappeared during the military regime of the seventies), illuminated on a grand platform while they silently rotate, were the two chapters of the parade most applauded by the hundreds of thousands that turned out to the streets of Buenos Aires.

Friday, May 28th 2010 - 11:09 UTC

Whales centre study to be built in Chile's Strait of Magellan

Chile is researching the possible construction of a new centre for visitors and scientists to study whales in the Straits of Magellan.

The Strait is a perfect feeding passageway for whale colonies, seals and Magellan penguins. The Strait is a perfect feeding passageway for whale colonies, seals and Magellan penguins.

A significant growth in tourism rates over the last five years has given birth to Chile's first marine park and protected offshore preserve. The region, named after Chilean writer Francisco Coloane, is centred on the Island Carlos III in the Straits of Magellan and is a perfect feeding passageway for whale colonies, seals and Magellan penguins.

The Straits of Magellan is the largest natural passage between the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans. Its beauty and increasing tourist visits motivated officials of the Global Environment Fund (GEF) to construct a visitor centre that will include laboratories, activity rooms, and two wooden dormitories.

Environmental evaluations have already started and the project's design will be shaped like a whale and will be built on a slope of an island in Mussel Bay, which is surrounded by forests. The aim is to finish the project in two years and to preserve the area while facilitating the work of foreign and national scientists.

Chile has repeatedly expressed its concern about the whales and their habitat. In May, Chilean Foreign Minister Alfredo Moreno said that Chile will maintain a position "in favour of conservation and against whaling". By Loretta van der Horst – Santiago Times.-

Saturday, May 29th 2010 - 05:31 UTC

Argentina announces Malvinas sovereignty presence with patrol vessels

Argentine Defence minister Nilda Garré said that four navy patrol vessels will be sent to the "Mar Argentino" (South Atlantic) to show presence and the willingness of Argentina to exercise sovereignty over the (Argentine) Falklands/Malvinas Islands.

Defence minister Nilda Garré Defence minister Nilda Garré

The patrol vessels are under construction in a joint project with Chile and the first one should be ready for operations early next year said Ms Garré during a brief interview with journalists from the official news agency Noticias Argentinas.

"Now begins the construction of four ocean going patrol vessel to complement the tasks of the Coast Guard which is to patrol up to mile 200. We're not talking or planning to send troops to the zone but simply to show the presence of Argentina and our willingness to exercise sovereignty over our maritime areas", added Ms Garré.

The minister revealed that the ocean faring patrol vessels were a regional project, "from which Brazil dropped out" but it was followed up, in all its dimension by Chile that developed the "basic engineering" for such vessels.

"They are inter-operational vessels, practically similar to those the Chileans have and the idea is not to delay the decision. Next year the first patrol vessel will be in charge of complying with the naval task of patrolling our waters and imposing our sovereignty", pointed out Ms Garré.

In related news Deputy Foreign Secretary Taccetti said that the current situation over the Falklands was triggered when the British began exploring for oil “in a sea that does not belong to them, not do the Islands”.

That is why “the decisions regarding fisheries, oil exploration and exploitation and maritime navigation in the zone”.

Taccetti said that the current Argentine diplomatic approach is helping to build a “world consensus on the issue. The British will have at some point to sit and negotiate sovereignty because of world pressure. In all forums we bring up the subject and it’s working, consensus is building”.

“Britain’s position is unsustainable and even inside Britain there are sectors with the idea of putting an end to the dispute. Some European countries are supporting us, although tepidly still but a growing majority favour a negotiated solution”, concluded the top Argentine official

Saturday, May 29th 2010 - 01:25 UTC

Peru/Chile maritime dispute extends to Ecuador and Colombia

In addition to having called upon Ecuador a few weeks ago as a witness in Chile’s maritime dispute with Peru, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague also asked the Permanent Commission of the South Pacific (CPPS) – of which Colombia is a member to testify.

Peru took the issue before the ICJ at The Hague in March 2009. Peru took the issue before the ICJ at The Hague in March 2009.

Ecuador is a third-party witness that signed previous border agreements between Chile and Peru in the 1950s. The CPPS was created in 1952 and includes member countries Peru, Chile, Ecuador, and Colombia, which also serve as witnesses to the disputed border.

Chile and Peru have been squabbling over the maritime border issue for years. While Peru maintains its maritime border with Chile has never been properly defined, Chile insists a pair of treaties signed in 1952 and 1954 resolved the issue.

Chile argues that its maritime border with Peru is simply a horizontal line in the Pacific. However Peru claims that due to the fishing agreements between both countries, the border should be considered as a diagonal line equidistant between both countries rather than a longitudinal line that extends out from the land border.

The net effect is that Peru is claiming fishing rights to 10,000 square miles of seafood-rich ocean that Chile has claimed for decades. Having first brought the case to the ICJ in January 2008, Peru decided to litigate the issue before the ICJ at The Hague in March 2009.

ICJ is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations and its final ruling on the matter will be binding and irreversible.

According to diplomatic circles, whether the CPPS decides to participate in the litigation or not, the group should present their opinion, along with Ecuador. While Chile recognizes that reaching a consensus is complicated, Peru has established that it does not support the CPPS participation in the case.

The Chilean government already considered Colombia's possible role in the lawsuit, noting that the country later ratified the 1952 agreement and that its maritime borders with Ecuador and Panama are parallel lines.

The Peruvian government maintains that it does not have issues of pending borders with Ecuador, since the 1952 agreement sets the "criteria" that when two countries have islands on the border, the limit will be a parallel line.

However, Peruvian Foreign Relations Minister José García Belaunde insinuated in February 2008 that if The Hague rules in favour of Peru, negating the borders established by the previous treaties, Peru would be able to renegotiate its border with Ecuador.

Chilean Finance Minister Felipe Larraín insisted that “Those treaties are completely current for all three countries. Peru has tried to have one criterion with Chile and another with Ecuador, which is contradictory to justice”. The minister also said that Ecuador’s stance on the issue should be favourable to Chile “because a wrong decision in The Hague could be prejudicial for Ecuador in the future”.

On the other hand, if Ecuador supports Chile in the case, it may damage relations with Peru, provoking another border dispute between the two.

In March 2010, Chile submitted a 200 page response to Peru’s report. Later, both countries will have the possibility to orally present their case to the ICJ. Ecuador has to make its decision whether to participate in the trial by this time.

Chile has to hand in its last written response in July of 2011 and the tribunal will likely pronounce its final decision in 2012.

Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa will make his first trip ever to Peru on June 9 and 10 followed by Peruvian president Alan García’s visit to Ecuador in October.

Saturday, May 29th 2010 - 01:16 UTC

Plymouth commemorative plaque for Falklands’ conflict Royal Navy vessel

The Commanding Officer of one of the Royal Navy Devonport-based frigates lost in the Falklands conflict has unveiled a commemorative plaque in Plymouth, reports the Herald from Plymouth.

HMS Antelope and HMS Ardent were both victims of Argentine air attack HMS Antelope and HMS Ardent were both victims of Argentine air attack

Captain Nick Tobin, who was the Commanding Officer of HMS Antelope during the campaign, was involved in the ceremony which marked the formal opening of HMS Raleigh's new accommodation blocks.

Four new blocks, named Antelope, Ardent, Sir Galahad and Conqueror, have been built at the Torpoint-based Royal Navy training establishment as part of a major upgrade of facilities. The blocks have been named after units which were part of the UK Task Force sent to recover the Falkland Islands in 1982.

The site's new commemorative plaque is mounted on a stone brought back from the Falkland Islands. As part of the ceremony, Capt Tobin presented the original crest recovered from the bridge of HMS Antelope to officers at HMS Raleigh.

The crest was recovered 48 hours after the ship had been sunk.

Ardent and Antelope blocks are home to the trainees of Corporate Squadron who are undergoing their professional training within the Defense Maritime Logistics School, the Royal Navy Submarine School and the Royal Navy School of Seamanship.

Conqueror block is the new base for the National Sea Cadet Training Centre and Sir Galahad will be used to accommodate sailors returning to HMS Raleigh for career progression courses. Each mess deck has its own utility area, common room and bathroom facilities.

Veterans who served on the ships and the submarine were also invited to attend the ceremony at HMS Raleigh, along with Sea Cadets from the Training Ship (TS) Ardent from Bollington, Cheshire.

Type 21 frigates HMS Antelope and HMS Ardent were both victims of enemy air attack during the Falklands conflict in May 1982. The Royal Fleet Auxiliary Vessel Sir Galahad was classed as a landing ship logistics.

The ship was hit by bombs and badly damaged while unloading soldiers from the Welsh Guard on 8 June 1982. A total of 48 men lost their lives.

HMS Conqueror, a Churchill class submarine, controversially fired the torpedo which sank the Argentine cruiser, General Belgrano, causing the greatest single loss of lives of the 74 day conflict in the South Atlantic.

JUNE

Tuesday, June 1st 2010 - 01:43 UTC

German president resigns on comments about military actions overseas

German President Horst Koehler unexpectedly resigned due to a storm over comments he made about military action abroad in a move that could cause conservative Chancellor Angela Merkel a headache.

President Horst Koehler, and former IMF chief, never expected such a reaction President Horst Koehler, and former IMF chief, never expected such a reaction

The shock resignation comes at a time when Merkel is already battling a Euro zone debt crisis, sinking popularity and an increasingly awkward coalition partner.

Now she will have to find a new and successful candidate for president. Her conservatives had backed Koehler for re-election by a special assembly last year.

The German President is responsible for signing bills into law but the role is largely ceremonial.

"I regret that my comments could lead to a misunderstanding about an important and difficult question for our nation," an ashen-faced Koehler told reporters in a statement called at short notice.

Koehler, 67, has already signed off on law allowing Europe's biggest economy to contribute to a 750 billion Euro emergency debt package and his resignation would not be expected to have a market impact.

As a former head of the IMF, Koehler has spoken out on the debt crisis enveloping the Euro zone but his departure will have little impact on German policy.

Koehler, in office since 2004, said in a radio interview just over a week ago that foreign military action by the German army also served economic interests.

A country like Germany with a heavy reliance on foreign trade, Koehler said, must know that "in emergencies military intervention is necessary to uphold our interests, like for example free trade routes, for example to prevent regional instabilities which could have a negative impact on our chances in terms of trade, jobs and income."

Koehler said he was unhappy about the reaction to it.

"The criticism has gone so far as to suggest I supported deployments by the army which are not covered by the constitution. This criticism is completely unjustified," he said. "It shows a lack a respect for my office".

The row and his resignation underscore the sensitivity of military issues in Germany.

A special Federal Assembly, made up of all the members of parliament and an equal number of delegates sent by the 16 state assemblies, elects German president.

Jens Boehrnsen, speaker of the parliament's upper house (Bundesrat), will be interim president. He is in the opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD).

Tuesday, June 1st 2010 - 13:48 UTC

BACTEC says goodbye to the Falkland Islands

The BACTEC (Battle Area Clearance, Training, Equipment and Consultancy) Project Management and the remaining Zimbabwean de-miners will shortly say goodbye to the Falkland Islands after more than six months of living and working in the community. Throughout the project the community has welcomed BACTEC personnel from UK, Zimbabwe and Lebanon and shown us great hospitality during our long stay away from home.

Deminer working along MPA road. (Photo by Kev Bryant) Deminer working along MPA road. (Photo by Kev Bryant)

All the Lebanese de-miners returned home to warmer climes, in April as did the majority of the Zimbabweans. Along with Roger Gagen, 4 Zimbabwean de-miners have remained on the islands to complete the location and clearance of the final panel of 16 anti-tank mines at Surf Bay. This work has been carried out using a combination of an armoured excavator, operated by Bruce Humphreys and manual clearance techniques using mine detectors which were operated by the Zimbabwean de-miners. The last mine was finally located and successfully cleared on Thursday 27th May 2010. Now that BACTEC's work has been completed except for some reinstatement and removal of the mine signs, the DPO will carry out the necessary QA checking, after this the site may then be formally handed over as mine/ordnance free.

Following the QA checking BACTEC will have cleared and handed over the four task sites. At Sapper Hill all 190 recorded mines were located and disposed of as well as two sub-munitions. At Goose Green no mines or UXO were found but the clearance operation has proved the site to be ordnance free. Similarly at Fox Bay no items of ordnance were found. These two areas had been classed as suspect mine/UXO contaminated areas and have now been certified as ordnance free. At Surf Bay the final task site for clearance, some of the mines were found to be buried deep into the sand, at depths in excess of 4m.

Roger Gagen, BACTEC International's Falkland Islands Demining Project Manager, said "The project has been an overall success. We have been faced with a number of challenges, including the weather, all of which we have overcome with the help of FIG, colleagues on the islands and especially the community. Our Lebanese and Zimbabwean

de-miners adapted well to the Falkland Islands' working environment and worked assiduously to successfully complete the project to the required standards in the specified timescale. We have experienced all weather conditions, some quite hostile but the work continued. I am pleased that the final mines have now been located and cleared and the project has been completed, as per the FCO contract, during the Austral summer.

On behalf of both Guy Lucas, BACTEC International's CEO, and the teams, I would like to offer my most sincere thanks and appreciation to the Falkland Islands community for their support, encouragement and patience throughout the project."

By Roger Gagen

Project Manager

BACTEC International Limited

Tuesday, June 1st 2010 - 04:52 UTC

HMS York almost home after high profile patrolling in Falklands' waters

HMS York is on her way home from the South Atlantic after a high-profile five months on patrol off the Falklands Islands, reports The Press from York.

The 25 year old Type 42 destroyer The 25 year old Type 42 destroyer

The Type 42 destroyer made the headlines earlier this year when she had an encounter at sea with an Argentine warship. Relationships between Argentina and Britain are currently strained after the UK started making exploratory oil drilling off the Falklands.

The encounter between ARA Drummond and HMS York occurred in January before the diplomatic flare-up and the British Ministry of Defence reported that a storm had blown the Argentine ship off course so that she was too close to the Islands.

She obeyed HMS York's instructions to change course and no further action was taken.

Since the 1982 conflict, the Royal Navy has maintained a constant patrol of the Falklands area by warships, often by Type 42 destroyers.

HMS York is now heading north again. Before leaving the Falklands, she celebrated her 25th birthday, having been commissioned in 1985 and a contingent from the ship also took part in a Queen's Birthday Parade in Port Stanley.

She was involved in a dramatic 300-mile rescue in heavy seas of a South Pacific fisherman from the Republic of Kiribati.

The trip home is now well underway having sailed from Fortaleza in Northern Brazil with two more stops before Portsmouth in the Canary Islands and Portugal.

Wednesday, June 2nd 2010 - 22:54 UTC

Falklands celebrates 40th anniversary of SS Great Britain salvage

An exhibition marking the 40th anniversary of the salvage of the SS Great Britain and featuring film footage and original items as well as a wide range of photographs is now open at the Britannia House Museum in the Falkland Islands capital, Stanley.

SS Great Britain mizzen mast remains on Victory Green
SS Great Britain mizzen mast remains on Victory Green

Launched in 1843, the SS Great Britain was designed by celebrated Bristol engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel for the Great Western Steamship Company's transatlantic service between Liverpool and New York. She was the largest vessel afloat when launched, and the first ocean-going ship to be made of iron and equipped with a screw propeller. From 1852 until 1876, the SS Great Britain carried immigrants to Australia. In 1882 she was sold again and refitted as a cargo ship, carrying Welsh coal to San Francisco and returning with wheat.

The SS Great Britain was condemned in the Falklands in 1886 and purchased by the Falkland Islands Company for use as a storage hulk. After 50 years of service in Stanley

Harbour, the hulk was deemed unfit for further use, towed out to Sparrow Cove, beached and holed, there to see out the rest of her days – or so it was believed.

However, in the mid-1960s interest in the old ship was renewed and a plan to return her to Britain for restoration began to gather momentum. The massive operation to return the ship to her home port began in January 1970 with the arrival in the Falkland Islands of a salvage expert who judged there to be an 80% chance of success.

The salvage operation that followed in April of the same year achieved what few thought was possible – the hulk was patched up, pumped out and refloated, then towed on to the submersible pontoon that would carry her 8,000 miles home to Bristol. A number of Islanders were involved in the famous operation –either providing carpentry skills, working on the small boats and launches that helped to tow the hulk into position, or as part of the dive team.

Now restored to her original glory, the “Great Britain” is Bristol’s main visitor attraction with over 150,000 visitors annually, but the ship retains an unbreakable link to the Falklands.

The ship’s mizzen mast remains on Victory Green, a tangible reminder of that link.

The salvage is central to the Museums current exhibition, and is illustrated with a series of photographs and a 10 minute video clip. The design, working life and restoration of Brunels most celebrated ship is also briefly explained.

Member of the Falklands’ Legislative Assembly Emma Edwards remembers visiting the SS Great Britain as a child while she was being restored in Bristol, and said the exhibition had brought back many happy memories.

Miss Edwards commended the Museum staff on their hard work.

Museum Manager Leona Roberts said that the Falkland Islands Museum & National Trust is extremely grateful to the Falkland Islands Company and Sullivan Shipping Services for

their sponsorship of the exhibition and to all the individuals who loaned photographs or shared their memories of the ship.

Falklands' Britannia House Museum receives approximately 10,000 visitors per annum, and is regarded by many tourists as the highlight of a visit to Stanley. FIMNT staff work closely with the Falkland Islands Government Archives to preserve the territory's heritage, most recently through an Oral History project.

Two small branch museums at San Carlos and North Arm focus on farm life and the 1982 Falklands Conflict. In the museum grounds is to be found the Reclus Hut, relocated from the Antarctic Peninsula and filled with its original 1950s contents. FIMNT is also responsible for the Cape Pembroke lighthouse and Cartmell Cottage, an 1849 house recreated in period style.

Wednesday, June 2nd 2010 - 02:41 UTC

Oil drilling begins in unexplored Falkland Islands' south east waters

Falkland Oil & Gas (FOGL) in association with BHP Billiton became the third oil company this year to begin exploratory drilling operations in Falkland Islands' waters according to a Tuesday release from the company.

"FOGL is pleased to announce that the Toroa F61/5-1 exploration well spudded on Monday 31st May 2010. The Toroa (albatross in Maori) prospect is located in Licence PL15, in which FOGL has a 49% interest", said the release.

The well is being drilled to an estimated target depth of circa 2,700 metres. Drilling operations are expected to take approximately 35 days and "a further announcement will be made once drilling is completed", added the release.

Besides the fact that FOGL is associated to one of the world's largest mining companies BH Billiton, the well is being drilled to the south and east of the Falkland Islands, an area yet unexplored because when the 1998 exploration round and the two 2010 wells so far, have concentrated in the North Falkland Basin.

Moving to the south of the Falklands where it is deeper means the oil rig "Ocean Guardian" will be operating at a depth of 600 metres while to the north water is shallower, in the range of 200 to 300 metres.

Apparently bad weather has delayed the Toroa drilling because the rig was only making two knots when tugged from Rockhopper's Sea Lion prospect.

The current drilling round which begun last February started with Desire Petroleum's Liz prospect which proved negative and Rockhopper's Sea Lion prospect that effectively discovered oil. However, further testing of samples and drilling will be needed to pinpoint with greater certainty the deposit and its commercial volume.

According to company sources the cost of the Toroa well is expected to be in the range of 21 million US dollars.

In an earlier statement FOGL said it was continuing to review with BHP Billiton a number of rig options with a view to drilling further wells on its licenses. Securing a suitable rig will determine the ultimate timing of the second phase of the program.

Other FOGL prospects which have been surveyed, Loligo, Nimrod, and Endeavour all lie in water depths greater than 1,000 meters and are best suited to being drilled by a dynamically positioned drill-ship or semi-submersible.

Falkland Island Oil and Gas is looking to contract such a rig later in 2010 to complete its minimum work commitment of two wells and possibly drill other discretionary wells.

As happened with the previous spudding announcements a strong condemnation can be expected from Argentina that claims sovereignty over the Falklands and other South Atlantic islands and the adjacent coastal and maritime areas.

Thursday, June 3rd 2010 - 20:44 UTC

Falkland Islands De-mining Pilot Project – Completion of Phase 1

Completion of the Falkland Islands Programme phase 1 is now a reality. The De-mining Contractor, BACTEC International Ltd, has persevered through one of the coldest and wettest summers to deliver a successful project within the single austral summer period that was demanded within the contract. Like all demanding programmes, many lessons have been learned but only a few will be elaborated in this article.

Public Confidence Demonstration on 17 Apr 10 at Goose Green
Public Confidence Demonstration on 17 Apr 10 at Goose Green

The manually excavated area at Sapper Hill with yellow pickets showing where anti-personnel mines were found
The manually excavated area at Sapper Hill with yellow pickets showing where anti-personnel mines were found

There were four clearance tasks; two known minefields close to Stanley (Sapper Hill and Surf Bay) which both had detailed records and one Suspect Hazardous Area in each of the Goose Green and Fox Bay Camp areas. They were four very different tasks with very different terrain all chosen to inform future projects most effectively. The two known minefields presented the greatest challenges as expected and some of these were mentioned in a previous MercoPress article on 7 Feb 10. These challenges centred on the ability to detect the minimum metal mines, the tough terrain and the inclement weather.

The Sapper Hill minefield (~7900 sq m) took 77 gruelling days of full manual excavation to lift the 190 anti-personnel P4B mines laid there on a single day in May 1982. Of note is that these mines were laid in a very formal pattern in three rows which did make it easier to locate them and encouragingly the minefield plan was good. No mine was found deeper than 12 cm although 97% were at less than 8 cm. The task was exacerbated by the thick fibrous peat and surface vegetation that was difficult to cut and excavate and a very wet and cold summer.

After the cleared area was handed over to the De-mining Programme Office (DPO), it conducted an independent Quality Control Sampling activity in accordance with International and National Mine Action Standards (IMAS and NMAS) which confirmed the

area was clear of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) to the contract depth. Finally a public confidence demonstration was conducted by BACTEC and the DPO on 25 Mar 10 and the Governor and Mr Colin Roberts of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office participated by walking across the cleared area.

The two Suspect Hazardous Areas in the Camps had two very different historical backgrounds and no formal plans or records existed for either. In Goose Green, the area had been cleared immediately after the conflict using information gained from prisoners who had laid the mines there and UK sketch plans existed of what had been lifted. However, a military vehicle had driven over an anti-vehicle mine on the promontory 6 weeks after the conflict had ended and the area was marked off as a minefield again. The task involved a detailed analysis of the available data and conducting what is known as a technical survey i.e. cutting survey lanes throughout the area to prove that no further mines existed. Because it was also the site of a cluster munitions strike by UK forces, a sub surface search for BL 755 sub-munitions was conducted. No mines or UXO were located and the area was declared safe after 21 days of search and following Quality Control sampling. A low key public confidence demonstration took place on 17 Mar 10 which was well attended and appreciated by the Goose Green community.

The Fox Bay area had never been a minefield. It was marked off a year after the conflict suspected of containing unexploded BL 755 sub-munitions and possibly washed up mines on the shoreline. As well as conducting a complete clearance of the Suspect Hazardous Area, a number of technical surveys were carried out on the whole Fox Bay East headland to check if any signs remained of the cluster munitions strike. No BL 755 sub-munitions were located confirming that the UK forces had already done a thorough clearance after the conflict.

By far the most complex and difficult task was the minefield at Surf Bay. This was known to contain over 1000 landmines; a mixture of anti-vehicle (SB81) and anti-personnel (SB33) mines. For a relatively small area (~32,500 sq m), this was a very high density of mines. The area can be divided into 3 separate types of terrain; peat, shallow sand and deep sand dunes. As at Sapper Hill, the mines were laid in formal patterns with a different number of rows from 2 to 6 and the plans were easy to follow using interpretation and

experience. The same challenges existed here as for Sapper Hill but there were additional ones as well. The first was that in the shallow sand area, some of the mines were up to 40 cm deep because of build up of sand over the years. In the dunes, mines were found at the 1982 profile and this required using an armoured mechanical excavator to locate them at up to 4 metres deep. Some of these latter mines were difficult to find at that depth but once the first evidence of each row was located, the pattern of mines became evident. This became much more of a civil engineering operation to process large quantities of sand to separate the threat from the surrounding material. In very deep sand it is easy to get disorientated between what has been cleared and what has not been cleared. Therefore detailed survey became a key component of the systematic search to ensure detailed distances and depths were recorded. Normal quality control sampling was conducted following operations at Surf Bay and where the random sample boxes were located on deep sand, the mechanical excavator was used to carry out the sampling.

Concerns about the environmental impacts of the project were a constant factor throughout the project. A broad plan was developed to satisfy the planning conditions associated with the consent provided by the Environmental Planning Department. This consisted of dividing the cleared areas broadly into three parts; one part being left to recover naturally; one part having the cut vegetation replaced so that seeds from the cuttings drop and germinate; and a further area is to be left for a different approach to be specified and agreed later by the Environmental Planning Department using natural and introduced methods. Rebuilding the sand dunes like a "Hollywood" set was never an aspiration but in close cooperation with the Environmental Planning Department, BACTEC replaced the sand as well as they possibly could stabilising the base of the dunes where possible using geo-textiles and aggregate bags. The area was left deliberately unsmooth in order to provide relief for natural forces to work on and to catch drifting seeds for germination purposes. Monitoring will take place over the next two years to establish which is the most effective approach for future programmes but not only does it need to be environmentally acceptable, it needs to be a practical, relatively simple and a cost effective procedure. This has been an interesting, but additional factor to be considered for this specific Mine Action programme but it will continue to be a key feature throughout future programmes on the Falkland Islands.

The Surf Bay minefield was completed on 4th June 2010 following a public confidence demonstration after 146 days of detailed, painstaking work in difficult conditions. Locating the last mines in the sand dunes was always going to be challenging and given the very cold and wet weather this summer, BACTEC did well to complete the project within the single austral summer they were allocated. In very broad terms the four simple lessons learned were: 1. The weather is always unpredictable in the Falkland Islands even in summer. 2. The terrain is tough and unforgiving for both manual and mechanical demining. 3. Further research and development is necessary to manually detect minimum metal mines more easily. 4. Where mines are laid in coastal sand, they will be found at much greater depths due to the build up of sand over the years.

Now this pilot phase is complete, the UK Government will have a much better understanding about the challenges of the remaining mined areas (approximately 113). This phase of the clearance will have reduced the number of mines buried in the Falkland Islands by 5% but in terms of area cleared it is a very small percentage. However, it will definitely be able to inform future projects about the technical, environmental and logistic challenges associated with clearance in the Falkland Islands and provide more accurate planning data for follow-on phases.

By Robin Swanson – Programme Manager, Demining Programme Office - Stanley

Friday, June 4th 2010 - 00:33 UTC

Falklands' scientists detect North Pacific Ocean species in South Atlantic

Deep sea fish species found in the North Pacific Ocean have mysteriously been caught in the southwest Atlantic in Falkland Islands waters. It is unclear how the animals, a giant rattail grenadier, pelagic eelpout and deep sea squid, travelled so far, according to a report by Matt Walker, Editor of Earth News.

Pacific gonate squid *Gonatopsis octopedatus* Pacific gonate squid *Gonatopsis octopedatus*

Their discovery 15,000km from their usual home raises the possibility that deep sea currents can transport animals from one polar region to another. Details are published in the journal Deep Sea Research part I.

“These findings were completely unexpected” says Dr Alexander Arkhipkin of the Falkland Islands Fisheries Department, based in Stanley.

Since 1987, the Falkland Islands Fisheries Department has performed surveys of fish caught by commercial and research fishing trawlers travelling above the Patagonian Shelf and slope around the Islands.

Commercial longline catches of Patagonian toothfish have also been examined, making the Falklands one of the best managed fisheries in the world, and acknowledged as such.

Recently, these catches have brought to the surface animals previously unknown in the southwest Atlantic.

For example, Dr Arkhipkin and colleagues Dr Vladimir Laptikhovsky and Dr Paul Brickle report a 81cm-long grenadier fish belonging to the genus *Albatrossia* caught by the longline fishery set to catch Patagonian toothfish.

Another deepwater trawl caught a small 15cm-long pelagic eelpout at a depth of 1000 metres. Experts have identified this fish as being a member of the slipskin species *Lycodapus endemoscotus*.

Previously both species were only known from the deep waters of the North Pacific Ocean.

A small immature 11cm-long north Pacific gonate squid *Gonatopsis octopedatus* was also recovered from a trawl south of the Falkland Islands.

Genetic analyses confirmed the identification, which is the first time any member of this squid genus has been recorded in the southern hemisphere.

The catches are the first time that such deepwater species have been caught so far from their natural habitat. All three species habitually live in the deep waters of the north Pacific, at depths greater than 600-1000m.

That makes it extremely unlikely that the fish and squid could have become trapped in ballast water used by ships, and transported around the world.

"We would not expect that relatively slow deepwater fish and squid might travel so far from their common habitats," says Dr Arkhipkin.

All three species live above the seafloor, and none of the three are known to habitually migrate, just as tuna and whales do. Far more likely is that each animal was transported thousands of kilometres by deepwater currents.

These flow south, across the equator, moving past South America underneath another northbound flow called the Humboldt Current.

Finally, this flow mixes with another called the Upper Circumpolar Deep Water to pass through the Drake Passage, which separates South America and Antarctica, to the Southwest Atlantic.

Such deep water currents flow slowly, so it may take a few years for a long-lived fish, or even several generations of short-lived fish or squid to migrate the whole way.

Dr Arkhipkin says the catches may force scientists to re-evaluate their ideas about the distribution and movements of deepwater species.

Though there is no evidence to support the idea, Dr Arkhipkin speculates that climate change may be influencing the deepwater currents, facilitating the novel spread of such animals.

Friday, June 4th 2010 - 19:02 UTC

Falklands' thick fog forces two RAF Typhoons and tanker to land in Punta Arenas

Two Royal Air Force Euro Typhoon fighters and their Vickers VC10 refuelling tanker had to land Wednesday afternoon in Punta Arenas, extreme south of Chile, because of adverse weather conditions in the Falkland Islands Mount Pleasant Airport.

Authorities from Comodoro Rivadavia authorized the three aircraft to fly Argentine air space Authorities from Comodoro Rivadavia authorized the three aircraft to fly Argentine air space

The incident was reported by the Chilean press and in an official release from the Argentine Air Force which revealed that on request to Comodoro Rivadavia air control service, the three aircraft over-flew Argentine territory en route to an alternative airport and therefore "there was no violation of Argentine air space".

According to Chile's El Mercurio visibility in MPA because of a thick fog was down to a hundred metres. The three aircraft apparently were travelling south from Brazil and entered Chilean air space close to 18:00 hours.

The three aircraft after landing in Punta Arenas taxied to the adjoining Chilean Air Force Chacabunco, seat of the IV Air Brigade. The crews spent the night in Punta Arenas and on Thursday morning were off to the Falklands MPA, an hour and 50 minutes journey.

In the second half of last year Euro Typhoon fighters were deployed in the Falkland Islands replacing the ageing Tornado F3 interceptors belonging to the Squadron 1435. Last October the RAF was praised by the UK MoD for the successful completion of Operation Tempest Trail, one of the main logistics operations in peace time involving the successful landing in the Falklands of four Typhoons after flying 9.000 miles 18 hours non stop from the UK to MPA.

An MoD spokesperson said the aircraft were on routine training activities before they were directed to Punta Arenas, a diversionary airport for MPA: "We are very grateful to both the

Argentine Authorities and the Chilean Authorities for their cooperation and rapid response which ensured that this emergency was resolved swiftly and with no loss of life.”

This is not the first time that Punta Arenas has been used as an alternative airport in emergency situations for foreign military aircraft.

Friday, June 4th 2010 - 03:26 UTC

Falkland Islands love to drink wine according to California's Wine Institute

The Falkland Islands figure among the world top ten per capita wine consumption countries according to the Wine Institute (2008), which brings together all of California's wineries and vineyards and manages a vast inventory of statistics with commercial purposes.

Will it be red or Chardonnay, with squid? Will it be red or Chardonnay, with squid?

Strangely enough top of the list in the last four years (2004/2008) figures the Vatican whose 932 residents (no word about the Pope's favourite) according to the latest census consumed an average of 66 litres of wine per capita.

Another oddity are the 1.800 residents of the Norfolk islands in the Pacific Ocean which figure with a higher consumption than those more traditional Mediterranean wine producing countries such as Spain or even the newly arrived but very efficient wineries from Australia (23 litres) and New Zealand (22 litres).-

Similarly with the Falkland Islands, that figures with a per capita consumption of 42 litres, well ahead of Spain with 33 litres, Argentina with 27 litres, Uruguay with 25, UK with 19 and Chile with 17 litres.

The top ten ranked are: Vatican; Norfolk islands; France, Luxembourg; Andorra, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Falkland Islands and Croatia.

Another curious fact is that at least twenty countries figure with virtually zero wine consumption (North Korea), and that the country with greatest taste-for-wine expansion in the last four years has been Nigeria (1.200%), Macao (690%). Meantime consumption in Argentina has dropped 3.7%.

More specifically the 2.967 Falklands' residents figure with the following per capita consumption pattern: 2004 (25.61 litres); 2005 (14.30 litres); 2006 (50.76 litres); 2007 (60.41 litres) and 2008 (41.99 litres) with an increase of 63.9% in the period analyzed.

Monday, June 7th 2010 - 10:57 UTC

OAS delegates and business sector agree to promote democracy and social equality

The Organization of American States, OAS, member countries and the business sector agreed in Lima, Peru on the need to strengthen and instigate the alliance between the public and private sectors in order to promote democracy, social equality and responsibility, and the fight against crime.

OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza

In the traditional dialogue between the heads of the delegation and representatives with the private sector, held before the start of the 40th General Assembly of the Organization of American States, Secretary General José Miguel Insulza said that "the work with the private sector has increased."

Insulza also said that the "work done in Haiti was brilliant" after the devastating earthquake in January of this year.

He also recognized "the important contribution from the private sector that has promoted social development and sustainable economic growth, along with social inclusion in regional nations."

Peru's Production Minister, José Nicanor Gonzales, said that the objectives of the Lima Declaration - peace, cooperation and security - "cannot be the responsibility of just one sector, but need to be the responsibility of society as a whole."

The Vice President of the Latin American Private Sector, Enrique de Obarrio, said that the sector "is sure that the existence of a multi-sector debate allows for a more complete dialogue" and that this "is the only way that we can continue to form alliances between the public and private sectors" that are "destined to successfully meet the goals for inclusive development and peace" in the region.

Tuesday, June 8th 2010 - 05:45 UTC

PM Cameron reiterates full support for Falklands' freedom and self determination

British Prime Minister David Cameron reiterated the support of his government for the freedom and self determination of the Falkland Islands, in a letter addressed to members of the Islands' Legislative Assembly which was made public on Monday.

Argentina's Jorge Taiana will address the Malvinas issue, Tuesday in Lima
Jorge Taiana will address the Malvinas issue, Tuesday in Lima

"I'm proud to lead this historic (British) coalition government" said PM Cameron and underlined the full support of the British government "for the freedom and self determination of the Falkland Islands".

The message from PM Cameron was in reply to a letter from the Falklands' Members of the Legislative Assembly, thanking them for their recent letter of support and warm wishes.

Meanwhile in Lima, Peru, where the Organization of American States, OAS, General Assembly is taking place, Argentina's Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana claimed he had

the full support of the 33 country members for tomorrow's debate on "the colonial situation of the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and adjoining maritime spaces" currently occupied by "an extra region power, Great Britain".

Ecuador, Surinam, Nicaragua and Uruguay joined the group of countries that openly expressed support on Monday for Argentina's sovereignty claims in the South Atlantic.

Tuesday afternoon at the plenary session the first point in the OAS assembly agenda is the "Malvinas question". Taiana is expected to describe Argentina's position and the set of measures taken following the "unilateral and illegitimate actions by the United Kingdom".

Brazil will present the draft-declaration on the Malvinas calling for the resumption of bilateral sovereignty discussions between Argentina and the UK to try and reach a peaceful solution to the ongoing controversy.

Recent statements from Mercosur, Unasur and the Unity Summit among others are expected to be included in the declaration which will also state strong rejection to current oil exploration activities by British companies in Falklands/Malvinas waters.

Tuesday, June 8th 2010 - 05:35 UTC

Argentina's head of fisheries flatly denies "uncontrolled hake catches"

Argentina's head of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Under Secretariat Norberto Yauhar openly denied the alleged collapse of hake (*Merluccius hubbsi*) fishery in the South Atlantic and claims of absence of control measures and management to ensure its sustainability.

Norberto Yauhar: "unjustified alarmism" Norberto Yauhar: "unjustified alarmism"

Yauhar described the scenario in an article published last week in the newspaper La Nación, titled "The uncontrolled fishing of hake populations" as "unjustified alarmism".

In the article, the Foundation for Wildlife (FVSA) warned that the abundance of hake decreased by 80% in the last 20 years because of over-fishing and that the size of current catches is over 60% juveniles.

In response to these allegations, Yauhar pointed out the control and fishery management steps taken by his offices among which:

- The existence of a permanently closed area to protect juvenile hake, which has now expanded to over 193 000 square kilometres, similar to that of countries like Uruguay, Syria, Senegal;
- The requirement for the entire national fishing fleet to use a satellite monitoring system that reports the position, course and speed of the boats every hour;
- In case of failure to comply with measures, the immediate return to port of the vessel in question is ordered;
- Mandatory port stops for vessels authorised to fish hake that are designed to reduce fishing pressure on the resource which demand they call after 50 days per year for fresh fish vessels and 75 days per year for freezer vessels. This represents between 20% to 30% of normal annual operations;
- The adoption for the management of this resource of a system of individual transferable catch quotas (CITC) instead of the 'Olympic' system that existed in the past.
- The implementation from 1 January 2010 of the Certification System of Legal Capture, which allows more efficient monitoring to interweave the various databases that reflect fleet operations. Catches to be reported haul by haul and landings are fully inspected upon arrival in port. In addition, satellite monitoring information shows who the catch was made, where and export data includes the health certificate issued by the National Service for Health and Food Quality, (SENASA) plus the documentation required by the Directorate General Customs;
- This crossing of all this information leaves no margin for under-reporting, which means declaring less or replacing species with another, in this case, stick fish (*Percophis brasiliensis*) for hake.
-

With regard to statements about the disturbing fact that catches of 2009 were dominated 61% by juveniles and 39% by adults, scientific reports indicate that "this is not a true

picture of the population composition which varies from year to year because the inclusion of juveniles is highly fluctuating and depends on the conditions of the population and environmental conditions. Nor is it mentioned that rates similar to those of 2009 were observed in 1993, 1996 and 2004."

He also stressed that the authorities of his office are well aware that the protection of juveniles "is fundamental to achieving the objective of sustainable exploitation of this vital resource for fishing Argentina".

For this reason, the Federal Fisheries Council (CFP) established the compulsory use of selectivity devices that prevent over-fishing of juveniles in the hake fishery, as well as in the hake and shrimp (*Pleoticus muelleri*) fisheries.

Last May CFP decided to use as a first step, four sets of selectivity for hake: Flexigrid, Dejupa, T 90 and square mesh, each with different penalties, according to provisions from the National Institute for Fisheries Research and Development, INIDEP, report.

Finally Yauhar stressed that "the total catch this year will not exceed that of the previous year, which was 30% lower than the current maximum allowable catch for the current year". (FIS)..-

Wednesday, June 9th 2010 - 21:18 UTC

UK reaffirms Falklands' self determination and British sovereignty

The British Foreign Office reaffirmed Wednesday the right to self determination of the Falkland Islands and dismissed the latest statements calling for sovereignty negotiations over the Islands with Argentina.

UK Foreign Secretary William Hague UK Foreign Secretary William Hague

"The principle of self determination stands, as stated by the United Nations' charter. There cannot be any negotiations on sovereignty unless the Islanders wish for them", said a spokesperson from the Foreign Office.

The spokesperson insisted that Britain has "no doubts" about sovereignty over the Falklands and its adjoining maritime spaces.

The statements come a day after the Organization of American States General Assembly meeting in Lima, Peru, called for the quick resumption of negotiations on the disputed Falkland Islands sovereignty with the purpose of finding 'a peaceful and definitive solution to the ongoing controversy'.

Following a debate on Tuesday at the OAS general assembly in which the US representative abstained from participating, Washington nevertheless called for fresh (bilateral) talks between Argentina and the UK.

The Obama administration official line on the issue was announced by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during a recent visit to Buenos Aires: "we would like to see Argentina and the United Kingdom sit down and resolve the issues between them across the table in a peaceful, productive way."

The OAS assembly also decided "to continue examining the issue of the Malvinas Islands until its definitive solution".

However the Foreign Office said that the US continues to deal with the Falklands as a British overseas territory.

"The American position is that they recognize the UK administration on the Falklands," said a Foreign Office spokesman. "There is no change in their overall approach".

Argentina has become increasingly outspoken over the Falklands in recent months as British firms start exploring the Islands territorial waters for oil.

Argentina's Foreign Affairs minister has said that the Malvinas and its territorial waters are part of Argentine territory "occupied by Britain as an act of force".

"Argentina never has stopped underscoring its will to negotiate on a peaceful settlement" he said. "[London] refuses to re-establish dialogue rejecting United Nations resolutions and other calls from the international community".

Meantime in Buenos Aires Vice Chancellor Victorio Taccetti speaking before Congress said that there is a growing "global awareness" towards the United Kingdom's "occupying attitude on the Malvinas Islands", and questioned the installation of several oil platforms on Argentina's continental areas.

"I believe our work is creating a growing global awareness that understands this occupying attitude on the islands has to end" said Taccetti.

Regarding the installation of the oil platforms, he added that "they are trying to exploit resources that don't belong to them, besides the environmental impact their actions would have in the region could be terrible, such as what is currently happening in the Gulf of Mexico".

"Argentina is taking concrete measures in the international community to stop corporations from exploiting the Malvinas. We believe in order to do so, they should first be cleared by us," he concluded.

Wednesday, June 9th 2010 - 19:35 UTC

Long time close friend of Gibraltar named Commons' Deputy Speaker

Britain' House of Commons Speaker John Bercow has unveiled his three deputies as Labour's Chorley MP Lindsay Hoyle, Dawn Primarolo MP and, and Tory Ribble Valley MP Nigel Evans. The deputy speakers were elected by MPs in a secret ballot for the first time.

Labour's Chorley MP Lindsay Hoyle and his father Lord Hoyle have long standing links to Gibraltar Labour's Chorley MP Lindsay Hoyle and his father Lord Hoyle have long standing links to Gibraltar

MP Hoyle a long time close friend of Gibraltar told the 'G. Chronicle' he was really pleased to have had all party support for such an important role; "But I can guarantee I shall not forget my friends either in Chorley or Gibraltar".

Mr Hoyle follows a tradition of Gibraltar support started by his father Lord Hoyle who in 2004 was granted Gibraltar's highest honour, the Freedom of the City. Lindsay Hoyle is chairman of the All Party Gibraltar Group in the Commons.

On the grounds of political balance, two Labour MPs and one Conservative were chosen to fill the posts as Mr Bercow was a Tory MP before being chosen as Speaker last summer. No Liberal Democrats or members of smaller parties were nominated.

Mr Hoyle and former ministers Ms Primarolo (Bristol S) and Mr Evans beat off competition from six other candidates, and will serve from Wednesday until the end of this Parliament.

They were elected under the single transferable vote system, a form of proportional representation. The three MPs will now withdraw from active political roles as they preside over Commons debates when the Speaker is not present.

Mr Hoyle was elected as the principal deputy speaker, the chairman of Ways and Means. Mr Evans is first deputy chairman of Ways and Means, while Ms Primarolo is second deputy chairman of Ways and Means.

In a short statement to MPs, Mr Bercow said: "I congratulate those elected and I look forward to working with them". He paid tribute to former deputy speakers Sir Alan Haslehurst (Tory, Saffron Walden), and Sir Michael Lord and Sylvia Heal - who both stepped down as MPs at this year's UK general election.

Friday, June 11th 2010 - 06:06 UTC

Argentina reaffirms "exclusive authority" over all Falklands' hydrocarbons activities

Argentina reaffirmed "exclusive authority" over all hydrocarbons activities in the Islas Malvinas territory and maritime spaces in a strong release to commemorate June 10th, Day of Argentina's Sovereignty Rights over Malvinas.

The strong release was also announced at the Shanghai World Expo Argentine pavilion by Jorge Taiana. The strong release was also announced at the Shanghai World Expo Argentine pavilion by Jorge Taiana.

The release states that "in respect to the current situation derived from unilateral illegal hydrocarbons exploration and exploitation activities in the zone illegitimately occupied by the United Kingdom, the Argentine government reaffirms its exclusive authority to establish conditions that make possible hydrocarbon activities in areas of the Argentine continental platform".

Therefore any pretension to authorize the accomplishment of the referred activities which do not emanate from the Argentine government, constitute an illicit action both for Argentine Law as for international law".

The release was also made public in Shanghai's World Expo during the "Argentine Day" with Chancellor Jorge Taiana and several of his closest aides sharing the official picture with high ranking Chinese authorities.

The release goes on to say that the "Argentine claim over those territories and austral maritime spaces is supported by the countries of our region".

Furthermore several international organizations and forums such as United Nations, Organization of American States; Ibero-American summits; the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation zone; the South American-Arab countries summits; the South America-Africa summit; the Rio Group and the Latinamerica and Caribbean leaders' summit "recognize the existence of the sovereignty dispute and call on both sides to resume the negotiation process".

The Argentine government reiterates once again on this Day, its standing willingness to resume negotiations geared to find a peaceful and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands question.

However, unfortunately so far “a persistent and unjustified negative from the UK government perpetuates the anachronism of a colonial situation incompatible with the advancement of time”.

“June 10, the Day of the Reaffirmation of Rights over the Malvinas, South Atlantic Islands and the Antarctic sector”, the Argentine nation recalls the creation in 1829 of the “Military and Political Command of the Malvinas Islands and adjacencies to Cape Horn in the Atlantic Sea”, a decree signed by then interim governor of the Buenos Aires province, Brigadier General Martin Rodriguez.

“Since its origins as an independent nation the Argentine Republic has openly expressed through acts of government, the effective exercise of its sovereignty over the austral territories and maritime spaces inherited from Spain”.

The release adds that the Argentine government (from its very origin) never ceased to reaffirm its legitimate rights over the Islands and has toiled to ensure the rule of the law for the better protection of the Argentine population and from other countries resident in the Islands. Thus the appropriate institutional framework was created for the development of the colonizing enterprise sponsored by the governor of the Islas Malvinas, Don Luis Vernet.

To that respect “the effective exercise of sovereignty was interrupted on 3 January 1833 when British forces occupied the Islas Malvinas, ousting the Argentine population and authorities there established and replacing them with British subjects”.

But underlines the release, “the Argentine people and government never consented to such act of force and ratify on this Day the historic mandate enshrined in the First Transitory Disposition of the National Constitution which states its permanent and unrenounceable determination to recover the Islands through peaceful diplomatic

negotiations in the full exercise of sovereignty over the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands”.

This objective is a policy of State and responds to the collective strong desire from the people of the Argentine nation, concludes the communiqué.

Friday, June 11th 2010 - 23:23 UTC

Chilean Senators want International Whaling Commissioner ousted

Chilean senators Juan Pablo Letelier and Guido Girardi met this week with the Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Fernando Schmidt, to plead the removal of Chilean Cristián Maquieira from his position as chairman of the International Whaling Commission.

Cristián Maquieira, chairman of the IWC Cristián Maquieira, chairman of the IWC

The senators, echoing concerns voiced by numerous environmental groups, said Maquieira supports a new international whaling agreement that gives the colour of legitimacy whale killing quotas.

Such quotas are “absolutely contrary to what Chile has always stood for, and are regressive for international attempts to uphold whale populations by prohibiting unchecked whaling,” said Sen. Letelier.

Letelier insisted that he was not advocating an “extremist ecological agenda,” but was simply trying to spark awareness that “the human species lives on a planet in which we are dependent on our environment. We have a responsibility to maintain the ocean ecosystem that covers 70% of the Earth”.

“Chile has a long-established stance against the killing of whales,” said Girardi. “We concluded long ago that it’s a serious ecological crime against humanity and it is totally unacceptable,”

Earlier this year, the IWC announced a new proposal to grant whaling quotas to countries in the organization. It will be further discussed and voted on during the next IWC meeting from June 21-25 in Morocco. The new proposal would replace the 25-year moratorium on whaling with quotas for allowed hunting, asserting that this would help lessen the ongoing illegal hunting presenting being done by some countries such as Norway, Iceland and Japan. By Aaron Cantu – Santiago Times

Sunday, June 13th 2010 - 01:31 UTC

UK Deputy PM Clegg reaffirms Falklands' British sovereignty

Britain's Deputy Primer Minister Liberal-Democrat Nick Clegg said in Spain there will be no change in the stance of the Falkland Islands sovereignty and the Islanders wish to remain British.

Britain's Deputy PM Nick Clegg talks to Spain's PM Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero during a meeting at Moncloa palace in Madrid. Britain's Deputy PM Nick Clegg talks to Spain's PM Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero during a meeting at Moncloa palace in Madrid.

"We believe that the rights, sovereignty and preferences of the Falkland Islanders have a primordial importance", said Nick Clegg during a meeting with the press on his first official visit to Spain.

"We will not compromise the rights, preferences and sovereignty of the Falklands", said the UK coalition government number 2. "We clearly want the Falklands to remain as part of the United Kingdom"

The statement is interpreted as a reply to last Tuesday's Organization of American States, OAS, General Assembly declaration which unanimously reiterated support for Argentina's claims over the Malvinas and South Atlantic islands and called for the resumption of bilateral sovereignty talks in search of a negotiated and peaceful solution to the dispute.

The round of oil exploration in Falklands' waters licensed by the Falklands' government and which begun last February has infuriated Argentina that has imposed the need of

authorization for all vessels travelling between the mainland and the Falklands arguing they violate "Argentine sovereignty".

The Deputy Leader of Britain's coalition government also informed his host Spanish president Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero that UK will not change its position regarding Gibraltar, which is a British Overseas Territory and whose residents are most happy in remaining British.

"I must be absolutely clear on this point. The (British) Government will not in any way accept a change in the status of Gibraltar unless this is approved by the inhabitants of the Rock," said Nick Clegg.

"I know, thanks to my political family (Mrs Clegg is Spanish) that this position is not popular in Spain, but it was the outgoing government's position and one that we share" added Clegg.

In related news the Daily Express published that US/UK relations plunged after the Obama administration sided with Latinamerican countries (OAS assembly) calling for fresh talks with Argentina on the Falklands sovereignty issue.

However, British diplomats have dismissed the move as "symbolic posturing" of no importance.

Monday, June 14th 2010 - 04:30 UTC

Falkland Islands commemorates Liberation Day 14 June 1982

The Falkland Islands are marking today Monday June 14 the 28th anniversary of the liberation of the Islands from Argentine occupation in 1982 and a full program has been outlined by Gilbert House.

Liberation Monument in front of Stanley's Secretariat building
Liberation Monument in front of Stanley's Secretariat building

A Thanksgiving Service will be held in Stanley's Christ Church Cathedral commencing at 9.45 am. His Excellency the Governor Alan Huckle, Members of the Legislative Assembly together with the Commander British Forces will attend the service.

The marching troops, consisting of the Royal Navy, Falkland Islands Defence Force, Army and Royal Air Force will be led by the Light Cavalry Band. Members of the Merchant Navy and Youth Groups will be in attendance. Veterans from 1982, including local residents and a small contingent from the United Kingdom will also be present.

At 11.00 am a ceremony will be held at the Liberation Monument in front of the Secretariat building. After prayers His Excellency the Governor will lay a wreath. Wreaths will also be laid by a Member of the Legislative Assembly, the Commander British Forces, Veteran associations, and by relatives and others wishing to do so.

Members of the community wishing to attend are asked to arrive no later than 10.45 a.m. Attention is drawn to the fact that Ross Road between Barrack St and Reservoir Road will be closed to traffic to enable the ceremony at the Monument to take place.

A civic reception, hosted by the Falkland Islands Government, will be held in the Town Hall from 11.30.

All residents and members of the Armed Services are cordially invited to attend. It is appropriate for medals and decorations to be worn on this occasion.

Monday, June 14th 2010 - 03:58 UTC

Protestors receive Falklands' bound Lan Chile flight in Rio Gallegos

As had been anticipated a dissident group of Malvinas veterans protested at the Argentine airport of Rio Gallegos during the Saturday stop over of the weekly Lan Chile flight to the Falkland Islands.

A Lan Chile aircraft in Rio Gallegos A Lan Chile aircraft in Rio Gallegos

Members of the Malvinas Association of Civil Combatants from Buenos Aires unfurled a huge Argentine flag and let off light-blue and white smoke bombs at the end of the runway demanding the immediate suspension of all Lan Chile flights to the Falklands.

According to the Argentine press it's the same group that during the recent military parade in Buenos Aires to celebrate the Bicentenary (25 May) slipped in and marched in front of the Honours' Box, in spite of having been ignored by the organizers of the festivity.

"We're here in defence of our sovereignty, we want flights of Lan Chile to Malvinas to be suspended", said Fernando Préstamo following the protest and quoted by La Nacion.

The Malvinas veterans group arrived in Rio Gallegos to protest the monthly flight and unfurl the Argentine flag which read: "Glory to the 649 Malvinas heroes". However nor the flag nor the smoke bombs interrupted or interfered with the normal operation of the aircraft according to the local Lan office.

In a communiqué distributed by the group the veterans openly reject the current round of oil exploration in waters adjacent to the Malvinas archipelago and protested last week's 'incursion of RAF aircraft from the British military base in Mount Pleasant en route to Chile'.

Monday, June 14th 2010 - 23:59 UTC

UK committed to strong naval presence around the Falkland Islands

A senior Royal Navy officer stressed that the new British government remains committed to keeping a strong naval presence around the Falkland Islands, reports the Portsmouth press.

Major General Garry Robison, Chief of Staff (Capability) on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief Fleet in Portsmouth Major General Garry Robison, Chief of Staff (Capability) on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief Fleet in Portsmouth

Major General Garry Robison promised that warships would continue to be deployed in the South Atlantic as Britain's search for oil there raises diplomatic tensions with Argentina.

The former Commandant General of the Royal Marines, who is now Chief of Staff (Capability) on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief Fleet in Portsmouth, was speaking after HMS York returned earlier this month.

In a speech to the ship's company on the Type 42 destroyer's flight deck, he praised their work of the past seven months, 8,000 miles from Portsmouth.

He said: 'There is no doubt that the South Atlantic and the Falkland Islands remain a strategically important region of the world for the UK.

'The new government, elected while you have been away, has set out its objectives and remains firmly committed to the Falkland Islands.'

During HMS York's deployment she intercepted an Argentine warship spotted about 10 miles inside the disputed 'oil zone' around the South Atlantic Islands.

HMS York had to radio the Argentine ship, a smaller corvette named ARA Drummond, to demand that it change its course.

The destroyer also acted as a guard-ship when the exploratory oil rig Ocean Guardian arrived to begin the search for oil.

Her commanding officer, Commander Simon Staley, 43, from Southsea, who was met by his wife Leonie, said: 'The excellent training prior to our departure last year, stood York in very good stead for what was a challenging and sometimes gruelling South Atlantic deployment.'

He will continue his command and take her back to the South Atlantic again next year.

Tony Banks, the UK TV series Secret Millionaire Tony Banks, the UK TV series Secret Millionaire

Tony Banks was a Scottish paratrooper ordered to dispossess Argentine troops of everything except their clothes after the fierce battle for Goose Green, and Omar Tabarez was an army musician who was forced to hand over the trumpet he was carrying.

Now the man probably best known for his role in the TV series Secret Millionaire will return to the scene of the conflict. In an extraordinary event, the multi-millionaire care home owner will this week meet Tabarez to hand back the instrument he seized 28 years ago and which has been in his possession ever since.

The two veterans will come face to face again in Buenos Aires on Wednesday when Banks, 48, will hand back the trumpet in a ceremony endorsed by the Argentine government. It said it would honour the entrepreneur for his gesture and his "good attitude" for returning to the country with the instrument.

Speaking from the Argentine capital Banks, a nursing home tycoon from Kirriemuir, Angus, said he was excited but anxious about the meeting. "But I have been looking at the trumpet over the past few years and thinking: this is not mine, I should give it back".

The two soldiers came fleetingly into contact when Banks, then 20, was working as a prisoner handler. "I had to put the Argentines on to their boats, making sure they left with nothing more than their clothes," he said.

"One chap standing in line was holding a strange-looking box and I asked him what it was. When he told me it was his trumpet I was taken aback.

"I felt bad, but I couldn't let him take this away so I held on to it. There was all these other guys (from his regiment] standing around with swords and bayonets. I had a trumpet and I've had it sitting in my office ever since."

The pair would now come together as men, not soldiers, he added. "I often wondered what happened to that guy. It's a way for me to grieve a little and I'll probably say I'm sorry and hope you've had a good life."

Tabarez said Banks' gesture went beyond politics and national pride and he had no animosity towards Banks.

"He is very brave to come here to Argentina and do this and to return something that belongs to a soldier," said the father of two, who is about to become a professor of history. "He didn't take the decision to confront me – Maggie Thatcher did."

Tabarez said he had been "jumping for joy" since a former army colleague phoned him in recent weeks to say the British ex-serviceman was looking to reunite him with the instrument.

"I couldn't believe it. I'm still only putting my feet back on the ground," said Tabarez, who was part of an artillery crew defending a landing strip during the two-month military campaign.

Banks says he too holds nothing personal against the country that seized the Falkland Islands, a British Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic, in 1982, provoking a bloody conflict that left 255 British servicemen dead and killed 649 Argentine soldiers.

"I have no animosity to Argentina. I was sent there to do a job and that was that," said Banks. "I'm not here to change history. I'm just here to give something back that's not mine."

Major Dario Ochoa, who is coordinating the ceremony to be attended by army officials, said: "we as soldiers have more in common than government: we understand each other. Mr Banks has a nice attitude towards this and the army is happy the veteran will get the trumpet back."

Banks, who is worth an estimated £60 million, travelled back to the Falklands this year to retrace his steps on the battlefield and raise awareness for Combat Stress, a charity aiding ex-servicemen. He became interested in helping traumatised veterans after appearing in the TV series in which wealthy individuals go undercover to identify people they can help financially.

In Liverpool he met 29-year-old Lee Sanger, a veteran of the Iraq war, who suffered from post traumatic stress disorder. He donated £30,000 to Combat Stress, Sanger's choice of charity, and has since donated another £100,000.

Banks said meeting Tabarez would help him overcome his memories of the Falklands conflict – he lost several of his friends from the regiment in the fighting – and a traumatic period after the war.

"When I came back from the Falklands there was death all around me. I was an angry young man for a long time," he said. "This is like the final piece of the jigsaw – like drawing a line through it all."

Tabarez says he has suffered from anxiety and depression since the battle. The war didn't stop in 1982," says Tabarez, who retired from the army in 1994. "It goes on for the whole life. It's an internal struggle. The suffering goes on".

He recalls the day when British forces swooped on Goose Green, where Argentine forces were entrenched in a bloody battle that lasted two days before they surrendered.

"When I saw the British guy (Banks], he was observing me. He saw I had something," he said of the black case he was carrying with the trumpet. "He went to his boss and said something. Then he came back and took the trumpet".

"It has a lot of meaning for me. It's symbolic. It's like therapy. It accompanied me through the war. It was like my brother. It doesn't have a price". (The Scotsman).

Tuesday, June 15th 2010 - 05:09 UTC

UK doubling inspection and reviewing standards of drilling rigs

Britain is doubling inspection of drilling rigs after the BP oil spill, Energy Secretary Chris Huhne informed Parliament. He told MPs a review of standards had been carried out but with the beginning of exploration in deeper waters west of Shetland, "we must be vigilant".

The Gulf of Mexico disaster has triggered an overhaul in offshore activities The Gulf of Mexico disaster has triggered an overhaul in offshore activities

Following the 1988 Piper Alpha disaster, UK regulation had been "significantly tightened", he said.

US President Barack Obama likened the spill's impact to the way the 9/11 attacks shaped US security policy.

Mr Huhne told MPs an "urgent review" of oil and gas industry standards had already been undertaken. "It's clear that our safety and environmental regulatory regime is already among the most robust in the world; the industry's record in the North Sea is strong," he said.

All the companies involved in the Deepwater Horizon project, Halliburton, Transocean, Cameron and BP should be subject to investigation. But with deep water drilling planned west of Shetland, Britain had to be vigilant.

"Initial steps are already under way including doubling annual environmental inspections by Decc [the Department of Energy and Climate Change] to drilling rigs."

"I will review our new and existing procedures as soon as detailed analysis of the factors which caused the incident in the Gulf of Mexico are available, building on the work already begun by the newly formed oil spill prevention and response advisory group."

He said global deep water production was important during "our transition to a low-carbon economy" but the disaster had been an "environmental wake-up call".

The spill was a "stark reminder of the environmental dangers of oil and gas production in ever more difficult areas," he said, which highlighted the need to switch to lower carbon technology.

The explosion on the Piper Alpha rig had led to an overhaul of British regulation - with licensing and operational regulation split from the health and safety regime. British officials had been discussing this with US counterparts, he added.

On BP, he said it was "hugely regrettable" that the firm had as yet been unable to stop the spill off the US coast. But he praised its "strong public commitment to stand by its obligations, to halt the spill and to provide remedy and payment of all legitimate claims".

BP remained a "strong company" which would continue to be "a major employer and vital investor here and in the United States," he went on.

"And in many ways, BP is effectively an Anglo-American company with 39% of its shares owned in the United States, against 40% in the United Kingdom."

He sought to reassure UK pension fund investors amid press speculation about the impact of BP's troubles on them, saying the company was "financially sound" and pension funds holding its shares generally also held a very diverse portfolio of assets.

Shadow energy secretary Ed Miliband said he wanted to express "deep concern" about the oil spill and said there should be a "clear and co-ordinated response" from the US and UK governments.

He added "All the companies involved in the Deepwater Horizon project, Halliburton, Transocean, Cameron and BP should be subject to investigation. Finger pointing at BP in particular is not helpful."

Mr Huhne agreed, saying BP's interest in the Deepwater Horizon project amounted to 65% and the rig had been subcontracted from Transocean, "a very well-known and respected US company" which was using technology produced in the US.

Labour MP Gareth Thomas pointed out that there were 10 Transocean rigs operating in UK waters and suggested they should be subject to an immediate safety review.

Mr Huhne said: "That is precisely why, when we conducted the urgent review of our existing regime, we thought it was appropriate to increase immediately the number of environmental inspectors who can go on to rigs and ensure that the rules and regulations which are set out for safety and environmental safety are properly applied". (BBC).-

Tuesday, June 15th 2010 - 02:32 UTC

Falklands' oil exploration "looking at business options in Brazil"

Falkland Islands member of the Legislative Assembly Glen Ross said the Islands are interested in reaching a business agreement with Brazil for the maintenance of the oil rig currently involved in a round of exploratory drilling.

MLA Glen Ross interviewed by the Brazilian press (Pic FIG) MLA Glen Ross interviewed by the Brazilian press (Pic FIG)

Interviewed on Monday (Liberation Day in the Falklands) by Folha de Sao Paulo's Buenos Aires correspondent Gustavo Hennemann, MLA Ross said the Falklands would like to have normal peaceful relations with Argentina but things couldn't be worse, "because Argentina has broken all existing agreements and understandings between both countries".

"The exploratory oil rig 'Ocean Guardian' (which arrived in the Falklands last February) needs maintenance and provisions, and we are looking at business options in Brazil". MLA Ross is quoted in the influential Sao Paulo newspaper.

Asked if there are any chances of reaching an understanding with Argentina reference oil exploration, MLA Ross says the opportunity still exists, "so far the Argentines are the only

responsible for breaking the agreements signed between our two countries. Any treaty with Argentina is not worth the paper it's written on".

MLA Ross said relations with Argentina are 'deplorable' and have been worsening for the last three years: "we want to live peacefully with our neighbours. We are a small democratic country with an autonomous government and budget, and we only depend on the UK for defence. The Argentine government is quarrelling on its own. We have an independent spirit and on our own will want to be British".

Asked about the UN resolutions since 1965 calling for Falklands sovereignty talks between the UK and Argentina, MLA Ross replied that "sovereignty is not negotiable, and from the Argentine point of view, negotiations means taking all of it. The ancestors of Falklanders have been in the Islands for 170 years. My family arrived in 1842, I'm sixth generation. We didn't expel any original communities, any aborigines; we have a discrepancy on that. The fact is that Argentines are not polite neighbours with nobody. I'm thankful for every drop of water that separates us from them".

And if Argentina dropped its sovereignty claims over the Islands would the local population be willing to become independent from the UK?

"We are very small, but if we had a friendly neighbourhood and they would support us, it would be interesting to consider it. Unfortunately we can't even stop to think about that hypothesis".

MLA Ross went on to explain that the Falklands have good and long relations with Chile and Uruguay. In the seventies there was a sea link with a Uruguayan port and today there are 200 Chileans living in the Islands and two of them belong "to our national soccer team". Ross also admitted spending most of his holidays in Chile.

Finally when asked about Liberation Day ceremony, MLA Ross said "it's not exactly a commemoration: it's an important day for us but it's not a festivity. There are religious services, followed by a military parade with groups of young people who march up to the Liberation Monument".

Suggested Stories

* Sep 08th 2011 The Earl of Wessex, in his position of Vice Patron of the Commonwealth Games Federation, opened the event

Commonwealth Youth Games open with Falklands proudly flying the flag

* Sep 08th 2011 Ambassador Argüello: "never before has Latin America and the Caribbean been so united in defence of the territorial integrity of the region"

Argentina alleges Falklands is under 'military occupation' with more soldiers than civilians

* Sep 07th 2011 MLA Emma Edwards "has always held deep reservations about certain aspects of the (tourism) strategy"

Falkland Islands Assembly Member removed from Tourism portfolio

* Sep 07th 2011 With a flash of fire from her saluting gun, the Fortress of the Sea makes her ceremonial entry into the home of the South African Navy

Falklands' deployed HMS Edinburgh visits South African navy Simons Town base

Published in: Politics, Falkland Islands.

109 comments Feed

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1 Hoytred (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 03:48 am Report abuse

"sovereignty is not negotiable, and from the Argentine point of view, negotiations means taking all of it. The ancestors of Falklanders have been in the Islands for 170 years. My family arrived in 1842, I'm sixth generation. We didn't expel any original communities, any aborigines; we have a discrepancy on that. The fact is that Argentines are not polite

neighbours with nobody. I'm thankful for every drop of water that separates us from them"

Well that pretty well rules out any negotiations in the foreseeable future! I also note that the UK is now only concerned with defence, foreign relations appear to have been passed to the islanders.

The reliability of Argentina's neighbours viz a viz treaties and expressions of support may soon be tested. I wonder what Brazil will do?

2 Marco (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 04:18 am Report abuse

The book The last Colonies by Robert Aldrich and John Connell page 200

1833 ' The Brithish commander raise the Union Jack, claimed possession of the islands and expelled the Argentinians.

The Falklands officially became a Crown colony in 1840, a governor and a few Scotsmen arrived to establish a Brithish pastoral settlement. Argentina hotly disputed the Brithish takeover, and Buenos Aires made continual diplomatic representations over the next 150 years to recover the islands"

3 Hoytred (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 05:58 am Report abuse

Marco - your authors are being dramatic, but they aren't very good historians ... check out the REAL diary of Charles Darwin. He was on the Falklands in March 1833 and recorded details of the population in his diary, i.e.

March 1st 1833

" We arrived early in the morning at Port Louis, the most Eastern point of the Falkland Islands: The first news we received was to our astonishment, that England had taken possession of the Falklands islands & that the Flag was now flying. — These islands have been for some time uninhabited, untill the Buenos Ayres Government, a few years since claimed them & sent some colonists. — Our government remonstrated against this, & last month the Clio arrived here with orders to take possession of the place. — A Buenos ayrean man of war was here, at the time, with some fresh colonists. — Both they & the vessel returned to the Rio Plata. — The present inhabitants consist of one Englishman,

who has resided here for some years, & has now the charge of the British flag, 20 Spaniards & three women, two of whom are negroes. — The island is abundantly stocked with animals. — there are about 5000 wild oxen, many horses, & pigs. — Wild fowl, rabbits, & fish in the greatest plenty. — European vegetables will grow. — And as there is an abundance of water & good anchorage; it is most surprising that it has not been long ago colonized, in order to afford provisions for Ships going round the Horn. — At present it is only frequented by Whalers, one of which is here now.... ”

So 20 of Vernet's workers remained, soon to be joined by a few more, and the newcomers (ie the garrison) left!.

And Darwin was only a passive observer more interested in the flora and fauna than the politics !

4 Domingo (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 06:04 am Report abuse

The authors of this book did not do their research well. Historical records do not record an expulsion of Argentines in Jan. 1833 . Rather the fact is 33 people of all nationalities were given a free choice to stay or go, 22 decided to stay. The Sarandi returned to Buenos Aires with 11 civilians who wished to go & 17 AR soldiers who, it is agreed, were ordered to go by Capt. Onslow. The Rapid carried 9 muntineers, who murdered the Argentine commander, Mestivier, on 30th Nov. 1832 after arriving on 6th Oct. and took command on 10th.

How do you reconcile your false claims against these actual facts of the “ARA” (United Provinces) privateer ship Sarandi's captain's log?

The fact remains no Argentines were expelled.

Also, how do you explain the fact that AR ratified the “Convention between Great Britain & the Argentine Confederation, for the Settlement of existing Differences & the re-establishment of Friendship” peace treaty in May 1850, which agreed the Falklands were a British Territory and that this existing difference was settled that “perfect friendship” existed between the UK & AR? This is de jure recognition of British ownership by Argentina.

Was there really continuous diplomatic representations over the next 150 years? The records shows this to be false. There is 1 recorded protest by AR foreign minister in 1888 & no further protests after the 1850 peace treaty in Messages to Congress until 1941, i.e. a 90 years of silence, when the AR fascists revived their claim. That is the truth.

Past history is secondary, Argentina voted for resolution 1514(XV) in 1960 which covers the case of the Falklands.

Resolution 2065(XX) reminds AR & UK that even if they agree who has sovereignty peacefully, their sovereignty rights are removed by resolution 1514(XV)& requires that:

"Immediate steps shall be taken, in... Non-Self-Governing Territories... to transfer all powers to the peoples of those territories, without any conditions or reservations"

Be accurate!

5 Hoytred (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 06:19 am Report abuse

Well done Domingo - now I hadn't thought of Sarandi's log, is a cope available anywhere on the internet do you know?

The British logs are in paper form at the National Archive in London I suspect a bit far from where I currently am!

6 Domingo (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 07:07 am Report abuse

The logs of the Sarandi & Rapid are held in the Argentine National Archive, as are the trial testimony of the AR mutineers who killed the commandant Mestivier, ending the four days of effective AR commandant government between 6th October 1832 to 10th of October 1832.

7 Think (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 07:17 am Report abuse

Mr Ross says:

"The exploratory oil rig 'Ocean Guardian' needs maintenance and provisions, and we are looking at business options in Brazil".

I say:

A welcomed opportunity for the Brazilians to check the rig and talk privately with "Diamond Offshore" about leasing it.

We need any piece off equipment we can put our fingers on for the development our own confirmed Mega Oil Fund, just off the coast.

He says:

"We want to live peacefully with our neighbours. We are a small democratic country with an autonomous government and budget, and we only depend on the UK for defence.

Sovereignty is not negotiable, and from the Argentine point of view, negotiations means taking all of it.

We are very small, but if we had a friendly neighborhood and they would support us, it would be interesting to consider it. Unfortunately we can't even stop to think about that hypothesis".

I say:

Wait a minute..... Where have I heard similar arguments before.....Hmmmmm.....

Oh yes!

Israel.

Has worked beautifully for the whole neighbourhood.

He admits:

Ross also admitted spending most of his holidays in Chile.

I say:

It's OK with me for you to visit Chile, a beautiful and friendly country.

As OK as when you as many of your fellow Falklanders cross over to Argentina to shop cheaply and get some juicy steaks.

You always have a good time.

But of course you wouldn't "admit" that in public.

What would the general public in GB think?

8 J.A. Roberts (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 07:47 am Report abuse

Oh Think, your powers of thought have deserted you again. The Falkland Island and Israeli situations could not be more different. There is absolutely not single shred of similarity.

What would the GB general public think of Islanders holidaying in Argentina? I would say: It's not a sin, go for your life! Good steaks and probably good value paying in pounds.

9 Think (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 07:55 am Report abuse

(8) J.A. Roberts

Of course, the SITUATION could not be more different.

But the ARGUMENTS are remarkable similar mate.

That's what I said.

10 J.A. Roberts (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 08:29 am Report abuse

You really have lost your power of thought. There is nothing similar about the arguments AT ALL! No parallels whatsoever!

11 Think (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 08:31 am Report abuse

(8) J.A.Roberts

You say: "What would the GB general public think of Islanders holidaying in Argentina? I would say: It's not a sin, go for your life! Good steaks and probably good value paying in pounds"

I say: What does the GB general public think of, for instance, Iraqi Citizens claiming political asylum in Britain by crying "bloody murder", holidaying in Iraq twice a year?

Would you say: It's not a sin, go for your life! Good Shish Kebab and probably good value paying in pounds.

12 J.A. Roberts (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 08:36 am Report abuse

Well if yr brave enough, why not go to Iraq on holiday? It would certainly help the Iraqis getting a bit of tourist income. It's not like it's off limits. There are flights to Baghdad from the UK now. I'm all for adventure and kebabs (shish kebabs are Turkish by the way)...

news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7957974.stm

13 Think (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 08:52 am Report abuse

For your kind info,

When you are an asylum seeker, you are not supposed to be able to holiday in the country you escaped from.

It automatically disqualifies you as an asylum seeker.

Is like working and getting unemployment benefits.

You know what I mean?

Shish Kebab is Ottoman, correct. That includes Iraq.

14 stick up your junta (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 09:09 am Report abuse

I say: What does the GB general public think of, for instance, Iraqi Citizens claiming political asylum in Britain by crying "bloody murder", holidaying in Iraq twice a year?

Does eating all that red meat give you Argies a form of Tourette's disorder

15 J.A. Roberts (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 09:37 am Report abuse

Oh Think, I misunderstood. Well an Iraqi got asylum in the UK then I don't see why they would want to go back to Iraq. It's a bit of a non-question. Yes, shish kebab is "ottoman", so it's an "ottoman" dish and not an Iraqi one. Just because the ottomans imposed themselves on what is today called Iraq does not make all Iraqi food ottoman.

16 Think (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 09:41 am Report abuse

(14) Sticky

Don't know... Could be...

I recall something about Mad Cow Disease (BSE) and England.

It made your brain spongy if I remember right.

17 arquero (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 12:03 pm Report abuse

#11 ,#12,#13 000fffff you excite me by talking about Şiş Kebap .

Şiş Kebap has Middle Asia Nomad Turkish origin.

in Turkey and other Türk Republics cheaper Döner Kebap is preferred.

(Döner = Revolving)... It has İskender (Alexander)Kebap version which has with butter+tomato paste+pita+grilled pepper,potatoes.

Hamburger has no market chance in here because we have patented traditional 36kinds meat rissoles and their restaurants chains.

also you can easily find and eat everywhere all Türk meals in Germany.
and all other European big cities.

bon appetite

18 Think (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 12:34 pm Report abuse

I knew Johnny Turk would be attracted by the" Kebab talk"

19 jorge! (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 08:25 pm Report abuse

Hi to all, argentines, british pirates and squatters. I sopped by to say:

Malvinas Argentinas for ever!!!!!!!!!!!!

20 Domingo (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 08:30 pm Report abuse

or Malvinas Argentinas for never?!

21 Think (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 08:36 pm Report abuse

You know what Brits can?....

Brits can:

Defeat a brick wall in a game of Tennis.

Order a Big Mac at Burger King and get one.

Play Russian Roulette with a fully loaded gun and win.

22 jerry (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 09:44 pm Report abuse

Just curious, but this statement: "We are a small democratic country with an autonomous government and budget, and we only depend on the UK for defence.", seems incongruous with statements made to me by Falkland Islanders that the U.K. paid an annual "salary" of about 20,000 pounds to each family in the Falklands. Because of this, Islanders had no desire to work, and most work was done by outsiders, while the local population spent most of their time driving from bar to bar in their 4-wheel drive vehicles and downing whiskey (or any alcohol) in about any form!

23 stick up your junta (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 09:50 pm Report abuse

If that is true jerry, no wonder they don't want anything to do with the Argies

I am off down south

24 jorge! (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 09:54 pm Report abuse

Domingo you are such a laugh!!!!

25 Think (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 09:55 pm Report abuse

A local old drunk is drinking in Port Stanley's Deanos Bar.

A tiny gay fellow sits beside him. After a few beers, the gay guy whispers, "Do you want a blow job?"

The gigantic man flips out, roars in anger, and tosses the little guy out of the bar, then returns to his stool.

The shocked bartender says, "I've never seen you react like that. What did that guy say?"

"Dunno. Something about a job."

26 stick up your junta (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 10:09 pm Report abuse

Q. How many Argentine soldiers does it take to defend Port Stanley?

A. Don't know, it's never been tried.

27 harrier61 (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 10:23 pm Report abuse

@26 stick up your junta.

A. 649, but not successfully.

28 Islander1 (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 10:36 pm Report abuse

Jerry, love to know your source on the £20,000 a head story! Never heard that one before- nor the rest of the bull**** with it! WE pay UK "experts" far larger sums to come here and sit on their***** for a 3yr contract!

Think - a few but only a few holiday in Argentina, most of those few who do are people who have family connections there. Yes Arg Steaks are damn good! But your clever Govt prevents us from importing them! Also correct number of Chilean folk living and working here now is nearer 600.

29 Beef (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 10:45 pm Report abuse

Watch out boys Jihad Jorge the Talib has returned. Looks like he has run out of things to say. Is your James Bond plan to take control of the Islands still on the cards Osama? Do you have a plan to prevent Brazil from collaborating on this legal and sucessful round of exploratory drilling?

Looks like dreaming is still your best talent!

30 harrier61 (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 10:48 pm Report abuse

Not a good idea for FIG to consider commercial links with Argentina. Any commercial infrastructure invites interference from the Argentine government, agitators and the like. Stick with Brazil and Chile, possibly Uruguay. I think they have a better history.

31 thorson (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 10:51 pm Report abuse

jorge, on a sereouse note, i was thinking you sound like you need employment, well i will pay you 40 pence a year if you wipe my arse for me after iv had a shite, food and accomadation are all inclusive

il even let you watch some tv from outside the window looking in, how about it jorge?

32 Domingo (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 10:53 pm Report abuse

@ Jorge: Thanks. U2!

Salaamun 'Alaykum!

33 Think (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 11:00 pm Report abuse

Islander

You wrote about Tony Banks visit to BUE: "Think, its B***** all to do with politics. and I hope will be seen by even the Arg press as just a decent gesture between profesional soldiers who once opposed each other. It will be a shame if this gesture is turned into a media Circus by Argentina"

I say:

Once a year the Circus comes to town.

Through history the vets and the dead have been the sad clowns of that Circus.

The Circus of the "stiff upper lips", the "dignifying silences", the introvert ceremonies, the quiet crosses in straight lines.

I'm not disrespecting those men.

The Circus is!

34 jorge! (#) Jun 15th, 2010 - 11:23 pm Report abuse

29 beef said:

....."Do you have a plan to prevent Brazil from collaborating on this legal and sucessful round of exploratory drilling?"....

www.infobae.com/mundo/521492-101275-0-Malvinas-Brasil-ratifico-su-apoyo-la-soberania-argentina-y-dijo-que-no-negociara-los-kelpers

35 Hoytred (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 12:47 am Report abuse

jorgy boy, the inclusion of the word 'kelpers' tend to indicate that your suggested article is less than serious!

36 Marco (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 12:57 am Report abuse

Now they are crying for South American help, why? London is too far and in Europe perhaps.

37 Hoytred (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 01:07 am Report abuse

I don't think they service rigs in London. There are some big American companies that do the job but I suspect cheaper options are being explored first.

A little, 'divide and conquer' may be in their reasoning too ...

38 Rhaurie-Craughwell (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 01:45 am Report abuse

Ah Jorge the abortion makes his always unwelcome appearance on Mercopress!

It is a said fact but true Jorge's mentally challenged state of mind rages outwards like radiation, ones feels their IQ count drop several digits when confronted by the mad and deluded almost parrot like ravings of Jorge Senor Rios (that is your real name ain't it?)

Now we just need the Youtube kid riding into town and the party begins :)

39 Billy Hayes (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 02:39 am Report abuse

thank´s mr ross; you make brazil speak.

40 jorge! (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 02:42 am Report abuse

hahahaha Hoytred, here you have more sources about the same

www.perfil.com/contenidos/2010/06/15/noticia_0028.html

www.ambito.com/noticia.asp?id=527779

We call them kelpers, what's the problem?????

Rhaurie, you will have to see me, sorry little man!!!!

Idiot!!!

My real name???? I won't tell you, keep with your research!!! Good luck!!!

41 Marco (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 04:00 am Report abuse

Not only British companies are too far to service the rigs also they are useless and negligent like British Petroleum that is flooding and destroying the whole US Gulf of Mexico region. If you speak nowadays in US with British accent they will throw you in the ocean and send you back to UK.

42 Think (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 05:08 am Report abuse

Seems to be that Glenn can't get his "old rig" repaired in Brazil.

Falklands, BP and Cars:

In the case of the Islands they fervently explain:

Is a British Wauxhall not an Opel !

In the case of BP they vehemently declare:

It's an Opel not a British Wauxhall !

Still.....Same car under the Bonnet.

43 Hoytred (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 05:56 am Report abuse

Bit repetitive Think?

Marco - as I understand it, they don't actually have to take the rig for repair, nobody has a garage big enough, it gets maintain 'in situ'.

I am a little surprised that the FIG feels the need to get involved as usually the rig is hired from another company who have the responsibility for maintenance. It is not often owned by the people doing the drilling, a far too expensive way of going about things.

Now the owners will probably have the personnel to service the rig themselves, if not they'll hire in whoever they need. One of my neighbours is in that very type of work, and he's up for it. In fact he's probably sending out e-mails as I write.

So the mountain does not, in fact, go to Muhammed, but the Muhammeds get transported to the mountain. What with the recession there are a lot of rig maintenance people waiting and there's a lot of money involved.

44 Think (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 06:22 am Report abuse

Right.... but you still need a harbor.

Ohhh yes ... Of course...

St. Helena :-)

45 Hoytred (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 06:40 am Report abuse

Don't be daft Think, think once the personnel have been transported to the Falkland Islands it is an easy matter to transport them to the rigs be it by boat or helicopter.

Your youth becomes apparent !

46 Think (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 07:02 am Report abuse

Well, that is, as a matter of fact, our intention!

Cost benefit analysis and all that boring capitalist stuff....

Thanks for your comment on my youth, lad!

47 JustinKuntz (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 07:35 am Report abuse

Three small words:

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Or does signing your word to free trade agreements not count for anything in South America. Blockades and embargoes are illegal under international law unless authorised by the Security Council of the UN.

48 J.A. Roberts (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 07:39 am Report abuse

Marco, enough with the "British Petroleum". The company has been called BP for quite some time now and is 40% owned by US citizens.

49 Think (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 07:56 am Report abuse

Yes Marco its Beyond Petroleum now.... DO YOU GET IT?

But still.....

BP's dividend accounts for about £1 in every £7 of dividends paid to British shareholders, and its suspension would be a blow to UK and international pension funds who rely on it.

:-)

50 Domingo (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 12:00 pm Report abuse

This anti-British BP stuff sounds like propaganda to me. Beyond Petroleum was formed by the merger of the AMERICAN OIL COMPANY & BRITISH PETROLEUM in 1998.

No one seems to mention that it was an American drilling platform run by American engineers using American safety technology.

Cameron International (based in Houston, Texas USA)made the blow out preventer which failed and the rig owners are Transocean (American based but Swiss registered HQ for tax reasons).

Whilst BP will take responsibility & pay damages and compensation as prime contractor, I am sure its sub-contractors bear the majority of the responsibility for the technical failures that has led to the spill.

Unfortunately, oil drilling is a dangerous and risky business and things can go wrong. How much was preventable (in foresight not hindsight) needs a public enquiry. However, the main thing now is to finally get the relief wells in place to halt the pollution and damage to the environment.

I don't think it does anyone any good for this success business to be persecuted, but it should also be held accountable for its mistakes.

51 Think (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 12:21 pm Report abuse

Insallah

52 harrier61 (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 03:08 pm Report abuse

British Petroleum merged with Amoco (formerly Standard Oil of Indiana) in December 1998, becoming BP Amoco plc. In 2000, BP Amoco acquired Arco (Atlantic Richfield Co.) and Burmah Castrol plc. In 2001 the company formally renamed itself as BP plc and adopted the tagline "Beyond Petroleum," which remains in use today. It states that BP was never meant to be an abbreviation of its tagline.

53 Think (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 03:19 pm Report abuse

(52) hawkerSiddleley61

Only Brits believe in BP's statements nowadays.

54 harrier61 (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 04:32 pm Report abuse

Think.

What an amusing train of thought.

But the Sea Harriers you remember were made by BAE.

You must remember the fixed wing scores.

Argentina lost 54. Britain lost 6 (5 by accident).

55 Think (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 04:48 pm Report abuse

(54) Dear Harry(er)

Sorry. I don't wish to play "Who's Frigate is biggest" or "Who has the longest Missile".

For your info, those Stats you just gave me are not from a videogame.

If you read my earlier posts you may be able to deduce it.

My "Soldier fantasy time" is over...

56 Marco (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 04:51 pm Report abuse

Quote"Protesters charge British Petroleum with greed and negligence

By Nisa Islam Muhammad -Staff Writer- | Last updated: May 21, 2010 - 4:27:08 PM

Protesters against British Petroleum in San Francisco. Photo: Nisa I. Muhammad

SAN FRANCISCO - "Hey, hey, ho, ho, BP's greed has got to go!" "BP did the crime, Now they've gotta do the time!"

Those chants and more were shouted from coast to coast in 20 cities including D.C., New York, Los Angeles, New Haven, Chicago and Philadelphia where demonstrations organized by the Seize BP Campaign were held May 12, outside of BP offices.

57 stick up your junta (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 06:39 pm Report abuse

And your point Marco Polio ?

The yanks are pissed off with BP, aint you the regular sherlock holmes

58 Islander1 (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 09:47 pm Report abuse

Before attacking BP perhaps a little reflection- which nations multinational company killed a couple of thousand in another country about 20 years ago- denied liability and paid a mere pittance? Answer USA owned UnionCarbide in the Bhopal didaster in India. Hypocritical American presidents would do well to learn and reflect on their own nations recent corporate history. Secondly has BP ever said it was not going to pay fair compensation? - answer NO. What I think BP want to not pay - is loads of money to gormless moneygrabbing American Lawyers who care only about their bank accounts and

not fair justice .Can you blame BP for that? - thats why they want to pay only DIRECT claims and not lawyers ones. Ok maybe a legal one if there is a reasonable disputed one later. Obama is showing himself to not really be fit to lead a 5th grade republic - let alone the USA.

Finally - has the enquiry repted finally and made its investigations in full yet? NO. If it is all BP,s fault then they do indeed deserve to pay - but lets check it out first - there were several totally USA owned subcontractors in there as well.

Very Finally - if corners were cut to save costs - WHO causes the endless demand for CHEAP car fuel?- The Americans themselves - and if you want it down to a price rather than up to a standard - then costs get cut by companies - its called the real world!

The ultimate self justice would be if Obama forces BP into bankruptcy with all his verbal vitroil crashing its shares - tens of thousand of Americans would also have their investments and pension funds wiped out!! They own 40% of BP themselves.

59 Hoytred (#) Jun 16th, 2010 - 10:59 pm Report abuse

If BP are guilty of some crime then it's right that they should pay.

It's a pity that so many, including Marco, err towards the lynch mob system of justice.

This mess will take a while to sort out and then, and only then, can blame be apportioned. The US is keen to have a go at BP and its safety plans, but it was US officials that approved those safety plans.

The fat lady ain't even turned up yet!

60 Deep-Sea-Diver (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 08:41 am Report abuse

Hello hoytred. finally work this thing out at last.

To all them knobs out there who are slagging the UK off for BP's balls up in the gulf. I believe BP is about 40% British owned and 39% US so you can argue about 1% if you want but its not really a British company is it, and as you rightly said Hoyt' its larger than the GDP of most small countries,! Argentina perhaps???

And as for where the rigs will be repaired as you said most are repaired and maintained in situ, this would be the reason some have been around since the late 60's. However if it

is very deep then the use of semisubs could/would be used and they are on the move all the time, where do they think the one that's there now came from? and a tow from Australia to Thailand is not unusual so from the Falkland Islands to West Africa, the Gulf, or maybe Brazil if they want to play also. But realistically if the amount of oil in and around the Falklands is really twice that of the North Sea wouldn't it make more sense to build the facilities on the islands as they are about the size of Wales, with a population of a large nightclub, and they could sell the scrap metal back to the Argies as that is obviously the limit of their capabilities

61 Think (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 09:01 am Report abuse

Who cares if British or whatever facts are that:

BP pays more than £1.000 Million per year in taxes to the UK.

BP's dividend accounts for about £1 in every £7 of dividends paid to British shareholders.

! From today BP stands for BOYCOT PETROLEUM !

You pissed on the "wrong" Americans this time.

Time to pay.

62 Deep-Sea-Diver (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 10:50 am Report abuse

LMFAO. I admit I know very little about taxes and finance, but if you're trying to tell me that BP who are an International company with Offices all around the world only pay tax to the British government and are therefore tax free in the rest of the world??? Then either you're smoking too much or they have a better accountant than me. Are you seriously suggesting they don't pay ANY tax at all in the US??? pissed off the wrong Americans have we? Your fucking laughable my friend, the only reason we took the Falklands back from the Argies so easily 28 years ago when WE were outnumbered 3-1 was because the Argentine army was trained by the Americans.

63 Think (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 11:21 am Report abuse

(62) Deep-Sea-Diver

BP is a multinational corporation primarily based in the UK.

I don't have the time to check how much tax they pay in the different countries but the UK figure is correct.

Where in my text do I "suggest" that they don't pay any Tax in the USA?

Please check your info before raging and using the F word.

As a DS diver you should know exactly how important it is to keep your pulse down.

But, anyhow.

Keep quarrelling with the Americans.

It serves our interests best.

64 zethe (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 12:30 pm Report abuse

I'd just like to point out that most of the worlds largest multinational corporations are now based in London.

This does not make them all British company's

This is why London is now the "Finance capital" of the world. It was wall street in America. But after 9/11 America made immigration very hard which was very unattractive for large multinational corporations, so a lot of them moved to London.

65 Think (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 01:00 pm Report abuse

(64) Zethe

And that's wyh they pay taxes in BB!

Please read also Nr61!

66 harrier61 (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 02:02 pm Report abuse

Think. I notice your comments at 55. I merely thought I would draw your attention to the need for accuracy. Re-writing peoples' tags is just juvenile. A contrast with the reality of the 1982 war in the air.

By the way, I came across this:

One of the first prominent uses of the demonym "Argentine" was in the first Argentine National Anthem, which made plenty of references to the ongoing Argentine War of Independence. The first formal use of the name "Argentine Republic" was in the 1826 Constitution. Rejecting the document, the territories were instead known as the "Argentine Confederation," and were so named in the 1853 Constitution. Upon the return of the secessionist province of Buenos Aires to the Confederation in 1859, the name was changed to that of the "Argentine Nation," and to the "Argentine Republic" per an October 8, 1860, decree.

Seems Argentina didn't really exist until 1859 and celebrated its bicentennial 49 years early.

Incidentally, what reparations has Argentina made to the Falkland Islands for its invasion and occupation? We know that it has agreed to pay for the mine clearance, but what else?

67 Think (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 02:24 pm Report abuse

Lad.... ..

I you knew anything about Falklands or WWII or Iraq or Afghanistan or.....or.....or..... you would not brag about death counts as if they where freaking football results!

68 Hoytred (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 02:42 pm Report abuse

Deep Sea good to have you aboard, but watch that blood pressure, the idiocy you'll find here can send it soaring :-)

69 Think (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 03:29 pm Report abuse

(68) Hoyt

Quite right... here some examples from last week:

The Argentineans "ate my hamster" or.....

"Funny Facts" discussions with "Funny People" in here

Case 1) "400 miles from Falklands to the Argentinean coast"

I pointed out that, with Google Earth you easily could determine 300 miles as the real distance.

He angrily responded that all depended from where you measured !!!

Case 2) "Martin Garcia" is an Argentinean island off the coast of Uruguay".

I pointed out that, with Google Earth you easily could determine that the Island was nearer to Argentina than to Uruguay.

He badly responded that it "still was an Island off the coast of Uruguay" !!!

Case 3) " Buenos Aires has 4 million inhabitants."

I pointed out that "Gran Buenos Aires" has a population of about 14.000.000.

That would ruin his statistics. He still uses the 4 million figure !!!

Case 4) "There where less than 30 marines defending the Islands."

I pointed out, only to keep the record straight, that the number was over 60.

He accepted the correction but it didn't change nothing because we were bullies !!!

70 J.A. Roberts (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 04:16 pm Report abuse

Actually, Think, case two is not closed. It's not nearer to Argentina as I pointed out. It is only feet away from the Uruguay coast on Isla Timoteo Dominguez.

Re case 4, 30, 60 or as it was 68 marines vs an invading force of thousands. You should use fewer exclamation marks. It's pretty obvious who the aggressive bully was then - the same one as today.

71 Think (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 04:21 pm Report abuse

You see what i mean ;-)

72 harrier61 (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 04:41 pm Report abuse

Don't need to boast. Fact. Wouldn't have happened if you hadn't started it. Well known advice from British fathers to sons. Don't start arguments, but if someone starts one with you, make sure you finish it.

Done that!

Football results? Perhaps you'd like to comment on Mr "Hand of God" Maradona.

73 Think (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 04:50 pm Report abuse

I know... I know...

cheating little latino ...

An Englihsman would never.....

Our fathers teached us to be fair.....

Honesty s in our blood etc etc etc.

Watch this and grow up Sprout !!!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=vB2h1ynKLII

74 J.A. Roberts (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 05:08 pm Report abuse

At least he got a red card, unlike someone in 1978...

75 Think (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 05:09 pm Report abuse

All races are equal.....

Some are just a tad more sophisticated than others.

76 zethe (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 07:45 pm Report abuse

Aye, some of us even believe in democracy.

77 Think (#) Jun 17th, 2010 - 08:16 pm Report abuse

And some believe in burning bushes and talking snakes.

Aye

78 Deep-Sea-Diver (#) Jun 18th, 2010 - 04:37 am Report abuse

It's all Irrelavent anyway however you look at it. the Falkland Islands are British because.

1. the Islanders want to stay British and not have some tin pot murderous banana republic governing them.

2. 1982 We WON!!!!

And i still can't work out Think's argument about paying taxes. What the F**K (you happy with this???) does that have to do with it???? of course they pay taxes to the UK government, they pay taxes to every government in the world where they have a petrol pump you numpty.

All races are equal! WOW Do your self a favour, Walk down to the end of your street, catch the 1st bus that comes along and return home in about 4 years time after you've actually met some of these races that are your equal, and then come out with this statement and see how foolish you feel.

As for Democracy- I forget who made the statement but i think it goes- Democracy is the freedom for the rich to die of starvation as well as the poor.

try telling the people in Thailand that they live in a democracy. the previous government has won by a landslide in the last 4 elections and still they aren't in power. and yet the americans, europe and the rest still recognise them.

And Finally.

3. 1982 We still WON

79 Hoytred (#) Jun 18th, 2010 - 04:59 am Report abuse

What did I tell you about your blood pressure?

And you forgot number 4 - WE WON! (obviously I'm referring to 1771/1833 and 1982)

80 Deep-Sea-Diver (#) Jun 18th, 2010 - 05:50 am Report abuse

Nothing wrong with my blood pressure, unless the missus is around. and i'm not as old as you that's why i couldn't remember them ones.

Good on 'ere init

81 Think (#) Jun 18th, 2010 - 06:11 am Report abuse

(78)Deep-Sea Diver

Be careful with your nitrogen% too ☺

A couple of Singhas would help.

My point about race equality was to stress their slight differences mate.

Scholes got a red card

Maradona got a goal.

Hoyt...

2-0 for you...

But you know what they say...

Third time lucky!

82 Deep-Sea-Diver (#) Jun 18th, 2010 - 06:37 am Report abuse

3rd time lucky? can't see it matey. unless it's on the football pitch. and it's Beer Chang , singha taste like piss

83 Think (#) Jun 18th, 2010 - 06:56 am Report abuse

Well....

Typical Ex-Pat

Drinking Danish beer in Thailand.

Shame on you!!!

84 Hoytred (#) Jun 18th, 2010 - 11:18 am Report abuse

... that explains a lot :-)

85 Think (#) Jun 18th, 2010 - 11:26 am Report abuse

Indeed it does!

86 harrier61 (#) Jun 18th, 2010 - 02:33 pm Report abuse

It probably doesn't matter what the Brazilian "government" says. The territory currently referred to as "Brazil" is a colonial territory of the Portuguese Empire. Just under 50% of the current "Brazilian" population class themselves as "white" and therefore of European origin. A similar percentage class themselves as "multiracial". In fact, only 0.28% class themselves as Amerindian. Logic says that the majority of the population are not indigenous and not entitled to self-determination. The imposition of the Portuguese language, as with the imposition of the Spanish language elsewhere in South America, makes it clear that it derives solely from the planting of Portuguese settlers. Therefore, the legality and validity of the "Brazilian" government must be in question.

87 Think (#) Jun 18th, 2010 - 09:45 pm Report abuse

For all of you; "Interpreters of International Law"

Here is a balanced analysis of a "Real International Lawyer"

Biography: www.internationallawoffice.com/directory/Biography.aspx?g=841614fb-2130-46e4-8a55-6078a950a59d

Complete article:

www.thelawyer.com/opinion-the-future-of-the-falklands-could-it-be-compromise-/1003785.article

Mr. David Moss,

The right of peoples to self-determination is enshrined in the first article of both the UN Charter and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has held that this right is 'irreproachable'.

However, the Falklands case does -highlight a contentious and potentially problematic facet of international law.

To begin with, the precise scope of the right and the definition of 'peoples' is a developing legal area. In the past, -indigenous peoples in island states such as Nauru (population of 12,000) and Tuvalu (population of 11,000) have been -recognized as exercising a bona fide right of self-determination. However, the -population of the Falkland Islands is only 3,000 and Argentina would likely contend that the right to self-determine

does not apply because the islanders are -descendants of British settlers. This raises the issue of what are the limits of the right to self-determination. For example, would the UK argument hold true if the -population of Jersey voted to become independent of the UK or part of France?

These issues are likely to come under the microscope again when the ICJ issues its advisory opinion on Kosovo. Argentina and the UK have both put in written submissions to the ICJ in the Kosovo case, which centers on a dispute over the status of Kosovo's declaration of independence. Predictably, Argentina emphasized the importance of territorial integrity and the UK emphasized the right of self-determination.

88 Hoytred (#) Jun 18th, 2010 - 11:28 pm Report abuse

Starting to repeat yourself again Think - as I've said elsewhere, "one lawyer does not an argument make!

Now look, you've got me at it :-)

89 Think (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 04:54 am Report abuse

I recall you also said: "I wouldn't hire that Lawyer." Very witty.....

Everybody here is "interpreting law" their way.

Including me.

And here are my reasons.

Would you care to answer the question?

90 Hoytred (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 06:08 am Report abuse

'Answer a question'? With the legal training I've had??

By the way, what was it?

91 Think (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 06:19 am Report abuse

I give up on you :-)

But I keep trying with the others.

Where are all the legal experts from yesterday?

92 Deep-Sea-Diver (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 09:17 am Report abuse

Sorry but Beer Chang is a Thai beer. The boss of Carlsberg in Thailand in the 90's deserted the company and started up Chang and then kicked out Carlsberg, or they left on the own accord, but feeling very disgruntled. because Chang had stolen all there

customers. At least thats the way i've heard the story. but i am willing to change my story if anyone decides to sue.

P.S> ive just checked on wikipedia and im almost right

93 Think (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 09:32 am Report abuse

As MercoPress doesn't mention this. (not even in their Energy&Oil Topics).....

I will!

"Rats abandoning ship"

money.cnn.com/2010/06/18/news/companies/BP_Anadarko/index.htm?hpt=T1

"Brits are masters at stonewalling"

money.cnn.com/2010/06/17/news/companies/hayward_testimony/index.htm?postversion=2010061717

Keep the good work up Tony!

Boycot Petroleum!

(92) DS Diver

I bow to your higher knowledge about the beer market in Thailand.

My info was outdated, based only on personal experience some time ago and.....

Chang tastes great.....too.

94 harrier61 (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 11:35 am Report abuse

In his comment at no.87 Think interestingly quotes a lawyer. Amazingly, this lawyer's solution is a compromise. For anyone with the least knowledge of lawyers in civil litigation, compromise is the ideal solution. It tends to embody lawyers in the compromise so that there are endless years of legal discussion about what certain words in the agreement "really" mean. Loads of money for lawyers, irrespective of their nationality.

I wonder how many have gone on to read the comments from the readers. Mr Moss doesn't seem to get a lot of support for his views, rather the contrary, and it must be expected that a fair percentage of the readers will be lawyers themselves. Whatever any lawyer says the real test is in front of a court. Why doesn't Argentina take its case to the ICJ?

But here's another matter. I suggest that the UN Secretary General has given Argentina his answer to their approaches.

pacific.scoop.co.nz/2010/05/non-self-governing-territories/

www.samoanews.com/viewstory.php?storyid=15238&edition=1274263200

The problem for Argentina in using the 'who are "the people"' argument is that there were no indigenous people when the Islands were settled. Whoever lived there at any time, French, British, Spanish, were colonists. Clearly, those with most right to be considered to be "the people" are those that have lived there, in terms of generations, the longest. In order, France - 3 yrs, Britain - 5 yrs, Spain - 44 yrs, United Provinces - 2 yrs, USA - 2 mths, Argentina - 2 mths, Britain - 99 yrs, Argentina - 2 mths, Britain - 28 yrs.

For those who have doubts, watch the documentary "Falklands: The Islanders' War". The approach of Argentina at that time was reminiscent of Nazi occupation.

95 Hoytred (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 11:48 am Report abuse

Personally, I'm a 'real'ale' man myself, but hey ... Chang will do at a push!

Think - NEVER challenge Deep Sea Diver about beer ... that level of experience is awesome!

Now, what's happening? Anything new anybody handed the islands to Argentine ,... no?

96 J.A. Roberts (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 11:58 am Report abuse

The last Argentine 2 months does not count. It was hardly a "settled population"...

97 Think (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 11:58 am Report abuse

Ohhhh no.

The N word again..... At(94)

Neo-Nazis accusing Neo-Nazis for being Neo-Nazis.....

Many of the people I have been insulted by in here seem deeply influenced by this tasteless abuse on vets by Blood & Honour's political party, the BNP

Corporal Fox, enjoy...

www.amren.com/videos/20050420bnp/

98 harrier61 (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 12:03 pm Report abuse

Only difference is that, as far as records can tell, Nazis didn't leave human excrement over people's beds and furniture. Aside from that, act like them, get compared to them.

99 Think (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 12:20 pm Report abuse

(95) Hoyt

And I'm a Pilsner Urquell dud.

Quilmes Imperial is difficult to get up here.

100 zethe (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 03:16 pm Report abuse

This is one thing im always confused.. How can your troops excuse leaving excrement all over the homes of the people they were sent to "liberate". Our army has been out there for 30 years disarming the mines yours troops put there. It's quite disgusting to be honest.

101 Deep-Sea-Diver (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 03:21 pm Report abuse

BTW not only does Chang taste great, its cheaper (I'm from Yorkshire)and gets you ratted sooner.

I have no idea about your other comments as im on my 5th large Chang at the mo'

As for boycott petrolium? I don't understand this either, for years people have been bleating on about burning fossil fuels, well BP have just cut out the middle man, i thoroughly applaude them, and the more thats wasted, the more valuable whats left of it becomes, and so makes more work for me and bumps up my salary. hence i can afford more Beer Changs. So thumbs up alround for that nice Mr Hayward.

Oh and a belated Happy Anniversary to the Falkland Islands 28 years of freedom roll on the next 1,000,000

102 Think (#) Jun 19th, 2010 - 04:01 pm Report abuse

Salut i força al canut

103 Hoytred (#) Jun 20th, 2010 - 12:36 am Report abuse

" ...It means Healthness and strength to the dick. The language is catalán or valenciano, (both are similar)...."

Amazing what you can find on Google, eh Think! Not that I'm sure that my Catalan ex-girlfriend's family would have agreed about connection between catalan and valenciano. Now talking of an independence minded bunch, try the Catalans :-)

104 Think (#) Jun 20th, 2010 - 04:58 am Report abuse

(103) Hoyt

Nope.....Try again junior.....

"Salut i força al canut" is just another example of how dominating societies misinterpret things at their convenience, making them become the accepted truth.

Please see:

chadwyckdrinksspanishwine.blogspot.com/2008/11/salut-salut-y-forza-al-canut.html

Google is an useful tool if..... you know how to use it :-)

Visca Catalunya Lliure

105 Hoytred (#) Jun 20th, 2010 - 09:28 am Report abuse

Your reference, and obviously yourself - are wrong! The fact that a phrase once had one meaning does not necessarily mean that it still has the same meaning. As you say 'things change'.

Language is a living thing and changes as the people use it. 'Wallet' it may have meant once but 'member' it now means by common acceptance. The people have decided :-)

Billy may call it 'Popular Sovereignty'.

If you really want to know how language changes try talking to teenagers, you're unlikely to understand them!

106 Think (#) Jun 20th, 2010 - 09:42 am Report abuse

(105) Hoyt

Tell that to the Catalans!

The people of Spain have decided over the Catalan minority idiomatic heritage!

No problem taking to teenagers here.... It takes only a high degree of open mindedness and the will to "listen to" and not only "hear" what they are saying.

I excel at that. That's how I communicate in here ;-)

107 Hoytred (#) Jun 20th, 2010 - 12:39 pm Report abuse

You are correct, it is almost impossible to tell the Catalans anything, I should know, I was with one for between 4 and 8 years I thought I'd left after 4 but it didn't seem to make any difference!

108 Think (#) Jun 20th, 2010 - 12:51 pm Report abuse

That's nothing....

I was married to a Basque once!

Beat that!!!

109 Hoytred (#) Jun 22nd, 2010 - 11:14 pm Report abuse

Not a good idea to beat a Basque !

Tuesday, June 15th 2010 - 00:08 UTC

Poignant event this week in Buenos Aires between Falklands/Malvinas' veterans

An extraordinary reunion, linked to the Falkland Islands conflict of 1982 is scheduled this week in Buenos Aires: a former paratrooper will return to an Argentine soldier the trumpet he seized from his 28 years ago.

Thursday, June 17th 2010 - 06:06 UTC

Taiana and Tierra del Fuego governor heads of delegation to C 24 in New York

A new chapter of the Argentine escalation of the Falklands/Malvinas sovereignty dispute is scheduled for next week at the United Nations Decolonization Committee or C24.

Fabiana Ríos, governor of Tierra del Fuego, Antarctica and South Atlantic Islands province
Fabiana Ríos, governor of Tierra del Fuego, Antarctica and South Atlantic Islands province

Representatives from the elected government of the Falkland Islands and from Argentina will display their arguments at the C24, an annual ritual but which this year promises to be

much tenser since Argentina has launched a package of measures to counter the oil exploration round begun last February in Falklands' waters.

According to Buenos Aires diplomatic sources the Argentine delegation will be headed by Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana and will include among others Fabiana Rios, Governor of the Tierra del Fuego, Antarctica and South Atlantic Islands province.

Argentina is expected to make a forceful presentation in defence of "its legitimate sovereign interests" over the Falklands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands plus adjoining maritime spaces.

The Argentine government is expected to insist that the UK abides by the several UN resolutions calling for the resumption of sovereignty talks.

Argentina's strategy has been to increase its claims in all world forums and international organizations, with the support of Latinamerica and Caribbean countries (the latest in Lima, Peru during the OAS annual general assembly).

This has been particularly intense since a round of exploratory drilling commenced last February in Falklands waters with the arrival of a British oil rig.

However the new British coalition headed by PM David Cameron and Deputy PM Nick Clegg have been equally affirmative and adopted a strong stance in support of the Falklands right to self determination and to develop a hydrocarbons industry.

Last Friday Deputy PM Clegg while visiting Spain and in perfect Spanish said that "we will not compromise the rights, preferences and sovereignty of the Falklands", adding that "we clearly want the Falklands to remain as part of the United Kingdom".

Monday, June 21st 2010 - 04:10 UTC

Falklands' and decolonization debate, Timerman's international debut

Argentina's newly designated Minister of Foreign Affairs Hector Timerman will be making his international debut with the Falkland Islands debate, next Thursday/Friday at the United Nations Decolonization Committee, C24.

Hector Timerman emphasized that foreign policy is established the head of state, President Cristina Kirchner Hector Timerman emphasized that foreign policy is established the head of state, President Cristina Kirchner

The former ambassador in Washington and the first Argentine Jewish Foreign Affairs minister is scheduled to be sworn on Tuesday and will immediately fly to New York. Apparently he already has been in contact with Argentine ambassador before UN Jorge Argüello and has been preparing for this week's major diplomatic event for Argentine foreign policy.

Very close to President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and fluent in English, Timerman has been crucial in improving Buenos Aires always complicated relations with Washington and in establishing strong links with the influential Jewish community in New York

In his first statements to the Buenos Aires press, Timerman anticipated there would be no major changes in the current foreign policy of his predecessor Jorge Taiana, "since this is established by President Cristina Kirchner".

"Those officials who believe they can't defend the foreign policy established by the President, who is head of state, will have to give a step aside", underlined Timerman.

He mentioned three main issues: Brazil is a priority for Argentina and relations will continue "to improve and deepen"; Iran and the United States, and sovereignty claims over the Falklands.

With Brazil "we are building a union based on a strong coincidence of interests, common positions in international forums and economic integration in the framework of Mercosur", which he described as the heart of "economic and political integration in the region".

With the United States “we have the level of links which we wish to have with the world’s leading power” although admitting that much is needed still regarding trade, mainly for agriculture commodities “to reach the degree of understanding we have in fighting the drugs trade and in nuclear security”.

Regarding Iran, Timerman recalled that since 2003 the Argentine government decided to support the requests from Justice to question and judge all those responsible for the (1994) attack on the Jewish Fraternity in the heart of Buenos Aires which killed and injured hundreds.

“An Argentine federal court has requested the extradition of several Iranian officials allegedly involved in the attack. It is for Iran to have them extradited so they can face trial in Argentina”, he added.

Argentina has also made its case before the United National annual General Assembly. And regarding the Malvinas Islands Timerman said that Argentina will continue to defend its national and territorial interests, both in the continent and on the continental platform.

“We want to solve the conflict with the UK peacefully and around a negotiations table. If we haven’t sat at a table it’s not because of Argentina”.

Given the fact that he is the first Argentine Jewish Foreign Affairs minister, Timerman said “this shows how much the Argentine society has advanced” since the return of democracy which he pointed out is also marked by the disappearance of prejudices like same sex-marriages.

“Maybe in a near future we could also have an Armed Forces Chief Of Staff who is Jewish”, said Timerman.

“We’re one of the countries most open and respectful with minorities, which is why I applaud the bill which contemplates marriage between people of the same sex”.

JULY

Thursday, July 1st 2010 - 07:08 UTC

Argentina prepares to begin drilling in Malvinas basin in second half of 2010

Towards the end of the year Argentina's YPF in association with Pan American Energy and Petrobras will begin exploring for oil in the Malvinas basin, following the contract for an oil rig which has been signed, according to oil industry sources in Buenos Aires.

Former Argentine president Carlos Menem Former Argentine president Carlos Menem

The high risk operation will be under control of YPF which holds a 33.5% stake in the operation while Pan American Energy has another 33.5% and Petrobras, 33%.

The initial outlay for this coming summer's drilling including the provision of supplies is estimated in 150 million US dollars.

In the so called Malvinas basin at different times "a total of 20 wells have been drilled, of which five showed signals of hydrocarbons presence and two of them in significant volumes but not sufficient to sustain a commercial exploitation".

According to the reports the area where the oil rig is to operate is to the southwest of the Falklands/Malvinas, next to the former Falklands/Argentina Hydrocarbons Cooperation zone, which was agreed in September 1996 following the so called New York Act.

The understanding was agreed under the administration of former president Carlos Menem and his Foreign Affairs minister Guido di Tella.

However in 2007 former president Nestor Kirchner, the husband of Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, disavowed the joint oil exploration agreements.

Thursday, July 1st 2010 - 07:12 UTC

"This is no soccer match, only both sides must benefit", says Timerman

Argentina's Foreign Affairs minister Héctor Timerman cautioned that the dispute with Uruguay over the Botnia/UPM pulp mill and its environmental impact can't be seen as "a football match where one side wins and the other loses", but rather as a situation where "the peoples of both countries benefit".

Timerman (R) with his counterpart Almagro during his recent visit at Uruguay
Timerman (R) with his counterpart Almagro during his recent visit at Uruguay

"This is not for the benefit of one side, one people; this is for both sides or for none. With this spirit I travelled yesterday (Tuesday) to Uruguay with the Argentine joint monitoring proposal and with that same spirit I was received in Montevideo", said Timerman.

On Tuesday Timerman spent the day in Montevideo where he met his counterpart Luis Almagro and delivered Argentina's proposal for the joint monitoring of the river Uruguay, which has become the main issue of the dispute and for which both sides have agreed on a 60 days deadline, August 2.

Uruguay asked for a week to study the Argentine proposal before replying. Minister Almagro is scheduled to contact Timerman sometime next week when he will deliver Uruguay's position and any amendments or improvements to the original proposal.

"This is no soccer match" insisted Timerman who said he was confident Uruguay and Argentina could reach an understanding on how to monitor the environmental impact of the pulp mill based "on science" and an example to the world.

He also underlined the gesture of the Uruguayan president Jose Mujica and Vice-president Danilo Astori who invited him to have lunch following the morning meeting with his Uruguayan counterpart, Almagro.

Timerman also talked about the inclusion of Brazil in the joint monitoring (a Uruguayan proposal), which he said "was not contemplated in the ruling from the International Court of The Hague", but if there is an interest from any of the two countries in having Brazil

join the task "it will have to be considered by both presidents (Cristina Kirchner and Jose Mujica)".

Although both sides said they would not anticipate details of the proposal or the counter measures, press reports in Buenos Aires indicate that both countries are considering a forestry development on both sides of the river, next to the cities of Gualeguaychú and Fray Bentos to help develop industry.

Similarly with the support from the University of Buenos Aires and a federation of Argentina universities a college specializing in environmental affairs could be started in Gualeguaychu.

As to the actual monitoring, once a scientific protocol is agreed it will address all forms of aggression to the environments in the river's basin, such as sewage disposal from cities and contaminating effluents from industries straddling the water course.

The former US ambassador on Wednesday visited his Brazilian counterpart Celso Amorim in Brasilia, a part of his regional familiarization tour and agenda updating process.

Thursday, July 1st 2010 - 21:05 UTC

MP Laing, chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Gibraltar Group

British Conservative MP Elainor Laing is the new chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Gibraltar Group, a House of Commons spokesman announced Wednesday night. Mrs Laing is no stranger to the Rock as she attended the main National Day rally when it was organised in Casemates Square.

Frequent visitor of Gibraltar Conservative MP Elainor Laing
Frequent visitor of Gibraltar Conservative MP Elainor Laing

Other locally well known MP's such as Andrew Rosindell, Simon Hughes and David Crausby have also been elected to the group.

A House of Commons statement said: "The All Party Parliamentary Gibraltar Group met last week to elect officers to the group, who will serve for the duration of this Parliament. A well attended meeting saw the following elected to office: Chairman: Eleanor Laing MP (Con); Vice Chairman: David Crausby MP (Lab); Vice Chairman: Andrew Rosindell MP (Con); Vice Chairman: The Rt. Hon. Lord Kilclooney (UUP); Vice Chairman: Simon Hughes MP (Lib Dem); Secretary: Jim Dobbins MP (Lab) and Treasurer: Jack Lopresti MP (Con).

"Lindsay Hoyle MP and Mr Mike Penning MP both asked that they should not be considered for re-election as their Parliamentary responsibilities prevent them from joining the Group.

"Both Lindsay Hoyle and Mike Penning have served this Group for a considerable amount of time and the Group wishes publicly to acknowledge their contribution and thank them for their past and future support. The Group congratulated Lindsay Hoyle on his election as Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons and Mike Penning on his appointment as a Minister.

Albert Poggio, UK Representative for the Government of Gibraltar attended the meeting as a special guest. The Group greatly appreciated being brought up to date on recent events in Gibraltar by Mr. Poggio.

Eleanor Laing MP said: "I have been a longstanding and loyal supporter of Gibraltar. I have visited Gibraltar on many occasions and have attended several National Day celebrations. To be elected to the Chair of the Parliamentary Group is a great privilege and I look forward to visiting Gibraltar some time this year and meeting with the Chief Minister amongst others.

"The Group looks forward to inviting key Gibraltarians to their future meetings at Westminster and hopes that the Chief Minister will be their first guest in the near future", concludes the statement.

Saturday, July 3rd 2010 - 22:43 UTC

Rockhopper confirms medium grade crude in North Falklands; FOGL to announce South Falklands results

Rockhopper Exploration one of the four companies operating with Falkland Islands government licences reported last Friday that samples from its recent discovery on the Sea Lion prospect in the North Falkland basin have been confirmed as medium grade crude.

Rockhopper Managing Director Sam Moody Rockhopper Managing Director Sam Moody

Rockhopper Managing Director Sam Moody was quoted in the British press saying that the positive results "when combined with our knowledge of reservoir quality from logging data, give us further comfort that a flow test of the Sea Lion well will confirm a mobile crude oil".

MD Moody's comments last Friday came in the eve of this week's expected announcement by Falkland Oil & Gas Ltd and associate BHP Billiton of its exploratory well at the Toroa prospect which was spudded May 31st.

The well in the Toroa prospect is the first in the south of the Falklands and was expected to be drilled to 2,700 metres in waters ranging from 550 to 750 metres deep.

"The wax content is typical for a lacustrine sourced crude oil and significantly lower than many other producing oilfields worldwide. Furthermore the viscosity, gas oil ratio, FVF and sulphur are all better than we anticipated" added Rockhopper's MD Moody.

According to laboratory tests the Sea Lion prospect has been confirmed as "medium grade crude measuring 26.4 to 29.2 degrees API".

The crude has a low viscosity of 6.5 to 6.8 centipoises at reservoir pressure, and the gas oil ratio is 261 to 272 standard cubic feet per stock tank barrel. A typical wax content of

18.4 to 20.8% is present, and the formation value factor (FVF) is 1.16. There is also low sulphur of approximately 0.2% weight.

FOGL was awarded seven production licenses constituting 33,700 square kilometres offshore the Falkland Islands from the Falkland Islands Government in 2002. Then in 2004, FOGL acquired 100% interest of 50,000 square kilometres in the East Falkland Basin.

Through 2005 and 2006, the company followed up its offshore land grab with three phases of 2D seismic, identifying multiple hydrocarbon prospects.

In October 2007, FOGL farmed out 40% interest in its 2002 and 2004 licenses offshore the Falkland Islands to Australian major BHP Billiton for 10 million US dollars. The agreement required BHP Billiton to drill a minimum of two exploration wells within three years, as well as gave the Australian major the option to increase its interest in the licenses to 65 percent and take operator-ship.

In February 2010, FOGL joined other Falklands' exploration companies, Desire Petroleum and Rockhopper Exploration that are using the Diamond Offshore's Ocean Guardian semi-submersible drilling rig.

However FOGL and BHP Billiton are looking to contract a deepwater rig to drill its Loligo, Nimrod and Endeavour prospects, which all are situated in waters greater than 1,000 meters deep.

Monday, July 5th 2010 - 04:40 UTC

Foreign Secretary William Hague: "The world has changed and if we do not change with it, Britain's role is set to decline"

The Foreign Secretary, William Hague, gave the following speech outlining the Government's vision for UK foreign policy on 1 July 2010.

Foreign Secretary, William Hague Foreign Secretary, William Hague

Thank you all for accepting my invitation to visit the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to hear how the new coalition Government will conduct the Foreign Policy of the United Kingdom. This is the first in a series of four linked speeches, the second of which will be in the Far East in two weeks time.

In them I will set out how we will deliver a distinctive British Foreign policy that extends our global reach and influence, that is agile and energetic in a networked world, that uses diplomacy to secure our prosperity, that builds up significantly strengthened bilateral relations for Britain, that harnesses the appeal of our culture and heritage to promote our values, and that sets out to make the most of the abundant opportunities of the 21st century systematically and for the long-term. So for the first time in years in my view Britain will have a foreign policy that is clear, focused and effective.

The reason I chose the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as the location for the first of these speeches to send a serious signal of intent about our new approach to British foreign policy and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

This Government understands that foreign policy and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office primarily exist to serve and protect the interests and needs of the British people in the broadest sense and must be anchored in that way if they are to command public support and confidence. Yes, much of the day to day business of the Foreign Office is necessarily conducted overseas. Some of it is secret. Most of it is complex. But these things should not be an obstacle to our foreign policy being well understood, firmly grounded in the lives of British people and accountable to them. In seven weeks so far as Foreign Secretary I have seen innumerable instances of where our work delivers results and protects Britons abroad. I am convinced that the skills and expertise of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are more necessary than ever and that marshalled effectively they can play a leading role in supporting our economy and contributing to a safer and more equitable world.

I returned to frontbench politics five years ago expressly to shadow Foreign Affairs and obviously hoping to occupy the office I now hold. During that time in Opposition it became increasingly apparent to me that the previous Government had neglected to lift its eyes to the wider strategic needs of this country, to take stock of British interests, and to determine in a systematic fashion what we must do as a nation if we are to secure our international influence and earn our living in a world that is rapidly changing. My coalition colleagues and I are utterly determined to supply that leadership. The Prime Minister has signalled our intention to chart a clear way forward by launching a strategic review of our defence and security needs, led by the requirements of foreign policy as well inevitable financial constraints, and that review will conclude by the autumn. It will be a fundamental reappraisal of Britain's place in the world and how we operate within it as well as of the capabilities we need to protect our security.

Today I will set out why we believe such a reappraisal is necessary, the new approach we intend to pursue and the steps we have already taken.

Put simply, the world has changed and if we do not change with it Britain's role is set to decline with all that that means for our influence in world affairs, for our national security and for our economy. Achieving our foreign policy objectives has become harder and will become more so unless we are prepared to act differently.

Four of the changes I would single out to support this claim are well known: First, economic power and economic opportunity are shifting to the countries of the East and South; to the emerging powers of Brazil, India, China and other parts of Asia and to increasingly significant economies such as Turkey and Indonesia. It is estimated that by 2050 emerging economies will be up to 50% larger than those of the current G7, including of course the United Kingdom. Yet the latest figures show that at the moment we export more to Ireland than we do to India, China and Russia put together.

Second, the circle of international decision-making has become wider and more multilateral. Decisions made previously in the G8 are now negotiated within the G20, and this Government will be at the forefront of those arguing for the expansion of the United Nations Security Council. While this trend is hugely positive and indeed overdue it poses a

challenge to our diplomacy, increasing the number of countries we need to understand and to seek to influence through our Ambassadors and our network of Embassies overseas. The views of the emerging powers are critical to our ability to tackle global economic reform, nuclear proliferation, climate change and energy security, but they do not always agree with our approach to these problems when they arise in the UN and elsewhere, making it all the more necessary that our diplomacy is energetic and robust.

Third, protecting our security has become more complex in the face of new threats. The immense benefits of trade and the movement of people can mask the activity of those who use the tools of globalisation to destructive or criminal ends and are able to use almost any part of the world as a platform to do so. No more striking example of this has been seen in recent history than in Afghanistan, but we must also look ahead to other parts of the world which are at risk of similar exploitation.

Fourth, the nature of conflict is changing. Our Armed Forces are currently involved in fighting insurgencies or wars-amongst-the-people rather than state on state conflict, they are involved in counter-piracy operations rather than sea battles, the projection of force overseas rather than homeland-based defence. And security threats themselves are more widely dispersed in parts of the world which are often difficult to access, lawless and in some cases failing, where the absence of governance feeds into a cycle of conflict and danger that we have yet to learn to arrest but are likely to face more often.

These four factors alone would call for a British foreign policy that is more active and that looks further afield for opportunity. But when taken together with the fifth and most striking change of all, the emergence of a networked world, the case for a new approach to the foreign policy of the United Kingdom becomes unanswerable.

For although the world has become more multilateral as I have described, it has also become more bilateral. Relations between individual countries matter, starting for us with our unbreakable alliance with the United States which is our most important relationship and will remain so. Our shared history, value and interests, our tightly linked economies and strong habits of working together at all levels will ensure that the US will remain our biggest single partner for achieving our international goals. But other bilateral ties matter

too, whether they are longstanding ties which have been allowed to wither or stagnate or the new relations that we believe we must seek to forge for the 21st century. Regional groups are certainly strengthening across the world, but these groups are not rigid or immutable. Nor have they diminished the role of individual states as some predicted. Today, influence increasingly lies with networks of states with fluid and dynamic patterns of allegiance, alliance and connections, including the informal, which act as vital channels of influence and decision-making and require new forms of engagement from Britain.

The contrast with the past could not be more striking. When the Foreign Secretary Castlereagh went to the Congress of Vienna in 1814 it was the first time a British Foreign Secretary had even set foot overseas to meet any of his counterparts since the job had been invented more than thirty years before. Today Foreign Ministers communicate through formal notes, highly frequent personal meetings, hours a day on the telephone to discuss and coordinate responses to crises, and quite a lot of us communicate by text message or in the case of the Foreign Minister of Bahrain and I, follow each other avidly on Twitter.

But the change does not stop there. Relations between states are now no longer monopolised by Foreign Secretaries or Prime Ministers. There is now a mass of connections between individuals, civil society, businesses, pressure groups and charitable organisations which are also part of the relations between nations and which are being rapidly accelerated by the internet. The recent Gaza flotilla crisis illustrated how collections of individuals from different countries can come together to try to force Governments to change course and reach a global audience in doing so. In a very different case, the emergence of a widespread opposition movement in Iran around the Presidential elections a year ago showed the astonishing power of the internet to allow individual people to reach out beyond their borders in defiance of a ruthless lockdown, sharing information on the net with people across the world who in turn urged their Governments to respond.

So if the increasingly multipolar world already means that we have more governments to influence and that we must become more active, the ever accelerating development of human networks means that we have to use many more channels to do so, seeking to

carry our arguments in courts of public opinion around the world as well as around international negotiating tables.

As an example I spent three days in Pakistan last week. There as in so many other countries relative poverty does not preclude access to information from numerous sources and it certainly doesn't stifle interest in the wider world. Half of all Pakistanis are under the age of 20 and 100 million of them have mobile phones. The average person has his or her own opinion on developments in Afghanistan, the rights and wrongs of the Middle East Peace Process as they see them and an impression of the conduct of Britain and the United States in all these arenas. In our relations with Pakistan for example we therefore have to understand that domestic opinion in that country and the British Pakistani Diaspora matter, to the extent that the impact of our expenditure on aid, counter-radicalisation and counter-terrorism in Pakistan may well be undercut unless we are creating a positive impression of Britain to the wider population at the same time. So in addition to my meetings with the President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister I spent a lot of time speaking to opinion formers in the media, business and anybody who was listening through television and twitter. In my mind, such communication will become all the more important over time and as we conduct our diplomacy across the world we overlook international opinion at our peril, and while we cannot possibly hope to dominate the global airwaves we must try ever harder to get our message across. This is a reality that the Obama administration has grasped and articulated most effectively, communicating directly with citizens in the Muslim-majority world. There are many new opportunities for us to work with the United States and other allies in this new environment in ways in which often complement their efforts.

I would go even further now to say that the networked world requires us to inspire other people with how we live up to our own values rather than try to impose them, because now they are able to see in more detail whether we meet our own standards and make up their own minds about that. We should not be shy about thinking about our development assistance in the same terms. We will honour our commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on overseas aid from 2013, to enshrine this commitment in law and maintain DfID as a separate Department. We will continue to support the Millennium Development Goals, as a moral obligation and a contribution to our own long-term security. But we should be open

about the fact that aid, which is not a gift of government but the fruit of the generosity of the British citizen, can also contribute to a positive impression of Britain.

In this networked world the UK not only needs to be an active and influential member of multilateral bodies but we also need to ensure that our diplomacy is sufficiently agile, innovative in nature and global in reach to create our own criss-crossing networks of strengthened bilateral relations.

In recent years Britain's approach to building relationships with new and emerging powers has been rather ad-hoc and patchy, giving rise to the frequent complaint from such Governments that British Ministers only get in touch when a crisis arises or a crucial vote is needed. This weakens our ability to forge agreement on difficult issues affecting the lives of millions around the world and it overlooks the importance of consistency and personal relationships in the conduct of foreign policy. In many countries decisions about politics and economics are also often more closely entwined than in Britain, meaning that the absence of strong bilateral relations has the further effect of weakening our position when economic decisions are made.

Furthermore within groupings such as the EU, it is no longer sensible or indeed possible just to focus our effort on the largest countries at the expense of smaller members. Of course France and Germany remains our crucial partner which is why the Prime Minister visited them in his first days in office. But for the UK to exert influence and generate creative new approaches to foreign policy we need to look further and wider. The EU is at its best as a changing network where its members can make the most of what each country brings to the table. We are already seeking to work with many of the smaller member states in new and more flexible ways, recognising where individual countries or groupings within the EU add particular value. To take just one example, newer member states which were formerly under Soviet control have a wealth of experience of the transition to democracy after decades of dominion which they could share with EU candidate countries and others further afield. That should be built into the European Union's approach to common foreign and security policy.

So I have begun discussing how we could form such initiatives with the Foreign Ministers of some of these countries. We should also see the value of Turkey's future membership of the European Union in this light. Turkey is Europe's biggest emerging economy and a good example of a country developing a new role and new links for itself, partly on top of and partly outside of existing structures and alliances. It is highly active in the Western Balkans, the wider Middle East and Central Asia. We will make a particular diplomatic effort to work with Turkey, starting with a major visit by the Turkish Foreign Minister to Britain next week at my invitation.

The case for the UK embracing the opportunities of the networked world is very strong. We are richly endowed with the attributes for success. We are a member of one of the world's longstanding global networks - the Commonwealth – which spans continents and world religions, contains six of the fastest growing economies and is underpinned by an agreed framework of common values. The previous Government in my view appeared oblivious to this aspect of the value of the Commonwealth, not even mentioning it a strategic plan published for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2009. We are also the world's sixth largest trading nation even though we comprise just 1% of the world's population; second only to the USA in the amount of money we invest abroad and always outward looking and intrepid in nature. One in ten British citizens now lives permanently overseas. We have unrivalled human links with some of the fastest growing countries of the world, whether it is the millions of our own citizens who boast Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage, our close links with Africa, or the 85,000 Chinese students currently being educated in Britain or at UK campuses in China. This is giving rise to a new generation with contact with the UK, with its language, culture and norms, and growing networks that we should cherish and build on. The English language gives us the ability to share ideas with millions – perhaps billions - of people in the biggest emerging economies and – if we so choose – to build networks across the world. It is staggering that in India 250 million school and university-aged students – four times the entire population of the United Kingdom – are now learning English. This underlines the essential importance of the work of the British Council and the BBC World Service, which give Britain an unrivalled platform for the projection of the appeal of our culture and the sharing of our values.

In the world I have described our approach to foreign affairs cannot be, to borrow the arguments of a former Conservative Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury, to "float lazily downstream, occasionally putting out a diplomatic boat hook to avoid collisions." The country that is purely reactive in foreign affairs is in decline. So we must understand these changes around us and adapt to meet them.

Our new Government's vision of foreign affairs therefore is this: a distinctive British foreign policy that is active in Europe and across the world; that builds up British engagement in the parts of the globe where opportunities as well as threats increasingly lie; that is at ease within a networked world and harnesses the full potential of our cultural links, and that promotes our national interest while recognising that this cannot be narrowly or selfishly defined. What I call instead our enlightened national interest requires a foreign policy that is ambitious in what it can achieve for others as well as ourselves, that is inspired by and seeks to inspire others with our values of political freedom and economic liberalism, that is resolute in its support for those around the world who are striving to free themselves through their own efforts from poverty or political fetters. It is not in our character as a nation to have a foreign policy without a conscience or to repudiate our obligation to help those less fortunate. Our foreign policy should always have consistent support for human rights and poverty reduction at its irreducible core and we should always strive to act with moral authority, recognising that once that is damaged it is hard to restore.

How do we go about this pursuing this distinctive British foreign policy?

Our starting point is the belief that government in Britain is not currently as well-equipped as it needs to be to pursue this ambitious approach. We are well placed to make the most of the opportunities of a networked world, but we are not yet organised or orientated to do so effectively.

First, we inherited a structure of government that had no effective mechanism for bringing together strategic decisions about foreign affairs, security, defence and development or to align national objectives in these areas. We therefore immediately established a true, a heavyweight National Security Council and launched the Strategic Defence and Security

Review I have mentioned, which will ensure that we have the right capabilities to minimise risks to British citizens and look for the positive trends in the world, since our security requires seizing opportunity as well as mitigating risk.

Second, many domestic departments of Government have an increasingly international aspect to their work and have staff posted in UK Embassies around the world. But this work is not as coherently brought together as it could be. For example we have already undertaken an audit of the Government's relations with up to 30 of the world's emerging economies and discovered that there is no effective cross-Whitehall strategy for building political and economic relations with half of these countries. It is our intention to transform this, using the National Security Council where appropriate to bring together all the Departments of Government in the pursuit of national objectives, so that foreign policy runs through the veins of the entire administration and so that it is possible to elevate entire relationships with individual countries in a systematic fashion – not just in diplomacy but in education, health, civil society, commerce and where appropriate in defence.

It ought to be the case that a decision to elevate links with a particular country will lead to a whole series of tangible developments: the establishment of a British higher education campus there or new education initiatives, diversified sporting and cultural links, new forms of exchange between Parliament and civil society to fit the circumstances of that particular country, cooperation sometimes on military training and exercises, a visa regime that reflects the totality of UK interests including the importance of the relationship, and British Ministers working with British businesses on aspects of that relationship. In a networked world we should see the presence of British businesses overseas as a valuable asset when it comes to persuading other countries to work with us or adopt our objectives as their own, and that joint initiatives between businesses can be as powerful a tool in changing attitudes as summits and communiqués, if not more so over time.

As an example of this approach I can announce today that the Prime Minister has launched a joint taskforce with the United Arab Emirates as part of our efforts to elevate links with the countries of the Gulf. It will develop options for strengthening our ties across the board and its very first meeting will be held later today. I can also confirm that we are actively exploring the scope for similar initiatives with other countries, including a

visit by the Prime Minister to India shortly to identify how we can forge a partnership for the 21st century, work led by our Liberal Democrat Minister of State here in the FCO Jeremy Browne to reinvigorate our diplomacy with Latin America and Southeast Asia which he will visit shortly, a renewed focus on our relations with Japan and further deepening of our partnership with China. We must also work harder at developing our partnerships in Africa with South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya and look for new opportunities in emerging markets there.

Third, we believe that we must achieve a stronger focus on using our national strengths and advantages across the board to help build these strong bilateral relations for the United Kingdom as well as complement the efforts of our allies, whether it is the appeal of our world class education system, the standing of our Armed Forces and defence diplomacy or the quality of our Intelligence Services and GCHQ which are unique in the world and of inestimable value to the UK.

Fourth, it was clear to us that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office itself has not been encouraged to be ambitious enough in articulating and leading Britain's efforts overseas and foreign policy thinking across Government. I consider it part of my responsibilities as Foreign Secretary to foster a Foreign Office that is a strong institution for the future, continuing to attract the most talented entrants from diverse backgrounds and in future years placing a greater emphasis on geographic expertise, expertise in counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation, experience of working in difficult countries overseas as well as management and leadership ability.

It must be a Foreign Office that is astute at prioritising effort, seeking out opportunities , negotiating on behalf of the UK, so that we can continue to lead through the power of our ideas and our ability to contribute to solutions to global challenges such as climate change and nuclear proliferation for which there can only be a collective response. It will have a crucial role in helping to maintain the UK's economic reputation and restore our economic competitiveness, working with UKTI, for which I have joint responsibility with my colleague Vince Cable, to use our global diplomatic network even more to support UK business in an interventionist and active manner, encouraging small businesses to take their products into international markets, prising open doors and barriers to engagement

on behalf of the whole of Government and acting as the essential infrastructure of Britain in the world.

Under this Government, the job of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will be to provide the connections and ideas that allow the whole of the British state and British society to exercise maximum influence in the world and to give the lead that allows foreign policy to be supported actively by other government departments.

And fifth, we are determined as a Government to give due weight to Britain's membership of the EU and other multilateral institutions. It is mystifying to us that the previous Government failed to give due weight to the development of British influence in the EU. They neglected to ensure that sufficient numbers of bright British officials entered EU institutions, and so we are now facing a generation gap developing in the British presence in parts of the EU where early decisions and early drafting take place. Since 2007, the number of British officials at Director level in the European Commission has fallen by a third and we have 205 fewer British officials in the Commission overall. The UK represents 12% of the EU population. Despite that, at entry-level policy grades in the European Commission, the UK represents 1.8% of the staff, well under the level of other major EU member states. So the idea that the last government was serious about advancing Britain's influence in Europe turns out to be an unsustainable fiction. Consoling themselves with the illusion that agreeing to institutional changes desired by others gave an appearance of British centrality in the EU, they neglected to launch any new initiative to work with smaller nations and presided over a decline in the holding of key European positions by British personnel. As a new Government we are determined to put this right.

Some will argue that our constrained national resources cannot possibly support such an ambitious approach to Foreign Policy or to the Foreign Office. It is true that like other Departments the Foreign Office will on many occasions have to do more with less and find savings wherever possible and that because of the economic situation we inherited from the previous Government the resources Britain has available for the projection of its influence overseas are constrained. But we will not secure our recovery or our future security and prosperity without looking beyond our shores for new opportunities and new partners. No country or groups of countries will increase the level of support or protection they offer to us and no-one else will champion the economic opportunity of the British

citizen if we do not. We must recognise the virtuous circle between foreign policy and prosperity. Our foreign policy helps create our prosperity and our prosperity underwrites our diplomacy, our security, our defence and our ability to give to others less fortunate than ourselves.

In our seven weeks in office we have taken early strides to put this approach into effect. We have put early efforts into our role in multilateral organisations, setting out to be highly active and activist in our approach to the European Union and the exercise of its collective weight in the world. We have worked hard with other nations on proposals to address the crisis in Gaza and to secure new United Nations and European action to reinforce diplomatic pressure on Iran. We have called for a sharpened EU focus on the Western Balkans and will put forward further initiatives in this area. We are working with NATO Allies to fashion a new Strategic Concept and to modernise the Alliance, understanding that in a world of interconnected threats, alliances and partnership must be flexible and networked, as we are seeing in Afghanistan where NATO's operations encompass not just its 28 members but a coalition of 46 nations. We also came to office midway through the five-yearly review of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty and within days announced the most significant departure in UK nuclear policy in a decade, revealing for the first time the upper limit on our nuclear weapons stockpile and announcing a review of our declaratory policy. We are fully committed to working with our Commonwealth partners to reinvigorate that organisation and help it develop a clearer agenda for the future. And at the G20 last week the Prime Minister played a leading role in seeking global action on climate change, maternal health, on the Doha Trade round and international banking regulation and deficit reduction.

The way we have started as a Government we will now carry on, using international institutions as well as working on strengthened bilateral relationships.

We recognise that we do not have the luxury of stopping the clock on foreign policy crises around the world while we put our house in order. We do not live in a tranquil world and a huge amount of our time is taken up with issues that demand day to day attentions and decisions.

We are at war in Afghanistan, our top priority in Foreign Affairs and the scene of extraordinary and humbling sacrifices and heroism by our Armed Forces and we face a serious set of challenges in supporting Pakistan;

We are at a crucial stage in efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation in the Middle East or risk the world's most unstable region from becoming festooned with the most dangerous weapons known to the world;

And time is running out to secure a two state solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict, where lack of progress would be a tragedy for both Israelis and Palestinians, extremely dangerous for the region and detrimental to our own security.

But conducting the foreign policy of the United Kingdom is not just about making the right decisions on issues that affect us now, but laying the foundations for good decisions for many years to come. As a Government we have been elected for five years. But our aspiration is a legacy in foreign affairs in the years to come that will be the strongest possible framework for the pursuit of the prosperity and security of the British people, a reinvigorated diplomacy, and restored economic standing.

So we are now raising our sights for the longer term, looking at the promotion of British interests in the widest sense. In the coming months we will develop a national strategy for advancing our goals in the world that ties together the efforts of government, that is led by foreign policy thinking, that works through strengthened international institutions as well as reinvigorated bilateral relationships, that is consciously focused on securing our economic prosperity for the future, and that unashamedly pursues our enlightened national interest of seeking the best for our own citizens while living up to our responsibilities towards others. In short, it is a foreign policy that embraces the networked world. For seen in this light, although the next twenty years is likely to be a time of increased danger in foreign affairs, it is also a time of extraordinary opportunity for a country that sets out to make the most of the still great advantages the United Kingdom certainly possesses.

Monday, July 5th 2010 - 05:10 UTC

UK press insists Prince William wants to go Falklands' as helicopter pilot

Mail on Sunday reports Prince William is battling to go to the Falkland Islands next year as an RAF search-and-rescue helicopter pilot. William, 28, finishes his training in the autumn and is due to travel to the Falklands for eight weeks next summer.

Prince William piloting a search and rescue helicopter Prince William piloting a search and rescue helicopter

But there is a huge question mark over whether Buckingham Palace will let him take up the post because Argentina is pressing its claim to the Islands.

A source told The Mail on Sunday: 'He will try everything in his power to make sure he goes out there with the rest of RAF Valley in Anglesey.

'He has Royal engagements and other official duties, and that has to be considered, but he is adamant that he is going.'

If he does, William would be following in the footsteps of his uncle, Prince Andrew, who was a helicopter pilot in the 1982 Falklands War.

Argentina is using every opportunity at international meetings to press its claim to the Falklands after British companies revealed there are positive signs of gas and oil in the waters around the South Atlantic islands.

Sources say this could be a reason why William would be held back from heading out to the Falklands with his colleagues from RAF Valley.

A source said: 'The fact that Britain is unwilling to give up sovereignty of the Falklands is of great concern and a threat to William's posting over there. William can't be seen to intervene in political issues and a future King can't get involved in a volatile region''.

The article ends saying that a Buckingham Palace spokesman declined to comment.

Monday, July 5th 2010 - 09:22 UTC

Falkland Oil and Gas: Further Update on Toroa F61/5-1 Exploration Well Spud

FOGL had been expecting to announce preliminary results of the well during this week; however, there have been some further delays due to some minor operational issues and weather related downtime.

Investors anticipating the results of a well being drilled by Falkland Oil & Gas (LON:FOGL) on the Toroa prospect to the south of the Falkland Islands, were left waiting today after the company said that early results from the well were not now expected until next week.

FOGL began drilling the Toroa F61/5-1 exploration well in May towards an estimated target depth of around 2,700 metres, with preliminary results scheduled for this week. The company blamed the delay on further delays due to some minor operational issues and weather related downtime. Shares in AIM listed FOGL soared from 199p to 244p during the last week of June but slipped back by 6.5% to 227.7p on the news today.

The Toroa prospect is located in Licence PL15, in which FOGL has a 49% interest alongside BHP Billiton. The company is planning a two-phase drilling programme, starting at Toroa and then moving on to a deepwater campaign, which is currently expected to start in late 2010. Under the terms of its farm-in agreement, BHP Billiton is funding more than two thirds of the total cost of the committed two well programme.

FOGL is one of four listed groups operating in the Falklands, which include Rockhopper Exploration (LON:RKH), Desire Petroleum (LON:DES) and Borders & Southern Petroleum (LON:BOR) . It is using the Ocean Guardian drilling rig, which was initially contracted by Desire Petroleum last year and began work in the region in February. In May, Rockhopper

became the first company to strike significant oil, with a discovery at its Sea Lion prospect in the North Falkland Basin. (Stockopedia)

Tuesday, July 6th 2010 - 09:20 UTC

Initiative to upgrade Chilean Antarctic Province to "Special Territory"

A group of Chilean senators from the ruling Conservative coalition presented a constitutional reform initiative that would declare as a 'special territory' the Chilean Antarctic Province with the purpose of protection and conservation of the zone's biodiversity.

Tte. Marsch, Chile's first stopping air field to Antarctica Tte. Marsch, Chile's first stopping air field to Antarctica

The initiative that would open the way for the constitutional amendment was presented to the Senate's Government, De-centralization and Regionalization Committee which if approved means Chilean Antarctic would have a similar status to Easter Island and the Juan Fernández archipelago.

In the presentation in support of the proposal the Senators argue that the 'special territory' denomination is needed for Chilean Antarctica because it must be acknowledged that as happens with Easter island and Juan Fernandez "the geographic condition relegates it vis-à-vis the development of the rest of the national territory, and as an echo system it has a direct impact on our country".

"Experience has shown that in extreme places regional and provincial institutional mechanisms are inadequate at local scale. Therefore they need specific rules to address those particular characteristics".

The Senators believe this can be achieved with a Constitutional Organic bill on Government and Special Administration for the Antarctica province.

The initiative also emphasizes that such rules will also guarantee a better protection of Chilean sovereignty, as well as a better development of 'all those activities allowed in that vast territory', enabling the full compliance with the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, which became effective June 1961.

Wednesday, July 7th 2010 - 06:38 UTC

Unasur will be the "political complement which is missing with Mercosur"

Unasur (Union of South American Nations) Secretary General Nestor Kirchner said on Tuesday that the regional block will become "the political complement which is missing with Mercosur".

Chilean president Sebastián Piñera with Unasur Secretary General Nestor Kirchner
Chilean president Sebastián Piñera with Unasur Secretary General Nestor Kirchner

The former Argentine president made the statement following a meeting with Chilean president Sebastián Piñera in La Moneda Palace, Santiago where he arrived to lobby for the approval by Congress of the Unasur charter.

"We agreed on all issues with President Piñera" said Kirchner who nonetheless has some convincing to make because several Senators from the Chilean Conservative ruling coalition are not entirely convinced with the wording of some of the articles.

"Obviously we are working and taking all the necessary measures for Unasur to coincide with and propel Latinamerica's interests", said Kirchner.

Chilean Foreign Affairs minister Alfredo Moreno said that all efforts will be made to ensure that "the treaty and the union of South American countries is the most adequate to Chilean interests and situation".

"We have been participating in Unasur for several years and what is needed is the ratification, which has already been approved by a significant majority in the Lower House and now is under consideration by the Senate", added Moreno.

Kirchner also met with former Chilean president Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet.

Precisely it was Ms Bachelet who held the first pro tempore presidency of Unasur, 2008/2009, when the institutional organization of Unasur gave a decisive step forward with the creation of the South American Security Council and the South American Health Council.

On Wednesday Kirchner is scheduled to travel to Valparaíso to meet with the speakers of the Lower House and the Senate, Alejandra Sepúlveda and Jorge Pizarro.

The Unasur charter is stalled in the Chilean Senate since January 2009. So far the treaty and charter has been ratified by the Legislatures from Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Venezuela, half of the organization's twelve members.

Kirchner as Unasur Secretary General has visited Ecuador, Paraguay and now Chile.

Meantime in Quito, Ecuador Unasur representatives met in anticipation of the pro-tempore presidency transfer from Ecuador to Guyana, next August.

"The idea is to visualize Unasur prospects and prepare for the formal transfer of the pro tempore presidency from Ecuador to Guyana", said Kintto Lucas, Ecuadorean Deputy Foreign Affairs minister.

Lucas said that all country members had acknowledged the role played by Ecuador during the last year in creating, promoting and putting to work the different Unasur councils.

"We now have to look into the future and see how councils will keep working", added the Ecuadorean official.

Finally he said Unasur representatives will review advances in the "political dialogue" with United States and the creation of a regional body to help solving controversies.

Wednesday, July 7th 2010 - 06:58 UTC

Uruguay concerned with Argentine 'naval harassment' in South Atlantic international waters

Uruguayan merchant and naval shipping is under continuous harassment from the Argentine Navy in South Atlantic international waters, a new chapter of the difficult relations between the neighbouring countries, reports Montevideo's main daily El Pais, quoting undisclosed Parliament sources.

Defence minister Luis Rosadilla informed Parliament of the "very serious situation"

Last week Uruguay and Argentina's Foreign Affairs ministers, Luis Almagro and Hector Timerman met in Montevideo to address a full agenda of bilateral issues, and "this was one of the points brought up by Uruguay".

The Uruguayan government later informed members of the opposition from the Defence committee on the results of the ministerial meeting and of several incidents in South Atlantic international waters involving Uruguayan and Argentine vessels.

With no records of what was discussed at the committee, on request from Defence Minister Luis Rosadilla, giving the seriousness of the situation, the minister said that the administration of President Jose Mujica considers these incidents as "harassment situations" towards Uruguayan vessels, particularly since most interception operations take place 'in international waters outside of Argentine jurisdiction'.

"These naval actions have been occurring during the last two to three weeks in the form of 'interferences' to shipping that constitute a 'bullying' attitude, which for the Uruguayan government do not correspond to international waters", according to Rosadilla.

Apparently Uruguayan naval intelligence is working on the issue following reports from naval vessels that were intercepted or told to re-route when crossing South Atlantic international waters, according to parliamentary sources.

The warning messages from the Argentine Navy call on vessels to abandon their route arguing they are crossing waters of exclusive Argentine jurisdiction, when 'according to international charts they are waters open to all shipping', said Rosadilla.

Wednesday, July 7th 2010 - 07:07 UTC

Argentina downplays protest involving Chilean students Falklands' visit

The Argentine consul in Punta Arenas downplayed the alleged repercussions of the recent trip of eight Chilean students to the Falkland Islands allegedly in the framework of a "written understanding" between the extreme south Chilean city council and Falklands authorities.

Martin Rivolta, Argentine General Consul in Punta Arenas (Photo LPA) Martin Rivolta, Argentine General Consul in Punta Arenas (Photo LPA)

"There was no need for a formal claim from the Argentine embassy much less a meeting at ministerial level. An informal meeting was enough" said Argentine General Consul in Punta Arenas, Martin Rivolta who added "there was no phone call from the Embassy in Santiago to Punta Arenas mayor Vladimiro Mimica to protest the agreement between the British administration of Malvinas and local Chilean authorities".

However La Prensa Austral, Punta Arenas main daily stands by its original report quoting a recording from the Argentine embassy in Santiago Press officer, Natacha Martínez who provided the information.

"The issue had strong repercussions in Argentine Tierra del Fuego, so the mayor called us. We had an informal meeting, based on our friendship, but with no intent at all of interfering with political relations", underlined Consul Rivolta.

However in spite of the friendly phone calls and informal meeting the exchange trip of the eight Punta Arenas students who remained in the Falklands three weeks to polish their English and learn about the Islands' culture, could have unexpected consequences.

Argentina under no circumstances can allow that Chile, via a city council, agrees to an understanding which could mean recognizing "the legality of a government in a territory under sovereignty dispute".

Nevertheless Rivolta said that leaving aside the events and the understanding, "it is not the Argentine embassy's business to protest before a city council of the host country, much less demand explanations, since that would inevitable harm bilateral relations".

According to La Prensa Austral that is why Consul Rivolta approached mayor Mimica to downplay the whole event and its repercussions.

"I only asked him as a good friend what was going on, but there was never inconvenience, just surprise" said Rivolta who revealed that the mayor was taken back by the repercussions of the whole incident involving a students' exchange program.

"It is a very sensitive issue; we can't forget a lot of people were killed in a war (1982) and that calls from international organizations for Malvinas sovereignty talks between Argentina and the UK are constant", pointed out Rivolta.

He also mentioned to mayor Mimica that his reference to the Islands as 'Falklands' instead of Malvinas caused an uproar, particularly in neighbouring Tierra del Fuego.

In fact, "mayor Mimica told me that for Argentina and Chile, at all times and in all circumstances they are the Malvinas Islands", revealed Rivolta.

At the time the Chilean consul in Ushuaia Francisco Gomez Lira immediately reacted recalling Chile's permanent recognition of Argentine sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, but acknowledging that mistaking Falklands for Malvinas "was a regretful error and a major carelessness" from a city councillor.

This way the misunderstanding surrounding the Chilean students exchange program trip to the Falklands, --and the Argentine over-reaction--, has been overcome in friendly terms, described as "a careless blunder"

The trip took place June 5 and involved eight Punta Arenas students sponsored by Punta Arenas city government, LAN Chile and the British consulate.

Thursday, July 8th 2010 - 08:06 UTC

Oil and gas finds in the Magellan basin, extreme south of Chile

Latin American oil and gas exploration and production company GeoPark Holdings (AIM: GPK) revealed this week new gas and oil finds on the Fell block in the extreme south of Chile.

James F. Park, GeoPark Chief Executive Officer James F. Park, GeoPark Chief Executive Officer

The firm released details about the successful testing of the wells - Cerro Iturbe 1, the new gas discovery, and Tetera 4, the new oil producer - in an update on its drilling activities on the block.

GeoPark operates and has a 100% working interest in the Fell Block which is located on continental Chile at the Atlantic entrance of the Magellan Strait.

Cerro Iturbe 1 was drilled and completed to a total depth of 3,094 metres on an un-drilled prospect located in the northwest region of the Fell Block.

A production test in the Springhill formation, at approximately 2,984 metres in a 14.5 metres perforated interval, flowed at a rate of approximately 14.6 million cubic feet per day of gas (mmcfpd) (or 413,770 cubic metres per day of gas) with 137 barrels per day (bpd) condensate and no water through a choke of 14 millimetres (mm) and with a well head pressure of 2,417 pounds per square inch (psi).

These are preliminary results and further production history will be required to determine stabilised flow rates from this well. A gas flow line is being constructed and it is expected to connect the well to the main pipeline and marketing infrastructure during July.

Tetera 4 was drilled and completed to a total depth of 3,057 metres on a prospect in the north central region of the Fell Block which had tested small quantities of oil by previous license holders but never been produced commercially.

A production test in the Springhill formation, at approximately 2,912 metres in a 2.5 metre perforated interval, flowed at a rate of approximately 115 bpd of oil and 350 bpd of water through a choke of 12 mm and with a well head pressure of 43 psi.

A beam pump and surface facilities have been installed and the well has now been put on production at a rate of approximately 100 bpd oil and 250 bpd water. Further production history will be required to determine stabilised flow rates from this well and potential development drilling opportunities.

In other drilling activities on the Fell Block in Chile, an appraisal well Ayelen 2, targeted for the shallow El Salto (Tertiary) gas producing formation, reached total depth of 883 metres. Production testing is scheduled during July 2010.

GeoPark is currently drilling well Yagan Norte 2 which is targeting the Springhill and Tobifera formations at depths of approximately 3,000-3,200 metres. GeoPark is also currently recording a 3D seismic survey on the Otway Block in Chile.

During 2010, GeoPark is carrying out a work and investment program totalling 50-60 million US dollars and consisting of a 14-18 well drilling program, 2D and 3D seismic surveys and an expansion of its production infrastructure.

GeoPark owns and operates 6 blocks in Chile and Argentina with a total of 3.7 million gross acres.

Commenting, James F. Park, Chief Executive Officer, said: "We are pleased with continuing strong results from our drilling programme on the Fell Block in Chile – and with our team's demonstrated reliability in both discovering new fields and rehabilitating abandoned fields", said CEO James F. Park.

He added the company was looking forward with confidence "to the remainder of our work programme this year, which represents a balance of development, appraisal and exploration wells and seismic focused on both increasing oil and gas production and reserves and opening up new prospective areas on the Fell, Otway and Tranquilo Blocks".

GeoPark currently represents 30% of Chile's hydrocarbons production and supplies all the oil extracted to Chile's government oil company Enap and all the natural gas to the huge methanol complex, a few miles from Punta Arenas, Methanex which is the world's major producer of methanol.

Thursday, July 8th 2010 - 07:49 UTC

Cricket world first at the Three Falklands Week Festival in Fife

A cricketing first takes place this July when Falkland Cricket Club (FCC) Fife will play their namesakes from Newbury Berkshire, and the Falkland Islands Cricket Association (FICA) who are travelling 8,000 miles from the South Atlantic to take part in the Festival of the Three Falklands Cricket Week.

Falkland Cricket Club Falkland Cricket Club

This will be the first time the three 'Falkland' teams have met creating a 'triangular tournament'.

The week-long festival takes place from 19 to 23 July and forms the centrepiece of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Scottish Falkland Cricket Club who play in Division One of the Scottish National League.

The festival will see the trio of teams contest the Stanley Services Cup – another first on Scottish turf – at Scroggie Park, arguably one of the most beautiful grounds in the UK. The Berkshire and South Atlantic teams have met twice before, first competing for the trophy in 2007. The Berkshire team travelled to the Falklands to successfully defend the trophy in March 2009.

The 2010 three-match tour will commence with the visiting FICA playing current cup holders, Falkland (Berkshire) on 20 July. The next match (21 July) will see FCC (Fife) face the Falkland Islands to compete for an additional trophy - the Drysdale Cup (*) – introduced for the first time. Finally, the closing match will see Fife take on Falkland (Berkshire) on 22 July. Whatever the outcome, it will make for an interesting 'sporting triangle'.

During the festival week there will be social events for the players and their families including a reception in Fife Village Hall on the 19 July to welcome the teams. Around 30-40 players, members and supporters from each organisation will participate in the festival, which ends on 23 July.

The Falkland Islands are a UK Overseas Territory and as such have a love of all things British, including cricket, laying claim to the southernmost cricket ground in the world. Cricket in the Islands is going from strength to strength. The population of around 3,000 boasts an increasing participation with the aim of having a minimum of eight teams by next year, which may be the largest ratio of players per head of population of any country.

The Falkland Islands Cricket Association was awarded Affiliate membership of the International Cricket Council in 2007 the 100th member to be elected to the ICC.

The Falkland Islands cricket team arrives in Scotland fresh from competing in their debut ICC-sanctioned international tournament at the inaugural ICC Americas Championship Division Four tournament in Mexico City.

The 13-man squad won its first match in the tournament, beating Costa Rica by 39 runs in a 50 over match (Falkland Islands 131 all out in 38.3 overs - Costa Rica 92 all out in 28.5 overs). Team captain, Elliott Taylforth, was Man of the Match, taking 6-14 (including a hat-trick).

(*) The additional trophy -The Drysdale Cup – has been donated by Karen Drysdale, who is originally from Falkland, Fife, and now resides in the Islands. The Drysdale family has had a long association with the Falkland CC with many of her ancestors playing for the club.

Thursday, July 8th 2010 - 01:27 UTC

Falklands' Fisheries scientists discover mating habits of deep-sea squid

The mating habits of deep-sea squid have been revealed for the first time, after the discovery of a male squid with a huge elongated and erect penis, according to an article from the BBC credited to Matt Walker, Editor, Earth News.

The male squid's sexual organ is almost as long as the whole body, including the squid's mantle, head and arms.

That shows how male deep-sea squid inseminate females; they use their huge penis to shoot out packages of sperm, injecting them into the female's body.

The discovery may also help explain how giant squid mate in the ocean depths.

Deep-water fisheries expert Dr Alexander Arkhipkin of the Falkland Islands Government Fisheries Department, based in Stanley, explains how he and his colleagues made the discovery, details of which are published in the Journal of Molluscan Studies.

"The mature male squid was caught during a deep-water research cruise on the Patagonian slope. We took the animal from the catch, and it was moribund with arms and tentacles still moving, and chromatophores on the skin contracting and expanding," he told the BBC.

"When the mantle of the squid was opened for maturity assessment, we witnessed an unusual event.

"The penis of the squid, which had extended only slightly over the mantle margin, suddenly started to erect, and elongated quickly to 67cm total length, almost the same length as the whole animal."

The squid's sexual agitation caught the researchers by surprise.

However, its occurrence has helped solve a mystery of how deep-sea squid mate.

Biologists know much more about the mating habits of shallow water cephalopods, the group containing octopus, squid and cuttlefish.

All cephalopods are hindered by their body shape, which comprises a closed hood-type structure called a mantle, which forms most of what appear to be a cephalopod's body and head.

The animals use this mantle to move via jet propulsion, they must ventilate it to breathe, and they must also hide their excretory and sexual organs within its structure.

That poses a challenge to male cephalopods: how do they get their sperm past this mantle, and how does the sperm stay there when water is being forcibly passed through the mantle cavity so females can move and breathe?

Shallow water cephalopods have evolved a special arm to do the job.

They have short penises which produce packets of sperm, called spermatophores, then one of their eight limbs is modified to transfer this sperm to special receptacles on the female. These receptacles are located either on their skin, or internally.

Deep-water male squid are known to use a more primitive method, which involves somehow injecting their sperm into the female's body.

However, it remained a mystery as to how they did it, as they lack a modified arm.

"In deep-water squid we could only guess how this happens," says Dr Arkhipkin.

But the catching of the male deep-sea squid, of the species *Onykia ingens*, has revealed the answer.

"Obviously a strongly elongated penis is the solution," says Dr Arkhipkin.

The squid uses its lengthy organ to reach into the body of the female, and it then injects the sperm directly to prevent it being washed away.

How the sperm injected into a female's body then reaches her reproductive organs remains a mystery.

It may circulate in the cephalopod's blood, just as it does in the bodies of gastropods, which are snail-like molluscs that are distantly related to cephalopods, which are also molluscs.

But it does suggest that one more outlandish theory about how giant squid reproduce may now be ruled out.

So few giant squid (*Architeuthis dux*) or its even larger relative the colossal squid (*Mesonychoteuthis hamiltoni*) have been sighted or brought ashore that scientists have had to speculate about their mating habits.

Dead specimens have been found, but that made it impossible to see that they too likely have extremely long penises, which are tucked under their mantle, before being extended to reach the female, says Dr Arkhipkin.

"So some authors even hypothesised that the giant squid 'shoot' their spermatophores hydraulically from distance to the females," he says.

"Obviously our findings show that the reproductive habits of giant squid may be bizarre, but not to that extent."

Last month, the same researchers revealed research showing the discovery that some deep-sea fish and squid species have mysteriously migrated across the world, from the North Pacific Ocean to the southwest Atlantic. (BBC).-

Friday, July 9th 2010 - 03:57 UTC

Fifth company, Argos plans to drill for oil off the Falkland Islands says FT

A fifth UK company plans to drill for oil off the Falkland Islands after it raises £70m in a London stock market listing, reports the Financial Times. Argos Resources, which holds licences next to the landmark 250m-barrel Falklands' oil discovery made by peer Rockhopper Exploration in May, hopes to achieve a £200m value on AIM.

Dr John Hogan, Chief Executive Argos Resources Dr John Hogan, Chief Executive Argos Resources

People close to the company said Argos began pre-marketing the share offering to investors this week with broker Evolution.

The news comes after three UK oil explorers – Rockhopper, Desire Petroleum and Falkland Oil & Gas Ltd – raised almost £150m to fund a drilling campaign off the Falklands that was condemned by the Argentine government as a violation of its sovereignty.

Rockhopper's value surged 650% in May after its Sea Lion prospect, which lies just east of Argos Resources' PL001 license, made the Falklands' first large oil discovery.

According to the FT Argos, formed in 1995, is led by John Hogan, who worked on Lasmo's attempts to find Falklands' oil in 1997. Ian Thomson is the company's chairman and founder.

Proceeds from the Argos IPO will be used to shoot 3D seismic data and to fund exploration. It is not clear whether Argos will attempt to use the 'Ocean Guardian' drilling rig being used by oil explorers on the Islands, or if it plans to use another rig at a later date.

Since exploration around the Islands began this year, Argentina has sought to make it difficult for companies to move in equipment and supplies by requiring special shipping permits to cross Argentine waters to the Islands.

Legislators in Buenos Aires have also approved a bill to impose sanctions on any companies working in Argentina with links to the Falklands' exploration program. The bill was passed unanimously in the Lower House, an illustration of the depth of feeling across parties and nationally, and is expected to be ratified by the Senate.

Britain says the Islanders have the right to self determination and to develop their own hydrocarbons industry.

Friday, July 9th 2010 - 00:01 UTC

New document outlines sustainable future for Falkland Islands

The Falkland Islands requires an enhanced foreign investment climate, among many other economic 'enablers' in order to achieve a sustainable economic future, according to the newly released Falkland Islands Economic Development Strategy (EDS).

The economy is overly dependent on three vulnerable sectors: fishing, agriculture and tourism. The economy is overly dependent on three vulnerable sectors: fishing, agriculture and tourism.

The document that has been researched and under construction for the past two years examines countless themes that affect the Islands economy, and under 'business environment issues' it notes that while the Islands offers a relatively open economy an improved tax regime, legal framework and foreign investment climate will facilitate the attraction of more development-friendly capital.

The economic landscape of the Falkland Islands has transformed substantially over the past 25 years and the last decade has been marked by modest economic growth, however, 'several strategic shortcomings exist', notes the document. The economy is overly dependent on three vulnerable sectors, fishing, agriculture and tourism. In addition, internally, geographic isolation, a small and aging population, a looming labour gap and skills shortage, limit the Islands ability to continue to build upon 'its strong legacy of the past and to develop a sustainable and vibrant economy for the future.'

According to the EDS the retention of highly skilled and educated workers on temporary work permits remains low and the labour force remains static in terms of 'size, upskilling and new opportunities'. The document emphasizes that the current immigration and work permit policy needs to more efficiently induce a growth in permanent residency and reduce the high outbound turnover rate and the high cost of worker recruitment.

The paper also notes the 'attitude of Argentina poses challenges for the Falkland Islands'. Any economic development strategy will have to take into account the political, diplomatic and commercial ramifications of Argentine actions and foreign policy.

The way forward?

In terms of the business environment, in the short term there will be moves to forge cooperative working relations and partnership between the government and the private and non-profit sectors. A Board of Investments (one-stop investment promotion agency) will also be introduced.

In the longer term there will be fiscal incentives to stimulate development and a favorable and development-friendly tax policy.

Regarding the legal environment, the regulatory regime can be used to 'improve the competitive environment' entailing a faster response and delivery in the creation and amendment of legislation to improve business efficiency, optimize business opportunities and instill confidence in the regime.

Under medium term actions for trade policy the document notes a 'Special Economic Zone' in Stanley and at Fox Bay (or possibly Fitzroy on East Falklands) to attract foreign investments and enterprises including agri-businesses, tourism and port related enterprises.

The worrying issue of labour supply may be solved by streamlining and fast-tracking a flexible work permit programme driven by market needs, as well as extending automatic residence or permanent right to remain to aliens currently in the Islands and returning former Falklands residents.

Immigration reform and legislative changes will cover the establishment of a clear, path towards permanent residence and Falkland Islands status, with a shorter qualifying period.

The specific targets of the document are numerous but according to the introduction, overall the aim of the project is for 'the public, private and voluntary sector to work together on ensuring the islands continue to thrive.' By Lisa Johnson – SeAledPR – Stanley.-

Friday, July 16th 2010 - 15:56 UTC

Falklands' oil exploration to continue with second Rockhopper drill

Oil fortunes ebbed and flowed this week as one exploration company abandoned its well, another looked forward to a second bumper find, and a new player joined the race for black gold in Falklands' waters.

Falklands' Director of Mineral Resources, Phyl Rendell 'really pleased' with the drilling program Falklands' Director of Mineral Resources, Phyl Rendell 'really pleased' with the drilling program

Shares in Falkland Gas and Oil fell by more than 60% before recovering slightly to trade 45 per cent lower at 110p on news earlier this week it would plug and abandon its Toroa well, about 90 miles from Stanley in the South Falklands Basin.

FOGL failed to find any hydrocarbons after drilling to almost 2,500 metres, but said it would continue to pursue its other licence areas in the south and east.

Chief Executive Tim Bushell said results were disappointing, but he added: "It has to be remembered that this is the first well in a previously un-drilled frontier basin. We look forward to continuing our exploration programme once a suitable deepwater rig has been secured."

The Ocean Guardian rig will now be released to Rockhopper Exploration, seeking a second major find after striking rich at its Sea Lion site. The first significant discovery in the current round of drilling sent Rockhopper shares soaring by 650% in May, and the company hopes to repeat its success at its Ernest prospect in the north, where it will begin drilling later this month.

Meanwhile, a fifth company has announced plans to join the drilling race, once it raises £70 million in a London stock market listing. Argos Resources is led by John Hogan, who worked on Lasmo's attempts to find oil off the Falklands in 1998. The significance of their announcement is that Argos holds licences next to the Rockhopper discovery.

An industry expert was quoted in the UK Guardian as saying: "Punters will be disappointed that the Toroa well in the South Falklands Basin failed to find reservoir hydrocarbons.

"However, smart investors will be aware of the massive geological and geographical "gap" between the South and North Falklands basins – the latter having been massively de-risked by the Sea Lion discovery."

Director of Mineral Resources, Phyl Rendell said her department and the government anticipated the ups and downs of oil exploration, and remained "really pleased" with the program so far.

"All the difficulties have been overcome and we are particularly pleased to see the first well drilled in the southern basin," she said.

"Technically and logistically it is fantastic. It will take numerous months to analyse but it does represent a landmark in the exploration campaign."

Mrs Rendell said all five existing licensees were now active, and FIG would be seeking interest from other exploration companies later in the year as part of its ongoing marketing strategy.

She also paid special tribute to all those involved in building the lay-down area near FIPASS: "They have done a remarkable job moving all those tonnes of equipment, and there have been no hold-ups to the rig, which has been the main thing."

Argentina, though, continues to express its displeasure. According to La Nacion newspaper, Argos has already been sent a letter by the Argentine Embassy in London warning it to abstain from drilling or "it will face legal actions."

Similar threats have been levelled at the other exploration companies as the Argentine Government continues its attempts to make life difficult through imposing shipping permits, through its Decree 256, designed to disrupt movement of equipment and supplies between mainland South America and the Falklands.

Lawmakers in Buenos Aires are reported to have now approved a bill to impose sanctions on any companies working in Argentina with links to the Falklands' exploration program. The bill was passed unanimously in the lower house and is expected to be ratified by the Senate.

Mrs Rendell, though, remained unmoved by the political manoeuvring: "It is not preventing the campaign from proceeding," she said.

Acting Governor Ric Nye told the Penguin News Thursday: "As I said in my letter in last week's edition, the UK has protested to Argentina, and has firmly rejected Decree 256.

"The UK Government has made clear its view that it considers that the Decree and its implementing regulations are not compliant with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

"The Convention provides for ships of all States to enjoy the right of innocent passage through territorial seas. As with other matters concerning a ship's route and operation, it is ultimately for a ship's Master and owners to decide whether or not to comply with the Decree, but there is a clear view in the UK that to do so is unnecessary."

Cllr Emma Edwards, minerals portfolio holder for the Legislative Assembly, was yesterday unavailable for comment. By Tony Curran - Penguin News - Stanley

Saturday, July 17th 2010 - 06:47 UTC

The Foreign Office report on British Behaviour Abroad 2009/2010

Lack of travel insurance and inadequate preparation compound the hazards faced by many Britons abroad, according to the Foreign Office's new British Behaviour Abroad report.

High incidence of drink and drug related cases: 944 Brits were arrested for drug-related offences last year. High incidence of drink and drug related cases: 944 Brits were arrested for drug-related offences last year.

The Foreign Office's latest British Behaviour Abroad report shows that Britons are still getting into preventable problems abroad. The report is based on incident figures reported by British visitors and residents to FCO offices around the world between April 2009 and March 2010.

Whilst lost or stolen passports were by far the most frequent problem encountered by British tourists and residents (27,272 reported incidents worldwide), other more serious problems highlighted by the report include drink and drug-related arrests, high numbers of road traffic accidents, and extremely high treatment and repatriation bills resulting from a lack of adequate travel insurance.

The report shows high numbers of drink and drug related cases: 944 Brits were arrested for drug-related offences last year, accounting for a seventh of all arrests of British Nationals around the globe.

Separate FCO research also highlights a risky lack of preparation, leading to many preventable incidents. Research found that Britons are spending an average £12.00 at the airport on magazines and sweets – more than double the cost of a standard single trip insurance policy –yet one in five (19%) are still travelling without travel insurance. Britons are also spending nearly twenty minutes longer cleaning their house before they go abroad (46 minutes), than they do researching the local laws and customs of where they are travelling to.

Spain is at the top of the list for consular assistance cases (5,283), although as a proportion of British visitors and residents, most assistance was needed by Britons in Thailand (957), Pakistan (273), and Cyprus (736). There were 563 British deaths in Germany and 471 Britons hospitalised in Greece. In addition to assistance cases, FCO staff around the world dealt with 1.95m consular enquiries last year.

With so many of the reported incidents being preventable, the FCO is appealing to British Nationals travelling or going to live abroad to make some simple preparations before they go in order to minimise preventable problems.

Foreign & Commonwealth Office Minister, Jeremy Browne, said that the report shines as light “on the number of Britons who get into difficulty abroad each year. The worrying fact is that so many of these situations are preventable. Helping out Britons in trouble abroad is part of our job, but we can’t get you out of jail or pay your hospital bills”.

Browne added that "a bit of preparation before you go, such as arranging travel insurance and checking our website, will ensure you get the most out of your trip without bad memories and big bills. The message from the Foreign Office is clear – have a great time while travelling or living abroad, but make the necessary preparations before you go".

Tuesday, July 27th 2010 - 02:09 UTC

Uruguay/Argentina agree water-monitoring negotiations are "not blocked"

Discussions for the joint monitoring of the River Uruguay with Argentina are "not blocked" and "we have a very strong commitment with the on-going negotiations" said Uruguayan Foreign Affairs minister Luis Almagro following Monday morning's ministerial cabinet meeting headed by President Jose Mujica.

Uruguay and Argentina are negotiating the terms and conditions for the monitoring of the shared waters of the river where the Uruguayan pulp mill UPM/Botnia operates and which is at the heart of a dispute, allegedly because of the contamination risks.

"Negotiations are not blocked and Argentina currently has the Uruguayan proposal for the monitoring under consideration. We are in a reflection period and we are working for the proposals' convergence, probably sometime late this week", said Almagro.

From Buenos Aires Foreign Affairs minister Hector Timerman reiterated that solving the pulp mill issue with Uruguay is a "priority" and added that "I will always have time to mend relations with Uruguay. It is a priority for both countries".

The Uruguayan official did not reveal details of the "negotiation process" although he emphasized that both sides have agreed that "science and only science will be responsible for the monitoring".

Furthermore, "who goes into the (Botnia/UPM) plant for the monitoring and who doesn't is out of the question".

Almagro insisted that Uruguay will never shut down negotiations “and we are going to look for a definitive solution; that’s our objective and all our efforts are directed to that goal”.

Last Wednesday when Uruguay presented Argentina with its monitoring proposal both sides agreed on a 48 hour ‘reflection period’ but on Friday there was no meeting at ministerial level (Almagro-Timmerman) as was anticipated, and over the weekend both sides publicly exchanged non converging statements about the negotiations.

However on Monday statements were back on course and the international agenda of Almagro and Timmerman (Unasur ministerial meeting in Ecuador and Mercosur summit in Argentina) should give them the opportunity to address the issue away from domestic pressure in Montevideo and Buenos Aires.

Tuesday, July 27th 2010 - 02:33 UTC

Gibraltar airport scheduled to become operational next May 2001

Gibraltar's new airport terminal is scheduled for completion in May 2011 and will come into operation regardless of whether or not the works on the La Linea North Entrance have been completed, Chief Minister Peter Caruana has confirmed.

Speaking last week after the technical talks of the Tripartite Forum, Mr Caruana said that Gibraltar had obtained what it wanted from the Cordoba airport agreement and we were no longer excluded from EU aviation measures.

Mr Caruana explained that the North Entrance to the terminal which connects to Spain, was devised solely for the benefit of residents in the Campo but noted that it is “entirely up to Spain to deliver on that,” and that the delay in building the necessary installations on their side, would mean they do not benefit from that aspect of the agreement.

He said the matter was pending agreement between AENA (Spanish Airports and Airspace) - the state owned company that owns and manages airports in Spain - and the La Linea Ayuntamiento which owns the land where the project has to be built.

However Mr Caruana was less than optimistic about the prospects of completion of the Spanish side of the works in time for the May opening of the Gibraltar Terminal, judging by the inordinate amount of time it has taken Spain to carry out refurbishment works at the local Instituto Cervantes.

Meanwhile Mr Caruana commented on the obstacles that exist in finalising a Tax Information Exchange Agreement with Madrid. The Chief Minister stated that Spain's political difficulty in signing an international treaty with the Rock, in the manner that other countries have already done, is what needs to be resolved to obtain a TIEA.

Spain believes that Gibraltar and all other crown dependencies and overseas territories do not have the right or capacity in international law to sign agreements with sovereign independent states, a view that is not shared by UK or the other countries that have already signed agreements with Gibraltar and other such territories.

AUGUST

Tuesday, August 3rd 2010 - 15:41 UTC

Falklands reports good catches of Loligo and rock cod in seven months of 2010

The Loligo and Rock cod fisheries have performed well over the first seven months of 2010, although it is too early to predict the overall performance for the year confirmed Falkland Islands Government Director of Natural Resources John Barton.

Falklands Director of Natural Resources John Barton Falklands Director of Natural Resources John Barton

The first Loligo season was good and the second season has started strongly, bearing out the results of the survey which took place before fishing commenced.

Mr Barton told Mercopress that catches of Loligo currently stand at 38.000 tonnes for the year. Rock cod has been the other strong performer with some 50.000 tons being caught so far this year.

Falkland's conservation zones used to be noted for catches of Southern Blue Whiting but these have declined over the period in which Rock cod has become the highest volume finfish catch in the zone.

Barton said, "It has reached the point now where the management of some of the finfish fisheries are based on the conservation targets for Rock cod."

A major survey of the Rock cod resource was successfully undertaken on the Falkland Islands fishing vessel Castelo, earlier in the year.

Mr Barton added, "It has been another poor year for Illex with very low catches in Falklands' zones. It is also apparent that it was a poor Illex year throughout the Southwest Atlantic with low catches also reported in Argentina and on the high seas.

"The fishing industry has once again being co-existing with oil exploration activities. Some of the exploratory wells, although not all, have been located in deeper water away from regular fishing grounds. The main point of interaction between the two industries is in the use of the FIPASS port facility. Use of the port has increased significantly. The port managers have endeavoured to accommodate all requests which have required flexibility from all parties. Vessel owners and operators have generally secured the port access required and port operations have gone smoothly so far."

Both squid fisheries (Loligo – first season and Illex) started in late February. The second Loligo season started in mid-July.

The Loligo fishery involved 16 trawlers, most of which were registered in the Falkland Islands

Regarding the illex fishery this year there was significantly greater interest in licences, with some 70 vessels calling to collect licences. The main fleets involved are from Korea and Taiwan.-By Lisa Watson – SeAledPR – Stanley.-

Tuesday, August 3rd 2010 - 15:20 UTC

UN Court ruling props “self determination”, contains “territorial integrity”

An International Court of Justice ruling, that Kosovo (in the Balkans) did not violate international law when it claimed secession from Serbia in February 2008, may have implications for territories caught in territorial sovereignty disputes such as Gibraltar, it has emerged.

The independence of Kosovo, test case for peoples of non self governing territories The independence of Kosovo, test case for peoples of non self governing territories

Following the decision, the European Union urged Serbia and Kosovo to improve their relations to bolster their chances of joining the EU.

The advisory opinion, requested by the United Nations General Assembly and issued a fortnight ago by the International Court of Justice, considered the legality of Kosovo's independence.

It notes that “during the second half of the twentieth century the international law of self-determination developed in such a way as to create a right to independence for the peoples of non-self-governing territories”.

It also concludes that “the scope of the principle of territorial integrity is confined to the sphere of relations between States”, thus indicating that the principle of territorial integrity does not impinge on the international law of self-determination and the right to independence.

The UN court ruling, whilst not legally-binding, could mean more will be added to the list of sixty-nine countries that have already recognised Kosovo's independence. But Spain has reportedly argued that it may also encourage other separatist movements worldwide.

International Court of Justice President Hisashi Owada said international law "contains no applicable prohibition" of Kosovo's declaration of independence.

Russia, China and five EU states including Spain support Belgrade's position, whilst the US, Turkey and twenty EU states are in favour of Kosovo's independence.

Serbia's prime minister had stated that the country would sacrifice the prospect of EU membership given the choice between that or re-gaining sovereignty over Kosovo which is already a member of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank but has yet to be accepted as a member of the UN General Assembly.

Aitor Estaban Basque nationalist MP (PNV) saw the ruling as paving the way for similar independence moves.

"I think that the main consequence is that Spain cannot keep saying that the international rules don't allow for a split of the country for a new Basque independent country in the European Union," he told the BBC.

Monday, August 9th 2010 - 07:26 UTC

Gibraltar: Between a Rock and a hard place

La Linea de la Concepcion is a small Spanish town on the North side of the border with Gibraltar. The fascist dictator Francisco Franco sealed the frontier in 1969 to punish Gibraltar for rejecting his offer of becoming part of Spain.

The border was not fully reopened again until 1985, almost ten years after Spain's transition to democracy. Prior to that many Gibraltarians lived in Spain and Gibraltar's dockyard provided thousands of jobs for the people of La Linea.

The closure brought hardship to Gibraltar, but even more to the Spanish town where unemployment was rife. Fast forward to 2010, when Gibraltar has a booming economy based on tourism and the Internet rather than the military base and again provides thousands of jobs to Spaniards struggling with the recession, and massive unemployment.

A recent report by Dr John Fletcher of Bournemouth University showed Gibraltar provided 18% of the total 102,468 jobs in the adjoining area, and that Gibraltarians spent some 63 million pounds in Spain in 2007.

But times are hard for La Linea's mayor, Alejandro Sánchez, he cannot afford to pay council workers, who are protesting in the streets. Quite what became of the town's money is a mystery, the former mayor resigned and was arrested. But the new mayor has a solution, in third world countries when the police are not paid; they set up a road block and charge passers by. Envious of the prosperity the other side of the border Sánchez plans to extort a toll from tourists crossing the national border. He says Gibraltar residents, like those of La Linea and frontier workers, would be exempt from any charge.

Of course the Spanish Government has other ideas, as does the EU regarding freedom of movement, but despite being summoned to Madrid by Miguel Angel Moratinos and told not to, the mayor is adamant that he will introduce it. All the cars leaving Gibraltar would be required to drive through his toll gate. He was also reprimanded for ordering the local police force to halt vehicles crossing into Spain and carry out document checks, an act that caused long delays and was labelled as "harassment" by Gibraltar's government. This was seen as a 'trial run' to see how his Government would react.

Another 'bright idea' is to try and tax telephone lines which he says pass through his town and are used by successful offshore betting companies based in Gibraltar, like William Hill and Ladbrokes.

Sanchez, a member of the right-wing Popular Party claims that the socialist government in Madrid has sacrificed the town of La Linea's interests, favouring Gibraltar, to ensure good relations with Britain. The 'favours' obtained under the 2006 Cordoba agreement included

Spain promising not to obstruct traffic at the frontier and to stop blocking telephone calls and flights.

The association representing Spanish workers in Gibraltar ASCTEG are strongly against his move, and in a press release say that "12 thousand mouths eat from wages earned on the Rock and nobody should interfere with the border"

The new rearrangements will be begin as from this week, Sanchez has said, and that the move was "not a bluff" Quite apart from the controversy of charging visitors, the process of checking cars on their way out could slow down frontier traffic and cause tailbacks into Gibraltar.

"It would create a gridlock," one senior official said

Gibraltar was seized by the British in 1704, and ceded by Spain in 1713. Anglo-Spanish attempts to push the idea of co-sovereignty were overwhelmingly rejected by the Gibraltarians in a 2002 referendum.

Since 2006, with the creation of the Tripartite Forum for Dialogue, the governments of Spain, Britain and Gibraltar have sought to build a framework of co-operation to improve the life of those who live and work in Gibraltar and the Spanish towns across the border. By Jim Watt – Gibnet.com- Gibraltar.-

Tuesday, August 10th 2010 - 01:15 UTC

Spanish mayor firm on charging fee to tourists visiting Gibraltar

Alejandro Sánchez, the mayor of La Lineá, the Spanish town which adjoins Gibraltar, held a press conference Monday evening. He was accompanied by his council members and briefed the media on his controversial plans to charge an entrance fee to tourists visiting The Rock.

He said that works to redirect traffic flow, and provide an infrastructure to allow his proposed toll would start the next day, and that the toll itself would begin to be phased in after 90 days on an experimental basis.

He stated that the charge would apply to foreign tourists, and also be levied on lorries entering Gibraltar. He was particularly critical of lorries carrying building materials to develop new housing on the Rock and said they would have to pay more. The toll for cars would be set at five euros. Despite in an earlier interview stating that Gibraltarians would be exempt, in response to questions from GBC television, he would not say whether that would now be the case or not.

He was openly critical of the socialist Government in Madrid, and said that traffic was a municipal matter for his council to determine, and that the municipal Police who were answerable to him would control it.

It is uncertain where the money for the infrastructural works will come from, as the council claims it cannot pay its workers. Under the 2006 Airport agreement made in Cordoba, Gibraltar agreed to build a new terminal which would allow for joint use of the airport. This 100 million pound project is underway with completion expected on target in May 2011. There is no sign of any works on the Spanish side, and the walkway which would allow passengers for Spain to be cleared through customs in Spanish territory ends abruptly at the frontier fence.

At an earlier press conference after a technical meeting of the trilateral talks between Britain Gibraltar and Spain, Peter Caruana, Gibraltar's Chief Minister remarked that works on the Spanish side were entirely a Spanish matter but Gibraltar would keep its end of the deal and be ready on target. He noted that under the Cordoba agreement Spain would open an Institute Cervantes in Gibraltar but so far they had not refurbished the two rooms made available for this.

The Gibraltar Government declined to comment on the plans for a toll, but issued a statement saying that "The abuse by politicians of police powers over citizens is not acceptable in a democracy. The Mayor of La Lineá must find means of conducting

domestic politics with his central Government that does not involve instructing his police force to harass Gibraltarians.”

Tuesday, August 10th 2010 - 01:00 UTC

Giant 260 sq km iceberg breaks off in northern Greenland

A 260 square kilometre iceberg has broken free from the Petermann Glacier, one of the two largest remaining glaciers in Greenland.

Shedding in the early hours of August 5, 2010, the 600ft thick iceberg is drifting 1000 km south of the North Pole and is an ice island four times the size of Manhattan, as reported by the by the University of Delaware Udaily.

“It is the largest Arctic iceberg to calve since 1962”, Professor Andreas Muenchow, research leader at the University of Delaware.

The event was captured from space by the NASA MODIS-Aqua satellite. First reported by Trudy Wohleben of the Canadian Ice Service, a team at the University of Delaware team subsequently monitored the event in near real time as it unfolded.

The Greenland ice sheet is known to be a dynamic and unstable region with 1000's of icebergs calving each year. Just two years ago, in July 2008, a 27 square kilometre iceberg broke free from the Petermann glacier with an approximate mass of one to two gigatons. This latest shedding is 10 times larger.

It is not clear if the latest Arctic ice instability can be linked to global warming, although scientists have said global temperatures in the first half of 2010 are the highest on record.

The enormous ice block may enter the Nares Strait, and may pose as a hazard to shipping in this deep waterway between northern Greenland and Canada. However the iceberg will be monitored by the University of Delaware team and collaborators using an ocean and ice observing array, positioned in the Nares Strait since 2003.

However the iceberg may have one positive effect – as it moves on its passage along the Nares Strait researchers say: it may act as a huge ice dam, creating a barrier between Canada and Greenland and preventing further ice to escape.

Icebergs calving off the Petermann Glacier are not unusual. Petermann Glacier's floating ice tongue is the Northern Hemisphere's largest, and it has occasionally calved large icebergs. The recently calved iceberg is the largest to form in the Arctic since 1962, said the University of Delaware.

Wednesday, August 11th 2010 - 06:43 UTC

Timerman meets Hillary Clinton to elaborate bilateral and regional agenda

Argentine Foreign Affairs Minister Héctor Timerman is travelling to Washington for a series of meetings with several of US President Barack Obama's advisors in relation to regional, economic and nuclear issues in Latin America.

Timerman first major scheduled appointment is with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Wednesday.

"While in Washington DC, I will not only meet Hillary, but also three of Mr. Obama's main advisors in Latin American issues, related to nuclear and global economy issues" Timerman said in Buenos Aires before leaving for the US.

Regarding the meeting with Mrs. Clinton, the Minister explained that "the US is aware of Argentina's role as a mediator in the region."

"She knows we're advocated to peace and we're looking to set fair rules around the region" said the Argentine minister who added that the administration of President Cristina Kirchner is engaged in conversation with the US on many global issues, "our relations are respectful and very good".

Timerman explained that the meeting will also look into defining the agenda on a bilateral and regional level.

The Argentine minister's first early Wednesday meeting will be with Mike Froman, Obama's advisor on global economy.

Wednesday, August 11th 2010 - 06:31 UTC

Falklands' air-bridge Air Seychelles begins to comply with EU emissions rules

Air Seychelles which currently covers the Falkland Islands/United Kingdom air bridge is in the process of meeting the European Union's emissions' monitoring and reporting requirements, reports Global Travel Industry News.

The European Union (EU) emission trading scheme has been a challenge to airlines flying into European airspace, and foreign carriers have progressively started to comply and "Air Seychelles is also now on board and has instituted measures and procedures to meet the European Union's requirements", based on which continued traffic rights into the EU are anchored.

The Seychelles' national airline is expected to buy carbon credits if necessary but may also take advantage of free carbon credits once the first schedule of reports has been submitted to the EU and reviewed by their experts, points out GTI news.

Air Seychelles operates scheduled flights to Italy, Britain, and charters among others as and where required from mainland Europe and in the case of Britain to Falkland Islands (twice weekly service since January 24th) on a contract with the UK Defense Ministry, "all of which fall under the EU new regulations".

Apparently the reporting and data processing was outsourced to Aviation Footprinter as a result of doing in-house trials first, a decision Air Seychelles took to promote accuracy and full compliance with a variety of rules and to obtain added data relevant to aircraft and engine maintenance.

Air Seychelles has also confirmed that they expect to take delivery of their first Boeing B787 Dreamliner by 2013, when the replacement of the current fleet of B767 aircraft will begin in earnest.

Thursday, August 12th 2010 - 04:30 UTC

Hillary Clinton praises Argentina for its role in helping consolidate peace

Argentine Foreign Affairs Minister Héctor Timerman and US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, met at the US Department of State Wednesday on what was the second and final day of the minister's diplomatic trip to Washington, DC

The US official lauded the role played by Argentina as mediator in the conflict raised between neighbour nations Colombia and Venezuela that ended up Tuesday with the restoration of the diplomatic ties after a meeting between Colombia's head of state Juan Manuel Santos, and Venezuelan president Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías.

The meeting was mediated by former Argentina president and current head of the South American Nations' Union (UNASUR) Néstor Carlos Kirchner and Brazilian president Lula da Silva.

Likewise, Clinton indicated that "Now, we all hope that the nice gesture showed by Santos and the prompt and positive reply of Chávez can be something that will go for a long run".

Before meeting, the Argentine official had told reporters that the encounter was a "good sign that shows how good and healthy the relation between the both countries is". He also remarked that there are "no conflicts between Argentina and the US."

The minister was scheduled to meet later in the day with Gary Samore, Special Coordinator for president Obama and the White House, to discuss programs on weapons of mass destruction and terrorism control.

Timerman had met with the International Economic Affairs advisor for US President Barack Obama, Michael Forman, and the advisor for Latin American affairs, Dan Restrepo, on Tuesday.

"We talked mainly about Argentina and South America. I told Restrepo the important role that Argentina is playing as mediator between regional countries in order to resolve some late mounted tensions, and always advocating for peace and integration. I especially referred to the importance of the UNASUR body, which is led by Néstor Kirchner."

Timerman also indicated that Tuesday's meeting was a great opportunity to inform US officials "how we handled the way-out from default, the debt-swap plan, the country's favourable conditions to welcome foreign investment, Argentina's growth forecasts, and the need of IMF reform".

Thursday, August 12th 2010 - 17:56 UTC

Possible way out to Gibraltar/La Linea 'car congestion tax' controversy

Spain's Public Works Ministry (Ministero de Fomento) has refused La Linea permission to divert traffic toward a toll gate, in a move that could scupper controversial plans to tax drivers heading to Gibraltar, reports the local press.

Rosa Torres Andalucía PSOE ruling party chair said La Linea would regain special status
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The ministry had granted La Linea permission to carry out unspecified works on the main road into Gibraltar but it expired last month. When La Linea, having announced its toll plan, tried to renew the permit, the ministry responsible for the road said no.

La Linea mayor Alejandro Sánchez had hoped to force visitors heading to the Rock to drive through the town centre and pay a congestion charge to be allowed to continue into Gibraltar.

He insisted repeatedly that the proposal complies with EU and national law, but no one else agreed. Government officials both in Gibraltar and in Madrid were in no doubt that it was illegal.

The move by the Public Works Ministry coincided with a parallel announcement by the ruling PSOE-Andalucia, which said it was not opposed to granting La Linea a special economic status to reflect its unique characteristics as a border town.

Sánchez had been arguing for this for months and this status could now become reality. In practice, it would mean a cash injection for La Linea's bankrupt town council, which cannot even afford to pay its own workers.

The two-fold 'carrot and stick' tactic by the PSOE may yet defuse the situation, though there was still tension in Gibraltar yesterday over the mayor's plans.

Rosa Torres the president of PSOE, for Andalusia, declared that the La Linea Ayuntamiento has no competence to implement a toll on cars visiting Gibraltar. But in public statements that open the way for the La Linea mayor to step back from his threat, she also expressed support for La Linea gaining back its special status and the financial support that comes with that.

Ms Torres claimed that the measures planned by Alejandro Sanchez contravene "national and international EU laws". She told reporters that a toll will not solve La Linea's problems.

"There must be dialogue with the Mayor, find a consensus and not declare intentions that will be difficult to deliver on and which only lead to confrontation," she said adding that citizens did not want to hear this.

Ms recalled that under previous PSOE government La Linea had had a special status as a frontier town which delivered extra funding from Madrid but that Aznar's PP government had done away with it.

Friday, August 13th 2010 - 02:49 UTC

A festival of cricket for the Falklands

The cricketers of the Falkland Islands may become regular visitors to Scotland if plans for further stagings of the 'Festival of the Three Falklands' cricket festival are realised, according to a report from the Live Cricket web site.

Last month, teams representing the Falkland Islands, Falkland in Newberry, Berkshire, England and Falkland in Fife, Scotland played a series of matches.

"Tentative plans are in hand to make this triangular tournament a regular feature every 3 to 4 years which would be an excellent idea providing we can manage the logistics of fielding teams for ICC competitions and also for friendly overseas tours," Roger Diggle, Falkland Islands Cricket Association official and player, told Cricinfo.

Although it was in some respects a tournament, its success wasn't measured by the customary wins and losses. "The Festival of the Three Falklands was a very sociable affair. It started with a traditional Scottish ceilidh (a fancy term for a good meal, lots of drink and Scottish dancing). Speeches were given by representatives of all three clubs and also the provost of Fife, Councillor Frances Melville," Diggle explained.

Among the Islanders' squad were the current and former Attorneys General of the territory and its Chief Medical Officer.

In the first match, Falkland Islands won the toss and sent Falkland (Newbury) in to bat. The English Falklanders amassed 220 from their allotted 40 overs before bowling out the Islanders for 103.

Any reduction in overs always has the potential to even things out and perhaps this was the case in the second match. Originally it was to be a 40-over contest, but torrential rain on the first day saw it reduced to a 10-overs 6-a-side affair, which was won by the Islanders by three wickets with two balls to spare.

The win ensured the Falkland Islands returned home with the Drysdale Cup, donated by Falkland (Fife) resident, Karen Drysdale, whose great-great grandfather and grandfather were both captains of Falkland (Fife) CC. The tournament wrapped up with a win for Scotland as Falkland (Fife) beat Falkland (Berkshire).

It's been an unusually busy year for the Falkland Islands who played in their first ICC tournament in June when they took part in the Americas Division Four event in Mexico.

Meanwhile, back home in the South Atlantic, there are plans to install the Islands' second cricket pitch in Stanley (in addition to the existing one at Mount Pleasant). This will allow a weekday Twenty20 league and under-15 and under-17 competitions to start in the 2010-11 season.

Linked with the appointment of a development officer shortly, the Falkland Islands Cricket Association aims to have 100% of school-age children play cricket in the school sports curriculum for a minimum of 6 weeks a year. "We think we might be the first country in the world to achieve 100% participation at school age," Diggle said.

Saturday, August 14th 2010 - 08:03 UTC

Remains of extinct Falklands' wolf, 'Warrah', discovered by 13-year old

A natural history enthusiast since he was just three, now aged 13, Dale Evans a native Falkland Islander has made a remarkable and significant scientific discovery.

Dale with his youngest brother Niall (PN) Dale with his youngest brother Niall (PN)

In January while home at Spring Point Farm, West Falklands he found parts of a Warrah – the Falklands wolf – a species that has been extinct for more than 130 years.

The Islands' only land mammal and its origin is something of an enigma. Only six complete specimens are known to exist and all these were collected in the 1800s. But Dale unearthed bones from the now extinct Warrah that could lead to new information about the Islands' only native land mammal.

Falklands's Museum staff and UK experts alike are thrilled with the discovery of the 'Evans Warrah'.

Dale told the story of the incredible discovery in the family's Spring Point Farm to the Penguin News.

"I knew if there was a jawbone there must be more so I went back the next day. I knew where it was but didn't know how to get there, so (brother) Niall showed me the way...It was boggy so I scanned the area from the bank and thought if I looked on the surface I'd see more – the bones were black against the white sand. By the time Niall caught up I had seen a bit of the skull sticking out of the ground.

As I went towards it I saw the teeth and the cranium. I walked up to it and gently put my hands underneath the sand and lifted it out.

The ground was relatively soft with a crust. I took it to the bank where I examined it. By then I was really excited. Niall was there with me and later he found a bit of hard palate (of a second specimen) and the back of a skull and I found the other bit of it, which I gave to him because they belonged together. I went back to the site a few times. By the skull I found another bit of jaw, and that is close to where I found a baby tooth".

Back in Stanley after the holidays Dale told his experience to one of his teachers who immediately took him and the skull to the local Museum's taxidermist, Steve Massam.

"Steve got really excited because it was obviously of some age. He compared it to photos of a warrah skull he had seen in Holland".

Dale went back searching in the holidays (Easter and half term) and found loads more bones – warrah bones and potential prey species – fish bones, squid beaks, penguin and goose bones and small bird bone.

"Eventually Steve and I went to the vet's to eliminate it from being a dog. He didn't think it was a dog".

Things really begun moving when Steve had to travel to England and there was an opportunity to get the specimen identified safely.

The waiting was perilous! But finally an email confirmed the news: effectively the bones belong to the long extinct Warrah.

The name Warrah is simply a corruption of the term aguará which means 'fox' in Guaraní, one of the prevailing indigenous languages in South America.

"There is no doubt that this is a scientific find of some magnitude" said Leona Roberts, Falklands' Museum Curator Leona Roberts.

"This is the only known Warrah specimen that seems to have been a natural fatality, rather than having been collected by naturalists. The bones and the site might well shed new light on what we know about these fascinating animals."

Since being told of the discovery of the bones, the Museum has been seeking advice and guidance from contacts at British museums and organisations and the next step will be to try and establish the age of these specimens, probably through AMS radiocarbon dating. If the bones are as old as they appear to be, that can only add to the importance of the find. (PN/MP).-

Monday, August 16th 2010 - 05:05 UTC

Argentina developing satellite launcher; ready by 2013 in Puerto Belgrano

Argentina is in the process of developing a satellite launcher which could become operational in three years time, making it the sixth country in the world with that capacity, according to a Sunday edition report in La Nacion.

"With the needed resources, we estimate that by 2013 we could be launching the first space vehicle", said Conrado Varotto, CEO of Argentina's National Committee of Space Activities, Conae.

The project is being developed by hundreds of Conae engineers and researchers.

"We estimate that a vehicle as the one we are planning could cost a fourth of what it would cost anywhere else. It's obvious that it is convenient for the country, because I can have it when I need it and it also opens a line of research and know-how in which we can continue to advance", said Varotto.

The Argentine launcher could put in orbit satellites weighing between 250 and 400 kilos under the LEO orbit (which is between 200 and 1.200 kilometres).

"Regarding the booster, at the moment we are quite advanced with the first prototype with an engine that has 30.000 kilos take off push. Probably the first launcher will be a combination of three of them", added Varotto

Conae CEO pointed out that the fuel, engines, structure and navigation system for the rocket launcher are being developed in Argentina.

The launching pad would be in Puerto Belgrano, where there's a huge military compound. Argentina currently has three families of satellites to monitor the Earth: SAC, Saocom and SAR. SAC has instruments which work optically and/or with passive microwaves; Saocom, active microwaves and radars and SARE, for specific applications in orbits which are of specific interest for Argentina and help map segments of the targets, working under the so called dynamic cluster.

"This new concept helps with immediate response. Currently if we need a satellite in orbit for a specific mission, we appeal to the so called 'monolithic' which means that by the time it is designed and put into orbit, six years can go by. If something goes wrong when in orbit, it's lost and if technological advances occur, you can't replace the obsolete pieces. However with 'small' or 'pieces' of satellites each with different functions and duties, we can somehow overcome the setbacks and delays", said Varotto.

"Hopefully in 2013, we can begin applying this technique once we make the first launching".

The six countries with launching satellite systems are Ukraine/Russia, China, Japan, France/EU, India and the US.

Monday, August 16th 2010 - 04:12 UTC

Gibraltar/La Linea dispute triggers ample coverage in UK press

Ashley Fox Tory MEP for South West of England & Gibraltar has written to the UK press about the current developments in La Linea, reports the Gibraltar Chronicle.

He tells readers in the constituency that considering its distance from the UK it is rare that a story crosses back to Britain, but he wanted to draw readers' attention to the harassment threatened against the residents of the Rock.

The letter states:

"The cash strapped Mayor of La Linea, the Spanish Town immediately across the border, has come up with a new scheme targeting the people of Gibraltar. He is proposing to levy a charge on all people entering and leaving the former colony, with the exception of Spanish workers."

"This is a clear breach of EU law which enshrines the concept of the Freedom of Movement of Labour throughout the EU. This is obviously yet another attempt to distract local attention from the financial problems of La Linea by blaming all troubles on Gibraltar. The Mayor of La Linea needs to focus on fixing his own problems rather than looking for a scapegoat that doesn't exist."

"The people of Gibraltar need our support to face this latest threat to their economic and political independence. Gibraltar may be separated by geography but its people are British, and as such, deserve the same rights that we all enjoy including the ability to cross a border without harassment."

Meanwhile Spanish ferry line Transcoma has launched a promotion offering a maritime alternative to La Linea's controversial congestion charge. The border toll is nowhere near becoming a reality yet, but the company running a service between the Rock and Algeciras is wasting no time.

While workers in Spain continued to dig up the road next to the border, Transcoma sent out a new leaflet advertising a £5 return ticket. The promotion ran under the bizarre slogan, "If dampen the way...come to Spain by sea."

But whatever was meant by the headline, the ultimate aim was clear: "From Ferry Terminal to City Centre without the hassle or tolls!"

Despite pressure from Madrid, La Linea mayor Alejandro Sánchez is pushing ahead with his scheme and has asked council officials to begin drafting the documentation to implement the congestion charge.

Monday, August 16th 2010 - 19:11 UTC

Scientists survey krill fishery and possible marine protected area in South Georgia

The two South Georgia Island King Edward Point (KEP) based scientists are undertaking regular winter survey work at sea to investigate the spatial overlap between the winter krill fishery and the distribution of foraging predators and fish larvae in South Georgia waters, reports the SG newsletter.

Sub-Antarctic marine ecosystems are fragile and can be slow to recover from the impacts of human activities Sub-Antarctic marine ecosystems are fragile and can be slow to recover from the impacts of human activities

This forms part of a range of a larger program of marine studies that will lead to the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the South Georgia Maritime Zone. In 2008 CCAMLR (Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources)

identified 11 priority regions where work to designate MPAs was urgent; one of those was South Georgia. MPAs are an important tool for conservation of marine biodiversity, and form a key component of ecosystem-based management.

According to the UKOTCF (United Kingdom Overseas Territories Conservation Forum), the Sub-Antarctic is a natural laboratory that provides unique opportunities to study and understand one of the most intact large marine ecosystems remaining on Earth. However, human activities such as fishing, tourism and scientific research are increasing in the Southern Ocean, and have the potential to cause major impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem function. Sub-Antarctic marine ecosystems are fragile and can be slow to recover from the impacts of human activities, and their resilience may also be weakened by the effects of climate change. Action must therefore be taken to maintain the integrity of Sub-Antarctic ecosystems and biodiversity, before irreversible changes are allowed to occur.

The current winter survey work is investigating the potential interactions between higher predators and the krill fishery at South Georgia, as well as the possible interactions this fishery may have with other fish stock through the by-catch of larval fish, and will be conducted over two years. The scientists are conducting seabird and mammal counts and trawling for larval fish on set transects. The transect areas have been set in the main target areas of the krill fleet, set using historic krill catch data, and in adjacent areas that are not normally fished.

The two scientists are working opposite ends of the day. During daylight hours Higher Predator Scientist Jon Ashburner monitors a 300 meters wide strip of sea on one side of the ship as it moves along the transect. He records every higher predator seen, which may include penguins and other birds, seals and whales. He also records the animals' behaviour, noting if they are feeding, their direction of travel, approximate age and moult states for some of the birds. Analysis of the data should show what species are competing with the fishing industry to use the krill resource during winter.

Fishery Scientist Luke Kenny conducts his work at night. A plankton trawl net is used to fish for half an hour at three stations along each transect. He then analyses the collected

samples to identify any larval fish. Four surveys are planned between May and August, as part of an OTEP (Overseas Territories Environment Programme) project. The results will build on earlier work surveying seabirds at sea carried out in 2002 to 2004.

Monday, August 16th 2010 - 20:57 UTC

HMS Portland in Falklands' tri-service exercise and patrolling South Georgia

The Royal Navy frigate HMS Portland lead the Maritime component in a Tri-Service week long exercise "Purple Strike" involving all of the military units based in the Falkland Islands. Exercises are conducted on a regular basis to ensure all units are prepared and capable of dealing with any eventuality, including the ability to defend the Falklands if required.

Initially HMS Portland teamed up with the Falkland Island's Patrol Ship HMS Clyde to deploy the Roulement Infantry Company, currently the Welsh Guards with elements of the Light Dragoons, to investigate reports of enemy troops on West Falkland.

As the week wore on HMS Portland flexed her Anti-submarine Warfare skills by hunting for an enemy submarine that was "sighted" in and around the Islands. The Ship's Lynx helicopter also provided support to the troops ashore while the frigate prepared for a simulated emergency landing. Flight safety exercises are conducted regularly to ensure the ship's company can respond effectively to short notice emergencies.

Weapon Engineer "Paris" Hilton who is responsible for Air Weapons said: "The ability to safely deploy the Ship's helicopter adds to Portland's versatility. It can undertake many roles from prosecuting enemy submarines to providing reassurance to the people of the Falkland's in remote settlements. I am proud to be part of the team who delivers that effect."

The exercise culminated with the Devonport based Frigate berthing in a 'hostile' port where she landed a shore patrol to establish a security cordon and allow fuel and supplies to be offloaded from RFA Black Rover.

During July "HMS Portland" was on patrol in South Georgia waters according to the latest South Georgia newsletter. The type 23 frigate, captained by Commander Mike Knott, made a circuit of the Island, and entered the dramatic Drygalski Fjord, at the southern end of the Island, as dawn broke on July 23rd. High winds were whipping out of the fjord and prevented the ship going in more than half way, but luckily the conditions were local and after a fast passage the ship was again amongst fabulous scenery and weather, as it picked its way through brash ice to approach the Nordenskjold Glacier in Cumberland East Bay.

A group of infantry were disembarked to make patrols on foot. Over the next three days the crew took it in turns to be landed ashore. Landing operations were assisted by the two GSGSSI harbour launches. The lack of deep snow, though unusual for this stage of the winter, was a bonus for walkers making it easy to walk from KEP to visit the old whaling station at Grytviken.

Many of the crew aboard "HMS Portland" had visited the Island before, though in many cases it was more than ten years ago. Those returning were interested to see the changes to the whaling station after the 'Remediation Project', reinstatement of hydroelectricity, and the change from KEP being manned by a military garrison living in the old barrack building at Hope Point, to the modern science base that now dominates the foreshore of the Point.

Tuesday, August 17th 2010 - 08:56 UTC

"Argentina/UK relation must go beyond the Falklands/Malvinas conflict"

The Argentina/UK relation must go beyond the Falklands/Malvinas conflict, said British ambassador Shan Morgan during a recent visit to Salta, one of Argentina's most northern provinces famous for its landscape and agro-industry potential. She also praised Argentine labour and talent and was hopeful a trade agreement could soon be reached with the European Union.

Interviewed by the local newspaper El Tribuno Ms. Morgan said that the two countries "have more issues in common than the Falklands/Malvinas conflict: we have historic links that clearly exceed the difference over the Islands. Argentine railways were built by the British and so many other infrastructures. My priority is to maximize coincidences beyond our differences".

When asked about the recurrent Argentine calls for sovereignty negotiations, the British ambassador admitted it is "a very important issue for Argentines, but the position of my government is well known and has not changed. I understand we have an important difference, but we also have other forms of cooperation".

Further on Ms Morgan said she was hopeful a trade agreement could be reached between the European Union and Mercosur, "so as to strengthen trade links between both blocks".

The British ambassador said that claims about Argentine protectionist practices were being handed by the EU Commercial Attaché and denied point blank that any British corporation has complained about lack of legal security in Argentina.

"Not at all, on the contrary the British corporations always talk about the quality of Argentine human resources. Labour capacity in Argentina and talent are excellent and that is what British companies are after. Over a hundred British companies are established in Argentina and 36 of them belong to the top ranking", said Ms Morgan who recalled the long and significant trade relation between Britain and Argentina.

Finally the British ambassador said it was her second visit to Salta but was again stunned by the beauty of the landscape and regretted that "more British tourists don't visit the country". Last year an estimated 60.000 British tourists travelled to Argentina. "More flights to Bariloche and Iguazú will help but what are needed is publicity and more infrastructure".

Wednesday, August 18th 2010 - 19:18 UTC

HMS Gloucester sets sail for the Falklands next Friday

A Royal Navy destroyer will set sail for the Falkland Islands from Portsmouth to maintain Britain's interests in the South Atlantic, reports Royal Navy News.

HMS Gloucester will leave on Friday for the next seven months. She will spend the majority of her deployment patrolling the British South Atlantic Isles including the Falklands and South Georgia.

The Type 42 destroyer will take over from Devonport-based HMS Portland. She will also make official visits to various South American countries such as Brazil and Chile, represent the UK at an exhibition of defence technology and take part in maritime security patrols.

Gloucester's Commanding Officer, Commander David George, said: 'Gloucester will be providing British citizens in the South Atlantic with the reassurance of knowing that the Royal Navy is looking out for their interests.

'But while we are down there, we are also policing the seas and ensuring that they are safe for all to use and pass through.'

With the ship away until March next year many families are making alternative arrangements for celebrations such as birthdays and Christmas. Some have even celebrated Christmas already.

Commander George added: 'We have all been making the most of precious time with them in the last few weeks.'

Tuesday, August 17th 2010 - 19:27 UTC

South Sandwich Islands are the emergent tips of huge volcanoes, according to BAS

Earlier this year, geologists on the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) ship "RRS James Clark Ross" completed a project to map the sea floor around the volcanic South Sandwich Islands using multi-beam sonar. This completes a project started three years ago, reports the latest edition of the South Georgia newsletter.

Bathymetric map showing submarine volcanoes around Zavodovski Island and numerous seamounts and sediment waves in the foreground (Image BAS) Bathymetric map showing submarine volcanoes around Zavodovski Island and numerous seamounts and sediment waves in the foreground (Image BAS)

The islands are rich in marine life, but also are sources of poorly quantified hazards from volcanic eruptions and tsunamis generated by land-sliding of submarine parts of the volcanoes.

The 30m resolution survey showed for the first time that the South Sandwich Islands are the emergent tips of huge volcanoes that rise from seafloor about 3 kilometres deep. Scattered among these large volcanoes are about 20 smaller, submarine volcanoes known as seamounts, some of which rise to within 100m of the surface. These are likely to be biological hotspots, especially as several are likely to be releasing volcanic hot springs onto the sea floor.

The risk of land-sliding of the volcanoes to form tsunami is less than might be anticipated. Although sizeable landslides clearly have occurred, they are infrequent. This is because slope gradients have been reduced by build-up of thick piles of sediments on the lower slopes.

BAS scientists Phil Leat, Tara Deen and Alex Tate carried out the survey from January to March 2010 with scientists from the Aon Benfield Hazard Research Centre of University College London led by Simon Day.

Thursday, August 19th 2010 - 06:05 UTC

Rockhopper confirms Falklands' drilling program; shares rebound

After stating that its first well (Ernest) drilled in the southern part of the North Falkland Basin has been declared dry, Rockhopper Exploration (AIM: RKH) was sold down to 265p before rallying sharply to close Wednesday only 2.5p cheaper at 301.25p.

Focus in back in Sea Lion says Sam Moody, Managing Director of Rockhopper Exploration.
Focus in back in Sea Lion says Sam Moody, Managing Director of Rockhopper Exploration.

In its Tuesday release Rockhopper said that the Ernest prospect reached a depth of 2.240 meters but logging operations confirmed that no hydrocarbons had been encountered at the well location and that "the well is a dry hole".

The well was drilled approximately 120km from the Sea Lion discovery in a previously un-drilled part of the basin, and was testing a different play type from that encountered at Sea Lion. The well encountered good quality sands with high porosity and permeability.

Rockhopper Exploration intends to undertake detailed post-well studies of all data and information gathered from the well once all samples have been returned to the United Kingdom and analysed in a specialist laboratory.

A further announcement will be made once all operations have been completed. Ernest well was spudded 23 July 2010 and was declared a dry hole on 17 August 2010

"The result of Ernest is disappointing, but the well was always designed to investigate an entirely different geological play type from Sea Lion, to which our focus now turns.

Once operations are complete at Ernest, our intention, subject to the usual regulatory consents, is to test the Sea Lion discovery and gain as much", said Sam Moody, Managing Director of Rockhopper Exploration.

The latest estimate for Sea Lion by independent consultancy RPS Energy raised the bar from 170 million barrels recoverable to 242 million barrels recoverable.

Energy analysts at Evolution Securities said: "The first well drilled in the Southern part of the North Falkland Basin has been declared a dry well. RPS suggested that the greatest risk to this well was the source rock found in the Northern part did not extend into the southern part.

"If this is the case behind the dry well there should be little impact on the prospectivity of the Northern part of the basin as eight wells have been drilled (there) proving a working hydrocarbon system."

In spite of the adverse result Rockhopper showed no signs of slowing its campaign and in its yearly results published Wednesday said it fully intends to maintain its focus "on developing our existing acreage and continuing to work with the Falkland Islands Government in doing so."

Its bullish approach came despite its losses widening to 7.6 million USD at the end of March from 5.1 million USD a year earlier.

Dr. Pierre Jungels, Rockhopper Exploration's Executive Chairman, said: "We are fully funded to complete the well on the Ernest prospect, a flow test on the Sea Lion prospect, which we believe will help move the discovery forward towards being declared as commercial, and pay our 15% contribution to two further wells on PL003 & PL004, where Desire is the operator.

The group has been transformed by the discovery on the Sea Lion prospect and is now working through the steps required to ensure that shareholders get the best possible value from it.".-

Monday, August 23rd 2010 - 21:24 UTC

Falklands, 'a really valuable training' theatre for the £ 75 million Typhoon

IT'S almost a year since the Typhoon aircraft took up the role of air defence of the Falkland Islands, and their presence is a source of great pride with Falklands' residents. The aircraft, costing in the region of £75 million each, patrol the skies and undertake valuable training on a daily basis.

Squadron Leader Steve Pook plans a Falklands flight Squadron Leader Steve Pook plans a Falklands flight

For the past four months Squadron Leader Steve Pook has been in charge of the aircraft which were flown to the Islands in September 2009 clocking up an historic flight for British aviation. Steve (40) has just completed his sixth and probably final tour on the Falklands, and is proud to have commanded a squadron of the world's most capable swing-role combat aircraft.

Sharon Jaffray from the Penguin News interviews Squadron Leader Steve Pook.

How does flying here compare to elsewhere in the world?

The weather makes it interesting, and can catch us out, as you saw in June when we were diverted to South America. But flying around here is great. There is not much traffic, no controlled air space issues to deal with, apart from the ranges and wildlife sanctuaries which have to be avoided. We get a lot more low level flying here than in UK, which is really valuable training for us. In the UK most of the flying we do is high end and fighting against other aircraft. Here the threat is of a much lower order so that is what we train for. We have some top end limits on winds we can fly in, mainly because if we eject we'll be killed, and of course cross winds for landing, but generally the wind is in the west which is OK for the runway here.

The Typhoon is very agile and uses a lot of lift off the wings, but the downside to that is that it is susceptible to high winds on the runway. However, these are training limitations. Operationally if we have to go, we go.

If you were to plan a scenic flight around the Islands where would you go?

I'd head out over Head of the Bay Brook and into San Carlos. I'd then cross the Sound onto what we call A4 Alley and fly down Coast Ridge. It's beautiful flying down there. And then for pure scenery I'd fly over Weddell Island and the Arch Islands.

The Top Gun movie is famous for the nicknames the American pilots had. Do British pilots have nicknames?

We do, but they are nowhere near as imaginative as the Americans who tend to get theirs when they are passing out because of something they have done. Ours tend to be name related.

Do you give the aircraft names?

Yes. Faith, Hope, Charity and Desperation, for example, and they have personalities too. Despo is the sickly bird in the fleet. If any of them is going to break it will be her. She hasn't flown as much as the others because she does get poorly.

Faith and Hope are the two that went to South America so they were well named, and Charity is a worker, but Despo is my little sickly child.

When did you know you wanted to be a pilot?

I flirted with the idea briefly when I was very young, but I actually wanted to be a geologist. Then I changed my mind as I was approaching 21. My dad was with the Air Force and worked for British Airways, and he said they were crying out for pilots so I thought I would give it a go. I passed their aptitude test and they passed it on to the RAF. I joined the RAF to fly helicopters, but it was at a time when we were reducing in size and it was fast jet or bust. If you didn't make fast jet you weren't going to be a pilot. Thank goodness for that, because I have had an amazing time.

What qualities do you need to become a fast jet pilot need?

The specific thing is capacity – the ability to deal with a lot of different bits of information while still carrying out the task. In my job the flying is very much secondary. To be honest, anyone could fly a Typhoon, it's a doodle.

The problem comes when you have to start fighting and there's a lot of information thrown at you to deal with; multi-tasking. Confidence is important too. It was when I became confident in my decision making I realised I was probably going to be OK as a fast jet pilot. I had a lot of trouble during basics because I struggled to make a decision. My instructor told me to just make a decision. It didn't matter if it was the right or wrong one because you can always correct it. Just get into the habit of making a decision.

Multi-tasking is most often attributed to women. Are there any female Typhoon pilots?

Just the one at the moment: Helen Seymour, an ex-Tornado pilot. She was here around Christmas time and is a very good pilot.

What advice would you give to a young person who would like to become a pilot?

Go to university and get a degree. You need to be good at and practice mental arithmetic. Not just adding numbers up, but what we call mental dead reckoning. Be able to look at a map and calculate distance and time, etc. Play a lot of computer games for hand eye coordination, which should be very easy for most kids. It's a useful tool, but don't play too many as you have to work and study to get the grades too. Flight simulators are also useful because some of the aptitude tests will have you looking at similar instruments, so getting used to them is a good piece of training. But, most importantly, don't let your education suffer.

Is the Typhoon the best in the world?

Bar the most expensive, the fifth generation American Raptor, the Typhoon, as what we call a fourth generation fighter, is the best.

What gives it that edge?

The Typhoon has power – it's got great engines and of course the air frame. It's highly agile unlike most of the aircraft we have had in the past. Together it means it can carry a lot of stores without degrading the performance of the aircraft. It allows us to fight in the places we want to be able to fight. High or low and fast while carrying a lot of stuff. It turns like crazy and has got loads of power. It's just brilliant.

What's next for you?

This is my last flying job in the RAF. I'm going back to a desk job in September until I leave the Air Force – it's my time so I am moving on. I'm on what's called the career spine and my chances of flying now are reducing. Once you get to a certain rank, flying jobs become fewer and fewer. I'm looking at more and more desk jobs and that is not what I joined the Air Force to do. I'll fly for fun but I am not going to the airlines or anything like that.

Thursday, August 26th 2010 - 02:55 UTC

Falklands: Rockhopper ready to begin well flow-test of oil discovery

Rockhopper Exploration plc (AIM: RKH), the North Falkland Basin oil and gas exploration company is ready to begin a flow test on the Sea Lion discovery which should give an early indication of the production potential of the reservoir sands.

The Ocean Guardian oil rig is moving towards Sea Lion prospect The Ocean Guardian oil rig is moving towards Sea Lion prospect

According to the latest release from the company the Ocean Guardian drilling rig is heading for the Sea Lion location while it awaits the necessary consent from the Falkland Islands government to carry out the a flow test at the well 14/10-2

The flow test is expected to give an early indication of the production potential which will be an essential part of the planning process required as the Company moves towards its full appraisal and possible development programs.

The design for the initial flow test uses equipment that is available on the Ocean Guardian and certain chemicals which are expected to mitigate the wax appearance temperature and the pour point of the oil

Meanwhile Rockhopper's second well 26/6-1 at the Ernest location has been safely plugged and abandoned as a dry hole following completion of all logging runs.

The company is expected to provide an update of its operations once the Ocean Guardian is at the Sea Lion location.

The oil well at the Sea Lion prospect was drilling during April and May 2010, the result of which is the first oil discovery and Contingent Oil Resource in the North Falkland Basin.

Rockhopper was established in 2004 and was floated on AIM in August 2005 and holds a 100 per cent. interest in four offshore production licences granted by the Falkland Islands government.

Before the drilling begun early this year the company was involved in an extensive work program which included 2D and 3D Seismic and Controlled Source Electromagnetic Mapping (CSEM).

In February 2010, the Ocean Guardian drilling rig contracted by Desire Petroleum arrived in Falklands' waters to carry out the current multi-wall drilling campaign.

The Ocean Guardian first drilled the Liz prospect well for Desire Petroleum, discovering natural gas; the Sea Lion well for Rockhopper, discovering oil; and the Toroa well for Falklands Oil & Gas, which was a dry hole. However it was the first well to be ever drilled to the south of the Falklands. The Ernest well was also dry.

FOGL junior partner (49%) of Australian mining giant BHP Billiton (51%) has plans to continue with its original exploratory program to the south of the Islands, probably with a deeper water submersible rig. Two more companies, Borders & Southern Petroleum (in May) and Argos Resources (early July) have announced their intentions of drilling in Falklands' waters.

Friday, August 27th 2010 - 08:25 UTC

Malvinas: Argentina working for more than "a gesture of support" from Unasur

Argentina is working with Unasur (Union of South American Nations) so that in the future the South American forum offers more than "a gesture of support" to Argentina's claim over the Falkland/Malvinas Islands and helps bring the United Kingdom to the sovereignty negotiations table, said Argentine ambassador before United Nations, Jorge Argüello.

"Argentina is pushing to increase the level of commitment of the region with this historic claim", said Argüello during a meeting at the UN offices in Buenos Aires to brief journalists on next month's UN annual General Assembly agenda of activities.

Argüello revealed that Unasur is addressing 'hypothesis scenarios' which are in line with Argentina's interests and expects to receive "something more concrete than a gesture of support" in the dispute with the UK over the South Atlantic islands.

He considered as positive and beneficial for such a stance the recent experience of Unasur in helping defuse the Colombia/Venezuela conflict.

"The successful participation of Unasur in the Colombia/Venezuela crisis is a very important fact for the United Nations General Assembly which begins September in New York".

"I believe that Presidents Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, Lula da Silva (Brazil) and even Barack Obama will mention the issue in their speeches", said the Argentine diplomat. He added that Unasur secretary general Nestor Kirchner played a "key role" in bringing together Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and Colombia's Juan Manuel Santos.

Argüello was also upbeat about Argentine prospects for its Malvinas claims because of the newfound support of English-speaking Caribbean countries (including in the UN Decolonization Committee chaired by St. Lucia) and the adverse impact of the Gulf of Mexico oil environmental disaster on the British South Atlantic oil exploration begun early this year.

"Similar deep-sea drilling in uncontrolled and disputed waters", Argüello pointed out. He then went on to reject the right of a (Falklands) "implanted population" to self-determination.

Donatus Keith from Santa Lucia and president of the Decolonization committee or C-24 is scheduled to visit Argentina next October.

Mrs. Kirchner is scheduled to address the UN General Assembly 24 September.

Saturday, August 28th 2010 - 07:10 UTC

Former Uruguayan Defence minister honoured by US Centre for Defence Studies

The United States Centre for Hemispheric Defence Studies (CHDS) has selected U.S. Army Gen. John Galvin and former Uruguayan Defence Minister Dr. José Bayardi in the individual category and the Mexican Centre for Superior Naval Studies (CESNAV) in the institutional category for the 2010 William J. Perry Award for Excellence in Security and Defence Education.

Jose Bayardi to receive the same Perry Award as former Colombian president Alvaro Uribe
Jose Bayardi to receive the same Perry Award as former Colombian president Alvaro Uribe

In announcing the selection on Tuesday, CHDS Director Richard D. Downie praised both the awardees as well as the record number of people and institutions from around the Western Hemisphere who were nominated this year for a Perry Award, named after the former U.S. Secretary of Defence whose inspiration resulted in the creation of the Centre.

"Interest in the Perry Award reflects the fact that these selections truly recognize significant academic and/or policy contributions in this Hemisphere," Downie said.

"We are deeply honoured that in 2010 we are able to offer the award to two enormously distinguished individuals and an outstanding educational institution, CESNAV—whose hallmarks has been the promotion of education, research, outreach and knowledge-sharing in defence and security issues in the Western Hemisphere.

"In their own ways, the work of Gen. Galvin, former Minister Bayardi and CESNAV has led to greater international security cooperation, enhanced effective civil-military relations, and adherence to CHDS core values."

Downie praised the work of former Defence Minister Bayardi, a CHDS graduate and now a Uruguayan senator, whose tenure as defence minister in Uruguay entailed a key role in international peacekeeping efforts in Haiti and the Congo. Bayardi was also an important figure in his country's debate over human rights and in the Uruguayan armed forces reorganization for the 21st century.

The Centre director said he also took great pride in the fact that Galvin, a former commander at SOUTHCOM and a former dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, was a 2010 choice.

“As the Commander-in-chief of the U.S. Southern Command and later as NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Commander in Chief of the U.S. European Command John Galvin brought great regional understanding, and leadership, serving as a beacon and an inspiration for those who have served in Latin America.”

Downie pointed to the key role played by CESNAV (known in Spanish as the Centro de Estudios Superiores Navales) in helping the Mexican government confront some of the greatest threats in its history.

CESNAV, he said, “makes extraordinary contributions every day toward advancing the cause of democracy and the rule of law within some of the thorniest terrain in the defense and security arenas. Clearly their success has been key to beating back some of the greatest threats faced not only in their country, but in the region as a whole—including the United States.”

The second annual Perry Awards were given to Colombian President Alvaro Uribe Velez in the individual category and the Chilean National Academy of Political and Strategic Studies (Academia Nacional de Estudios Políticos y Estratégicos/ANEPE) in the institutional category.

Monday, August 30th 2010 - 19:20 UTC

US has “permanent military bases” in Guantanamo and Falklands, says Castro

United States has permanent military bases in Guantamano (Cuba) and the Falkland Islands, but it is prepared and capable of setting up troops anywhere else in Latin America in “a matter of hours” said the ailing Cuban leader Fidel Castro quoted by the official press.

The retired ailing Cuban leader spends his time writing The retired ailing Cuban leader spends his time writing

"The US has bases at such points as the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic (to control the vast resources of Antarctica) and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, while in other places they appear not to have them, but in reality they do and they are on training and exercises all the time", said Castro.

"The US does not have bases in Venezuela, but they have turned Colombia into a huge base. They have them in Honduras. They don't have them in Costa Rica but they do have forty ships with helicopter carriers off the coast 'nobly' helping Central America combat the drug trade", said Fidel Castro.

The Cuban leader made the statements following a meeting in Havana with the Russian writer Daniel Estulin, author of "The True Story of the Bilderberg Group".

The subject of US bases in Latin America was one of several topics discussed in Castro's conversation with Estulin, who considers that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is being targeted because his country is one of the few where Washington has no military presence.

Also referring to Chavez, who made a surprise visit to Cuba last week, Fidel Castro said that the Venezuelan is working tirelessly on a peace process with Colombia, and "sleeps a little during the day and works all night".

The meeting in Havana took place because Fidel Castro's "Reflections" articles have used on several occasions quotes from the Russian writer and his so called Bilderberg Group, an annual, invitation-only conference of some 130 influential figures in politics, banking, business, the military and media, which allegedly act as "a world government" in the shadows with the clear purpose of controlling global affairs.

SEPTEMBER.-

Wednesday, September 1st 2010 - 06:48 UTC

Argentina to increase budget defence 50%, recovering losses of Falklands war

Defence minister Nilda Garré said the Argentine government would increase the defence budget in coming years from 0.9% to 1.5% of GDP to help overcome decades of divestment following the defeat in the (1982) Falklands/Malvinas war.

The extracts of her words are from a conference followed by a period of questions and answers with political science students at the Di Tella University.

Garré said that the contraction of the defence budget can be tracked to the “defeat in the Falklands/Malvinas war, social incompatibility with the military institutions following the war, military dictatorship and the 2001 collapse of the Argentine economy”.

The minister said these factors “most probably impeded a quicker recovery” of military spending that will be used in future budgets to improve military hardware, particularly with the development of a defence industry.

“The current 0.5% of GDP, will be sustainedly increased in coming years to reach 1.5% of GDP: in other words a 50% increase to modernize equipment particularly appealing to the development of a national defence industry”, pointed out Garré.

The minister also said Argentina will continue to be committed to world peace operations and emphasized the “excellent performance” of Argentine troops in Haiti and Cyprus, where they have been congratulated by United Nations.

Garré anticipated that Argentina is ready to begin applying “nuclear technology” in defence issues since it has rigorously complied with international rules against the proliferation of this kind of energy.

"Foreign Affairs, the Argentine Atomic Energy Commission and regulators have fully agreed to work in the development of nuclear propulsion engines which could be used in vessels or submersibles", indicated Garré.

With this purpose the Atomic Energy commission has created a task force to work with the Ministry of Defence to begin outlining the project.

Regarding regional affairs the Minister of Defence said that Unasur (Union of South American Nations) has managed the creation of "a peace zone" where "substantially stability exists" although admitting "some local conflicts must still be resolved".

More specifically on the South American Defence Council, in the framework of Unasur, "it has been successful in several of these conflicts, actively working in the case of Colombia and Venezuela and the border incursion of Colombian troops into Ecuador".-

Finally she pointed out that Unasur must help in preserving the rich mineral resources of the region.

Wednesday, September 1st 2010 - 06:23 UTC

First ship to claim British victory in Falklands RFA Sir Percivale is dismantled

In her finest hour she was at the forefront of British victory in the Falklands in a long service that saw her serving the country around the world. Now nearly 28-years after Argentina invaded the Falklands, this once great servant of the Royal Navy sits tired and lifeless in a Merseyside dry dock and is destined to become a tin of beans in your kitchen, reports the Mail on Line

Falklands' hero: Sir Percivale was the first ship to sail into Stanley Harbour following the Argentinean surrender on June 14, 1982 Falklands' hero: Sir Percivale was the first ship to sail into Stanley Harbour following the Argentinean surrender on June 14, 1982

Dismantled: The British Navy warship is stripped - and could be made into tins used for beans (Barcroft Media) Dismantled: The British Navy warship is stripped - and could be made into tins used for beans (Barcroft Media)

As the first ship to sail into Stanley Harbour following the Argentine surrender on June 14 1982, RFA Sir Percivale gained affectionate notoriety among those who served on her.

Incredible pictures show how over the past three months she has been gradually stripped and ripped to pieces by a CAT digger, broken and up and sold for parts.

Many servicemen who fondly remember the 255 of their brothers in arms killed in the Falklands conflict can see her today in her final hours. But it will surely sadden them to think that the once great machine will be recycled like any other piece of scrap metal.

Pictured at Canada Dock, Liverpool, Merseyside, the 5,674-tonne Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) has been dismantled by as little as 12 people before the end of June.

Simon Capps, 35, sales manager of of Leavesley International, who also carried out the dismantling of HMS Intrepid in 2009, said: 'Many servicemen come to visit the ships we dismantle and shed a few tears in farewell.

"But fortunately we haven't got the attachment that they had to these machines. For us it's about extracting what we can. The Percivale has been taken out of service so it makes sense that we recycle it as much as possible.' The breaking up of the Sir Percivale began in June and the Leavesley team began by dismantling the 'superstructure' - namely the bridge any other areas above deck".

Once completed, a CAT excavator is sent in to rip apart the hull. "All the steel goes off to China and Eastern Europe and will probably come back in cars or even a can of beans in your cupboard", said Simon.

"Some of the metal might even go into new structures like high-rise buildings".

"Non-ferrous metals like the wiring and copper piping are melted down and resold as things like ingots. It could even be salvaged as jewellery if you find the right kinds of metal. So far we are finding copper, brass, titanium and cupro-nickel".

Colleague Stuart Halsey added: "We towed the ship up from Southampton in December last year. Firstly there is the removal of anything re-saleable such as anchor chains and generators".

"Then you are let with steel and non ferrous metals which are cut up and sold to local metal merchants".

Entering service with the RFA in 1970, Sir Percivale played an important role in the major flashpoints involving British maritime forces from the Falklands to the first Gulf War.

In 1982 Sir Percivale was one of the first ships to sail for the South Atlantic, and was in the forefront of the amphibious assault on San Carlos during the Falklands' conflict.

Measuring 412 feet in length with a crew of 52, Sir Percivale could carry up to 500 troops plus their equipment, vehicles like tanks and aircraft like Chinook helicopters.

Later she would become the first ship to enter Stanley Harbour, followed by RFA Sir Bedivere, after the Argentine surrender. The harbour was the point where many Argentine POWs exited the post-war Falklands when they were transported back to continental Argentina.

"It is a sad day for any ship to be scrapped, especially one with such a notable and illustrious history as RFA Sir Percivale; a history which includes action in the Falklands War" said Commander Gerry Northwood of the Royal Navy.

"That she has been replaced by the 4 highly capable ships of the Bay Class, means her legacy will live into the future as these ships continue to provide the British Naval Service with the Amphibious support it needs from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary".

The Bay class is a group of landing ships operated by the British Royal Fleet Auxiliary and are lauded with giving British forces significantly enhanced amphibious capability. Their main role is to get men and equipment ashore when landing.

During the first Gulf War Sir Percivale was deployed on various duties, remaining in theatre for the duration of the conflict. In 1997 she became the last grey ship to leave Hong Kong before the handover of power.

Sir Percivale was decommissioned on August 2004 and was laid up alongside at Marchwood Military Port, Southampton. She remained at the Sea Mounting Centre (SMC) until December 2009 when she made her final voyage (towed) to Liverpool to be demolished. (Mail on Line).

Wednesday, September 1st 2010 - 05:43 UTC

Falklands' veteran returns trumpet to Argentine POW

The Argentine jets screamed overhead the young paratrooper from Dundee, dropping their deadly payloads over Sussex Mountain. For Tony Banks, the Falklands war had become real and terrifying as the battle for Goose Green got under way.

Tony Banks and Omar René Tabarez meet 28 years later (BBC) Tony Banks and Omar René Tabarez meet 28 years later (BBC)

"All through that night and all through that battle, I just thought 'God get me through this, just get me through this'," Tony said. "I'd seen comrades fall - that was the first time I'd seen anyone close to me getting killed."

Tony survived, physically unscathed at least. Other comrades-in-arms were not so fortunate, with close friends paying the ultimate price.

The young para returned to "Civvy Street" and made efforts to put the war behind him. He started working in the care home sector and built up a multi-million pound business. Despite his success, the dark shadows of war still haunted his imagination.

He said: "I never spoke about the Falklands for years; I just never felt I could speak to anyone about it.

"It's always this thing about civilians that they don't understand what it's like. But you took it out in other ways."

Adjusting to post-war life brought out some unpleasant characteristics. Tony said: "I was a very angry young man, you drink too much, you get involved in fights and that was common with a lot of the guys at the time.

"We found it really hard to adjust to being back into normal life."

It seems it's an all too common experience for many soldiers.

Charities such as Combat Stress say the number of service personnel seeking help for post-traumatic stress disorder has risen by 72% in the past five years.

The conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have contributed to that but it's a familiar problem for veterans of any conflict.

"When people come back from a war situation, they sometimes can have moderate to severe depressive symptoms," according to Major Garry Walker, an expert in post-traumatic stress disorder at Surehaven Hospital.

He said: "More commonly they abuse alcohol or other substances to help them sleep because they may have nightmares about particular situations."

For many, these symptoms lessen as time goes on. For a small minority of people it causes lasting damage.

Tony Banks now devotes a lot of his time to helping veterans at Combat Stress.

Tony's thankful he's been spared a level of mental turmoil that many of them face - but he feels there's some unfinished business standing between his Falklands experience and a full recovery.

There's an unusual reason for this.

As the Argentine prisoners of war were loaded onto British troop carriers, Tony and his mates made sure they were not carrying any personal possessions. There was nothing sinister to this - they were following standard procedures.

One small black box caught Tony's eye. It contained a trumpet and a book of music. He confiscated it from the Argentine trooper and kept it as a war trophy. Twenty-eight years on that instrument is a reminder of those cruel times.

He set out to find the soldier so he could hand it back. Tony only had a name written inside the music book: Omar Rene Tabarez.

A trip to Buenos Aires, the Argentine capital, followed and one wet and miserable evening he found himself in Omar's front garden.

The door opened and a warm, friendly figure welcomed Tony and paid tribute to him for bringing the trumpet back.

"I thank you because this closes that stage of my life," said Omar. "To find myself reunited with my companion gives me strength. It lifts my spirits."

Those words were rich with meaning, as Omar too suffered mentally after the war - plagued by nightmares.

The two old enemies - now it seemed the greatest of friends - sat down and reminisced about the war.

Omar even played the trumpet, faltering a little at first but the militaristic notes became loud and clear.

This moving act of reconciliation certainly seemed to have moved Tony on to a better place.

"Having come back now and given Omar back the trumpet it's brought a bit of closure to me," he said.

"I feel I've returned the trumpet to the rightful owner. I can go to my grave now thinking I did the right thing."

For years, Tony has been that frightened young para, pinned down on the dark mountainside in the Falklands. Now he can begin to escape his past. (BBC).-

Thursday, September 2nd 2010 - 14:56 UTC

Falklands' government awards public relations 3 year contract to Edelman

The Falkland Islands Government has appointed Edelman to provide public relations support for the next three years.

Mr. Alex Bigg, Edelman Managing Director Mr. Alex Bigg, Edelman Managing Director

The contract begins in September and means that Edelman will provide an integrated media and stakeholder relations programme, building on the Public Affairs work that Edelman currently delivers.

Sukey Cameron, Falkland Islands Government Representative, said:

"I am pleased to confirm that we will be working with Edelman, with whom we have enjoyed a long-standing relationship and who can offer an integrated public affairs and corporate reputation programme, supported by an extensive international network.

"The Falkland Islands are a British Overseas Territory, with a modern, diversified economy and a wonderful quality of life. We will be working together to tell that story."

Alex Bigg, Managing Director, Edelman said: "It's a privilege to work with the Falkland Islands Government and even better to be able to deliver a truly integrated program on their behalf."

Edelman is the UK's largest independent PR agency, working for clients across the breadth of corporate reputation and brand management issues – including sustainability, employee engagement, crisis and issues, stakeholder engagement, digital strategy. Edelman has been studying the drivers of trust for over 10 years and publishes the annual Edelman Trust Barometer: www.edelman.co.uk/trustbarometer

Edelman is the world's largest independent PR agency. Founded in 1952, we have over 3,200 employees in 52 offices worldwide, 260 of whom work in the UK across all key industries (Consumer, Health, Technology, Financial, Property, Corporate, Public Affairs).

The agency is a multiple award winner for a broad range of clients and is PR Week's Consultancy of the Year 2009. In 2009, Edelman was named PR Week Agency of the Year and – for the third year running – Large PR Agency of the Year. The agency is the highest ranked PR agency in the 2009 Ad Age Book of Tens: Agencies of the Decade.

Friday, September 3rd 2010 - 13:04 UTC

Falkland Islands: Oil activities still remain encouraging

THE offshore oil drilling rig Ocean Guardian continues its work at Rockhopper Exploration's Sea Lion well, where hydrocarbons were encountered earlier this year. The well at that time was suspended for re-entry and testing.

Director of Mineral Resources Phyl Rendell Director of Mineral Resources Phyl Rendell

Director of Mineral Resources Phyl Rendell said the current programme included re-entering the well, drilling through cement cores, locating the hydrocarbon intervals and testing before the well would be permanently plugged and abandoned.

The activities are expected to last between 25 to 35 days.

Mrs Rendell said the actual flaring of carbons was likely to last less than 48 hours.

While she described recent activities as "encouraging steps" she said there was no guarantee that the well would produce commercial hydrocarbons until more appraisal wells were drilled and further analysis carried out over the following months and years, to establish the economic viability of the field.

After the drill stem test on the Sea Lion prospect, Ocean Guardian will be contracted by Desire Petroleum to drill at their Rachel structure, which is located south of Sea Lion in licence PL004. Desire Petroleum director Ian Duncan and chairman Stephen Phipps plan to visit the Falklands at the beginning of October.

Argos Resources have meanwhile successfully listed their company on the London Stock Exchange AIM and set up their office in Argos House in Stanley.

They now plan to conduct a 3D seismic survey over their acreage where two wells have already been drilled and hydrocarbons encountered in 1998.

Mrs Rendell said new data would equip the company in "de-risking drillable prospects."

Meanwhile in the northern hemisphere Encore Oil has enjoyed a surge in value after discovering a significant new oil field close to the Shetland Islands.

But would this be likely to detract from exploration activities in the Falklands?

Mrs Rendell said she did not think it would have any impact on the exploration programme in the Falklands because most operators did not have licences to explore elsewhere and had licence commitments that needed to be fulfilled.

"As it can take over a decade to develop an oil field, with no guarantees of production if the economics don't justify development, exploration can be expected to continue around the world, including the Falklands," she said.

"The Falklands is of course only one country out of many promoting oil exploration, and companies weigh up the odds when applying for licences.

"We are fortunate to have committed licensees who are investing a lot of money in exploration at present, which is benefiting the local economy. We hope it will continue," she said. (Penguin News)

Monday, September 6th 2010 - 05:26 UTC

UN calls for the collective global protection of oceans

Highlighting the centrality of the marine environment to human well-being, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed the collective global responsibility to protect the world's oceans.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

"We need to preserve the productivity and essential ecosystem functions of the oceans as a basis for a prosperous and sustainable future for all," he told the Pacem in Maribus XXXIII International Conference on Oceans, held in Beijing, China.

In a message delivered by Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs Patricia O'Brien, Mr. Ban noted the theme of this year's Conference, "Oceans, Climate Change and Sustainable Development," spotlights just how important oceans are and the many benefits that are derived from them.

Oceans – which cover about two-thirds of the Earth's surface – generate most of its oxygen, absorb carbon dioxide emissions, provide food and nutrients, regulate climate, and supply fishing and other marine resources for income.

"Perhaps most significant is the role that oceans play in regulating the global climate – generating oxygen and absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere," said the Secretary-General.

He pointed out that among those on the front lines of climate change are coastal communities, particularly people living in small islands developing States.

"Halting the decline of coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, salt marshes and sea grasses, can help to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change while providing numerous social and economic benefits to hundreds of millions of people," he said.

As the world is becoming increasingly aware, he noted, the many benefits of the oceans to human well-being are not limitless and, in some cases, are in peril.

Mr. Ban said that with so many people depending on the oceans, it is vital to pursue universal participation in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Known as the world's "constitution for the oceans," the treaty provides the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out.

In 2008 the General Assembly decided to make World Oceans Day, which was already celebrated by many countries, into an officially-recognized UN annual observance on 8 June to raise global awareness of the threats to the oceans.

Tuesday, September 7th 2010 - 05:12 UTC

Blair reveals "family" diplomacy in helping reach understanding on Gibraltar

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Spanish counterpart Jose Maria Aznar shared a tongue in cheek anecdote about Gibraltar during a family get together in Spain. The story is contained in Mr Blair's bestselling memoirs 'A Journey' that has just hit the bookshops in UK and is reported in the Gibraltar Chronicle.

The former British PM has only words of praise for Jose Aznar and his successor Rodriguez Zapatero The former British PM has only words of praise for Jose Aznar and his successor Rodriguez Zapatero

Describing Jose Aznar as a generous host "with enormous kindness and effusive goodwill" Blair writes that he sent his wife Cherie, children and mother-in-law to Spain ahead of his own arrival, as he was engaged in negotiations over Northern Ireland.

Upon arrival in Spain two days later after achieving the peace breakthrough in Ulster, Mr Blair writes that after getting a good night's sleep he went in search of his host "only to find him alarmingly closeted with my mother-in-law."

"Oh you needn't have bothered turning up," she said. "We've sorted everything"

"Sorted what?" asked Mr Blair. "Gibraltar of course," she replied.

The former British Prime Minister was impressed with the treatment afforded by Sr Aznar to his family and said this "formed the basis of a lasting personal friendship that had important consequences at a later date".

The publication of the Blair memoirs has provoked keen interest in political and journalistic circles in Spain where the book is also poised to become a bestseller.

The media has already seized on comments about former Spanish President José María Aznar made in the book.

Mr Blair describes Sr Aznar as a 'tough negotiator' in Brussels, noting how the latter obtained a special position for Spain in the Amsterdam Treaty.

He tells a story of how the Spanish President put his conditions on the table and then said he was going out to smoke. When Mr Blair went out to try and get Aznar to be more flexible, Aznar showed him the many cigarettes he still had in his packet to smoke. Blair notes that Aznar got what he wanted.

The Spanish media has often spoken of the photo in the Azores where George W. Bush and Mr Blair were joined by José María Aznar, as the decision was confirmed to invade Iraq.

Mr Blair writes: "José María Aznar told me that in Spain only 4% were in favour of military action, and I told him that this was more or less the percentage you would get if you asked the people if they thought that Elvis Presley was still alive."

Mr Blair states that Sr Aznar was resolved to stand firm next to United States.

"He believed, like me, that the possibility of a link between the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorist groups was too real to accept, and that the time had come to stand up to the Saddam regime, which would have turned to such weapons."

Mr Blair also makes a brief mention of current Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, when the two met in Singapore for the announcement of the 2012 Olympic Games.

"Despite my friendship with Aznar he always behaved very well with me, and was obviously an intelligent politician."

Meanwhile Sr Aznar has been taking part this week in the World Jewish Congress in Jerusalem where he has criticised Barack Obama for looking for new relations with the Muslim World, while at the same time "punishing his traditional allies".

He attacked Obama for "searching for a new relationship with the Muslim world" describing him as "projecting an image of someone who wants to escape from his problems."

Expressing guarded optimism about the new Middle East peace talks process, currently under way between the Israelis and Palestinians in Washington, Sr Aznar said: "Obama is hugging the enemies of the United States and punishing his allies."

Sr Aznar said he doubted that Obama could defend the lifestyle of the west, because "he has put forces into action which if not corrected could redefine the nation and its place in the world to such an extent that he could cause us all major problems".

Sr Aznar started his speech condemning the terrorist attack on Tuesday which resulted in the death of four Israelis. He said that the need to defend the state of Israel "is the same as defending our liberal system".

Friday, September 10th 2010 - 04:21 UTC

Falklands' first local television station ready to begin broadcasting

The Falkland Islands first local television station will soon be broadcasting to the Islands. KTV and Stanley Services Limited have announced the creation of a new Company called Falkland Islands Television Limited (FITV) which will broadcast locally produced news programs.

The Islands have had for decades a local radio station, FIRS The Islands have had for decades a local radio station, FIRS

The new Company which is equally owned by both parties plans to commence broadcasting later in the year using KTV distribution platform.

The aim of the new TV Station will initially be to provide locally produced news programs two to three times a week concentrating on local issues. The company will be staffed by local people who will undergo the relevant training.

Mario and Sharon Bulic Zuvic owners of KTV said they "...are very excited by the creation of a local TV station producing local news and other programs by local people for the local community".

Tom Swales Managing Director of Stanley Services Limited commented "SSL are very pleased to be involved in the creation of a completely new Company offering a brand new

service to the Islands. It will be a new sector within local business and will create albeit a small but dynamic industry in the Falkland Islands”

Speaking from Stanley Services Ltd. Financial Director Gary Perrens told Mercopress that the aim was to have staff in place to commence training in early November with the start date for actual broadcasting likely to be before the end of the year. Any training will be carried out in the Islands, “which will enable staff to become familiar with the equipment and effectively have a full dry run before we commence broadcasting. We intend to bring someone down from the UK to carry out the training.”

Currently Falkland Islanders receive television broadcasts from both the British Forces station and multiple channels from Mr Zuvic’s KTV. The new station will be available to all KTV users.

The station will be based at the Stanley Services office next to the fuel station to the south east side of Stanley. By Lisa Watson - SeAledPR - Stanley

Friday, September 10th 2010 - 03:17 UTC

Gibraltar prepares to celebrate National Day

Chief Minister Peter Caruana has highlighted the importance of Gibraltar’s National Day, September 10, as a celebration of identity and culture.

Brief message from Chief Minister Peter Caruana Brief message from Chief Minister Peter Caruana

In a brief message on the eve of the event Mr Caruana said that the Government wishes everyone in Gibraltar a happy and enjoyable National Day, and expressed the expectation that the many activities, events and amenities available will be well supported.

“On National Day we celebrate our country, our society, our culture, our heritage and our prosperity as a people. We make an important statement about our identity and our aspirations, and we recommit collectively to them as a community through the Gibraltar

National Day Declaration read by the Mayor at John Mackintosh Square on behalf of all Gibraltarians, regardless of political persuasion. Enjoy the day with your friends and families," he said.

Sunday, September 12th 2010 - 07:23 UTC

Falklands' representative to address challenge of sovereignty in small states

"The challenge of sovereignty in small states" is the issue to be addressed by Falkland Islands member of the Legislative Assembly Dick Sawle at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) meeting in Kenya.

MLA Dick Sawle will also talk about Argentina's bullying
MLA Dick Sawle will also talk about Argentina's bullying

"I am delighted to be attending the conference on behalf of the Falkland Islands, and have been invited to be a discussion leader in section three of the 30th Small Branches conference. The topic for debate that I will be speaking on is entitled 'the challenge of sovereignty in small states'", said the Falklands elected representative.

MLA Sawle added he hoped to correct a few misunderstandings internationally regarding the Argentine to the Falklands' claim to sovereignty, but would concentrate on the difficulties small countries faced when trying to deal with the challenge.

"I will be hoping to correct a few misunderstandings in the international community regarding the Argentine claim to sovereignty, but will be concentrating on the difficulties that small countries such as ours face when trying to deal with the challenge."

While the Falklands are not a small state, the political arguments were, he said, pretty much the same.

"Economic sanctions, aggressive and illogical behaviour and an overwhelming desire to own and occupy are common themes that many small states face. In my view we in the Falklands share many of these problems with colleagues within the Commonwealth."

He said it would be a great outcome if even a few Commonwealth colleagues left the conference a little wiser and perhaps a little more sensitive and sympathetic to the difficulties that were continually faced from Argentina.

CPA is a voluntary association of 54 countries that support each other and work towards shared goals in democracy and development.

The world's largest and smallest, richest and poorest countries make up the Commonwealth and are home to two billion citizens of all faiths and ethnicities....Member countries span six continents and oceans from Africa to Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe and the South Pacific" (quote from the CPA website).

Saturday, September 11th 2010 - 17:43 UTC

Mercosur and Unasur "more effective" for South America than OAS

Mercosur and Unasur (Union of South American Nations) can be "more effective" than OAS (Organization of American States) in addressing issues of South American countries, said Brazilian Foreign Secretary Celso Amorim currently in Switzerland for a conference on international security.

Brazilian Foreign Affairs minister Celso Amorim Brazilian Foreign Affairs minister Celso Amorim

"The OAS has its role because many of its countries are not Unasur or Mercosur members such as those from Central America, United States, Canada, Mexico and because it also has a more complete juridical organization, which in some cases can be necessary", said Amorim who is participating in the security conference in Geneva organized by the London based International Institute for Strategic Studies, IISS.

"I believe that for the exercise of good offices among South American countries Unasur or Mercosur, depending on which case, can be more effective", he added.

“Unasur and Mercosur and entirely complementary”, affirmed Amorim.

Speaking of Unasur, the union of the twelve South American countries, Amorim said “it has proved to be very efficient, discreetly sometimes, as with tensions between Colombia and Venezuela, in which the former Argentine president Nestor Kirchner played a role”. “Even the Colombian chancellor thanked President Lula da Silva and Unasur” for having helped solve the dispute said Amorim.

Colombian Foreign Affairs minister Maria Angela Holguín in an interview a month ago underlined the role undertaken by “the leaders from Brazil and Argentina in the process of normalization of relations between Bogotá and its neighbours”.

Holguin at the time said that the Unasur secretary general (Kirchner) played a significant “role” in the reestablishment of relations between Bogotá and Caracas, a matter which became “a regional issue”, she underlined.

The Colombian official also praised Brazilian president Lula da Silva who had a long conversation “with Chavez and Kirchner, the day before Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos took office last August 7, underlining the importance of re-establishing the relation between neighbours”.

Monday, September 13th 2010 - 20:33 UTC

Falklands’ Desire ‘exited’ about prospects plans to drill four more wells

Falkland Islands Desire Petroleum (AIM-DES) is upbeat about the prospects for finding major reserves of oil offshore the Islands despite mixed results so far and revealed plans to further drill four wells in the North Falkland basin.

Desire Petroleum chairman Stephen Phipps Desire Petroleum chairman Stephen Phipps

“The current North Falkland Basin (NFB) drilling campaign has started very positively: gas has been discovered by Desire in two zones in the Liz well and a potentially significant oil

field has been discovered by Rockhopper Exploration on the Sea Lion Prospect", said Desire Petroleum in a release to shareholders commenting on half year results to June 30.

Currently the Desire contracted oil rig Ocean Guardian is with Rockhopper doing the flow test on the Sea Lion discovery and following this "the rig will revert to Desire to drill our Rachel prospect; this is likely to be in late September or early October".

"In order to give ourselves time to evaluate the results of the Rachel well we are most likely to drill the Dawn/Jacinta prospect following the Rachel well. Despite the disappointing Ernest well result the Dawn/Jacinta prospect continues to excite us" said Desire.

"Since the Sea Lion discovery, Desire's geo-science effort has concentrated on identifying similar prospects for early drilling. In addition to the already recognised Rachel, Anna and Ninky prospects an exciting new prospect named Elaine has been identified".

"In the Competent Persons Report (CPR) prepared by Senergy (GB) Ltd and published by Desire late last year, using a reservoir thickness range of 30 to 85 metres, Senergy (GB) Ltd calculated a gross unrisked mean recoverable potential of 318 million barrels of oil. As a result of further work Desire now believe that the sand thickness in Rachel may exceed this range in a series of stacked sands, with a consequent increase in the recoverable potential. In addition the Rachel prospect has been significantly de-risked as a result of the Sea Lion discovery" points out Desire.

"Unfortunately, the full nature of these fan plays can only be identified on 3D data and currently Desire has 3D seismic coverage over only half the relevant acreage. Therefore, Desire intends to investigate the possibility of acquiring further 3D seismic, possibly in conjunction with other NFB operators to mitigate the costs".

Desire Petroleum made a loss of 6.4 million USD in the half year, of which 5.9 million were exchange losses. They arose primarily on Sterling cash balances held to meet exploration costs, and follows a weakening of the pound against the US dollar between the previous year-end and the date of this report, according to the company.

"This drilling campaign in the North Falkland Basin (NFB) has started very positively. Our first well Liz discovered gas in two zones and on the Sea Lion prospect drilled by Rockhopper Exploration a potentially significant oil field has been discovered. The confirmation of oil in the NFB has clearly significantly de-risked the rest of the drilling campaign. With the Ocean Guardian rig due to return to Desire within the month, we now enter an exciting period of drilling activity which may see us drilling up to four wells back to back" said Desire chairman Stephen Phipps.

Monday, September 13th 2010 - 18:15 UTC

Falklands challenge is Argentina's 'desire to steal what is ours'

A member of the Falkland Islands Legislative Council rebutted historical claims made by Argentina over the Islands in a speech to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Kenya this week, adding that the challenge Falkland Islanders face is Argentina's "simple desire to steal what is ours."

MLA Dick Sawle: "respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples" is paramount for United Nations
MLA Dick Sawle: "respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples" is paramount for United Nations

Member of Legislative Council Dick Sawle told Falklands' media that during the two day small states conference, "Thanks to much hard work and research by Peter Pepper and Graham Pascoe, the speech also went through some detail of the expulsion myth proposed by Argentina. The historical falsehoods stated and repeated many times in 1964 at the UN by Argentina have been proved to be exactly that. Any claim based as it was on false historical 'evidence' is meaningless."

Around 30 to 40 small state members of the CPA attend the conference.

MLA Sawle said, "For the Falklands, this was an important chance to state our case clearly and while the CPA itself is not a body that can pass resolutions, it is nevertheless the second largest body of political opinion after the United Nations. For the Falkland Islands,

it is therefore a very important conduit in which we can express our views and hope to influence decision makers who represent over 2 billion people in the world.”

He said the speech itself was well received and covered some of the key issues of sovereignty in general and the challenges that many small states face from threats to their sovereignty.

The speech aimed to define what sovereignty means – how it came about in historical terms and what it means in a modern democratic society. There was emphasis placed on the difference between the desire to own a small state which is achieved through subjugation and control by fear and force – inevitably leading to conflict, and sovereignty which is achieved through the desire for democracy propelled by self-determination.

“There is an important point here,” said MLA Sawle, “which is that the authority invested in a sovereign power has to be desired by those governed by it in order for it to have the respect that thereby leads to the acceptance by the people of their duty to obey the sovereign system of governance. Sovereignty in a modern democratic society cannot therefore be forced upon a small state.”

The speech noted the UN Charter with its mention of ‘respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples,’ and UN resolution 1514 elaborates further on that principle stating that ‘all peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.’

MLA Sawle said, “But a crucial point agreed by the UN 4th Committee in 2008 was that any dispute over sovereignty should not affect self-determination which is a fundamental human right.”

He said the speech was well received and there was a lively debate afterwards. Gibraltar discussed their own problems with Spain, and Malta called on large organisations such as the CPA to assist.

Bermuda called for negotiation over the Falklands/Argentina situation, but it was pointed out that self-determination and democracy are not principles that can be negotiated. MLA Sawle said negotiation implies acceptance of a compromise and in the case of a claim based on historical falsehoods, there is nothing to compromise.

Some delegates agreed that it was more a case of Argentine national pride at stake than any valid claim. One delegate referred to mediation as "rot – it's just a conspiracy" and said that "joint sovereignty is like claiming to be half pregnant – it simply doesn't exist."

MLA Sawle concluded that the challenge that Islanders face from Argentina, "is a simple desire to steal what is ours and to subjugate a fiercely independent people to an authority that we do not admire, respect, desire, envy or want."

MLA Sawle concluded, "The plea was made for delegates to understand more fully our case and take our views and our position with them when they attend conferences and to speak out on our behalf. It will never be a speedy process but changing opinions and winning friends is something to which we must always dedicate time, effort and cost. To ignore these opportunities is to lose position and influence."- By Lisa Watson - SeAled PR – Stanley.-

Tuesday, September 14th 2010 - 23:26 UTC

Spanish toll on Gibraltar traffic reaches the European Commission

The controversy over a Spanish town Mayor proposal for a toll on traffic to neighbouring Gibraltar has reached the European Union. Ashley Fox, Gibraltar's Tory MEP, has asked the European Commission to state whether the proposal would breach EU rules on freedom of movement.

This is one of two questions on the issue that the MEP has tabled before the European Parliament. Mr Fox described how Alejandro Sánchez, the "current" Popular Party mayor of La Linea, is proposing to tax people – "with the exception of Spanish workers" - crossing the border between Gibraltar and Spain.

"Would the Commission not agree that this is a clear breach of the principle of free movement of labour throughout the EU and that the mayor should abandon such an illegal action?" he asked.

"Can the Commission indicate what steps it intends to take, if the mayor presses ahead with the proposal, in order to ensure that EU internal borders remain open to all and free of harassment?"

The questions were tabled on September 6 for written answer. The Commission has yet to respond. In any event, there were signs this weekend that Sr Sánchez was seeking to defuse the row sparked by his plan.

Although the mayor continued to defend the toll – he describes it as a 'congestion charge' – he said he was open to dialogue with Madrid and Gibraltar to explore alternative ways of generating income for his cash-strapped town.

"We have never intended that the charge should be damaging to workers, to the people of Gibraltar or anybody else," he said at the weekend. It was a legitimate claim "after years of abandon," he added.

The change in attitude in La Linea was welcomed by José Carracao, the PSOE senator in Cádiz, who said he would convey the message to the central government in Madrid.

"Gibraltar is not a problem for La Linea, it is an opportunity that we should know how to make the best of," he said, adding that Madrid had always been open to dialogue.

Sr Carracao also said that La Linea's town council must take measures to cut its costs as a first step toward economic recover

Tuesday, September 14th 2010 - 14:25 UTC

Falklands' oil and Argentina: "the potential prize made the risk worth taking"

Alan Huckle retires this month as Governor of the Falkland Island. In an interview with Mercopress Mr. Huckle recalls some of the outstanding events of his mandate: a solemn, dignified 25th anniversary of the 1982 conflict; constitutional reform which transferred

even greater responsibility to the Falklands elected Councilors and oil, “an issue not yet played out”.

Retiring Governor Alan Huckle suggests Islanders self-determination is explained to as wide an international audience as possible Retiring Governor Alan Huckle suggests Islanders self-determination is explained to as wide an international audience as possible

“We all knew that it might make relations with Argentina more difficult but the potential prize made that a risk worth taking”, points out Huckle.

But of course the new Constitution gives Falkland Islanders “the right to self-determination and by virtue of that right [to] freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development and ... for their own ends [to] freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources”.

The outgoing Governor also recommends that Islanders right to self-determination is “explained and understood by as wide an international audience as possible”. There are many myths that need to be corrected: Islanders, UK Ministers and officials, and friends of the Falklands should be involved in this campaign and people should be encouraged to visit the Islands and see “the modern, vibrant society that the Islanders have created for themselves”.

The Governor’s role has changed over the last couple of decades – how would you describe it in today’s Falkland Islands?

The days when the Governor had a direct administering role in the government of the Falkland Islands are long gone. Under the new Constitution, elected representatives are rightly responsible for the Islands’ affairs across the board, although the Governor has an important role in ensuring good governance, the independence of the judiciary, the political impartiality of the administration of justice and the civil service, and the proper management of the government’s finances. The Governor also has a special role in matters relating to external affairs, defence and internal security (including the police).

Do you ever feel torn in terms of loyalty, that is, between representing the interests of the British Government and the interests of Falkland Islanders?

The Governor wears several hats – first as representative of HM the Queen but also in representing the interests of the Falkland Islands Government and the UK Government. The Governor crucially must explain the views of the Falkland Islands Government to the UK Government and vice versa. Sometimes those interests will not coincide and the Governor will have to speak frankly to both sides. The key to being a trusted interlocutor is honesty, accuracy and transparency – and I believe that I have been successful in this. What do you think the Falkland Islands Government should do to promote the Islanders' right to self-determination to those countries that support the Argentine position? Do you think it important that we do?

It is important that the Islanders' right to self-determination is explained, and understood by, as wide an international audience as possible. There are many myths and misunderstandings about the Falkland Islands which need to be corrected – and Islanders as well as UK Ministers and officials, and friends of the Falklands should all be involved in this. We might also encourage more people to visit the Islands to see the modern, vibrant society that the Islanders have created for themselves. What are your thoughts on the Argentine Presidential Decree 256?

Argentina's Presidential Decree 256 breaches Argentina's obligations under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to provide for the right of innocent passage and freedom of navigation through Argentine jurisdictional waters. It is an unjustified attempt to obstruct the legitimate exploration for hydrocarbons within Falkland Islands' waters. It has affected our normal shipping links to South America but I am pleased to say that it has had no effect on drilling operations, since supplies are brought to the Falklands without entering Argentine jurisdiction.

What is your prediction for the next Argentine Presidential election? Will it be another Kirchner?

It is not for me to comment on, or seek to predict, the outcome of the democratic process in Argentina. But I would say that both the UK and Falkland Islands Governments want to have good relations with Argentina. There are many areas of mutual co-operation in the

region that could be advanced without compromise to the different positions on sovereignty.

The Falklands are currently involved in an 'Economic Development Strategy' – in your opinion do you think this and the variety of linked strategies will lead to an effective way forward for the Islands?

The work being done on the Economic Development and Rural Development Strategy documents advance some thought-provoking proposals and the ideas for economic stimulus that they advance should be examined further. It is important for the Falkland Islands to diversify its economy and to both balance its budget and continue to build up its reserves. Without oil or increased revenues from either economic diversification, or a deepening of existing economic effort, there will have to be some uncomfortable belt-tightening if we are to live within our means.

What do you think will be the greatest pros and cons of a substantial (economically viable) oil discovery in Falkland waters?

The discovery of hydrocarbons in commercially exploitable quantities would be a significant boost to the Falkland Islands economy. It offers the prize of long-term economic stability, economic opportunity and a significantly improved standard of living. But oil revenues, if they come, should be managed carefully and not wasted. The Falkland Islands Government would be well advised to establish a Sovereign Wealth Fund and to look to how oil-producing countries with a similarity to the Falklands have managed their resources, both for their national benefit and the benefit of the wider international community. There would be socio-economic effects, some negative but others positive, which would have to be addressed. Oil would certainly change the Falklands just as our fisheries have done. No society can remain static but it is right that we should seek to preserve the qualities of life that we currently enjoy whilst adapting to change. But we should not bank on oil exploitation becoming a reality just yet. Elected representatives have wisely not based their policies on the expectation of an oil discovery nor should they. What was your biggest 'head in your hands' moment as a result of a decision made by the Falkland Islands Government?

There is no point in agonising over bad decisions or misguided actions or even failures to act. The key is to try to minimize their impact or to resolve the problems created. That is not to imply that the Falkland Islands Government (or the UK Government) have made bad decisions. As a Governor, you have to play the hand that you are dealt as best you can.

When you spoke to the new Falklands Government in November 2009 you warned, "yours will not be a light or easy job", are you now reassured or dismayed by the work and conduct of the MLAs?

It is to the electorate that Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) must answer. It is not for the Governor to comment on the performance elected representatives. But the job of an MLA is becoming increasingly demanding as government grows more complex and time-consuming. Whether this can be maintained as a part-time job in the medium-term is a real issue – and it may be that the balance between paying expenses and providing adequate remuneration should shift towards the latter.

How do you view the quality of the relationship between the Falkland Islands Government and people, and the British Forces?

The Falkland Islands recognise the tremendous debt that they owe to the British Armed Forces both for their rescue from illegal Argentine occupation in 1982 and for their defence and security since. Without the stability that the military have provided, the Islanders could not have made the advances that they now enjoy. Of course, the relationship needs care and attention but the Islanders' attitude to the military is one of warmth and high regard.

What was the most difficult situation you had to deal with during your time in the Falkland Islands?

Every Governor is faced with difficult and complex problems. I was encouraged to come here to help to manage three major issues – the 25th Anniversary of the 1982 conflict, Constitutional reform and the resumption of oil exploration. On the first, my task with Councillors was to ensure that the commemorations were solemn, dignified and sensitive to the fallen on both sides. On the second, the task was to encourage the transfer of political responsibility to elected representatives whilst preserving the ability of the

Governor to ensure good governance. On oil, the issue is not yet played out. We all knew that it might make relations with Argentina more difficult but the potential prize made that a risk worth taking – and of course the new Constitution gives Falkland Islanders “the right to self-determination and by virtue of that right [to] freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development and ... for their own ends [to] freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources ...”. Notably, it was Argentina that pulled out of the Agreement that allowed co-operation in a designated area within Falklands’ waters.

What do you feel to have been your greatest achievement during your time in the Falkland Islands?

Within my means and with the help and advice of many, not to have provoked or allowed a matter to develop into a major crisis. There have been lots of wobbles but, by and large, the course of government in my Governorship has run relatively smoothly. But I am personally satisfied with the influence that I brought to bear on the Constitutional negotiations. This was a major step in the political development of the Falkland Islands.

What is next for Mr. and Mrs. Huckle?

We plan an active retirement in the UK, after a slow trip home. Both of us will continue to take a close interest in the Falklands and shall offer whatever assistance we can, if needed.

A final message?

We met only warmth and kind hospitality in our time in the Falklands. This is a very welcoming, friendly and beautiful place. We shall be very sad to leave the Falklands (and its people) and just want to say thank you to all who made our four years here so happy.-
By Lisa Watson - SeAledPR – Stanley.-

Wednesday, September 15th 2010 - 05:46 UTC

Argentina confirms drilling in Malvinas basin for next December

The Argentine press confirmed that following the contracting of a semi-submersible rig from the Swedish company Stensa, a consortium of Argentine based oil companies will begin exploratory drilling in the Malvinas basin next December.

The consortium which includes YPF-Repsol, Pan American Energy and Petrobras will be drilling half way between the Falkland Islands and Tierra del Fuego, in what is considered the most austral hydrocarbons offshore exploratory operation in Argentine history.

The initiative is seen as a strong reply from Argentina to the exploratory round in Falklands' waters which the government of President Cristina Kirchner has condemned and rejected as "illegal" since these are "disputed waters", according to the Argentine argument.

At least five London quoted companies have drilled or have announced plans to drill in Falklands' waters taking advantage of the "Ocean Guardian" rig.

In Buenos Aires Defence ministry strategy considers the southwest Atlantic as "the soft belly of Argentina" and the policy has been to sponsor oil related activities in the area to contain the "encroaching" British companies, according to Argentina's Cronista Comercial, a financial newspaper close to the government.

"A positive result in the area would give a boost to the industry, and investments, and also most importantly signal defence of our sovereignty", said an Argentine Defence ministry source.

The consortium involved in the coming drilling round is estimated to pour into the operation 140 million US dollars. A 3D survey of the area to be explored was recently finished and analyzed.

Apparently the project was almost cancelled at the end of last year, but YPF was finally able to contract a semi-submersible rig which has the necessary fittings to stand weather conditions in the South Atlantic. Built to stand ten metre waves the rig is permanently

fixed to its position by a GPS system and four independent turbines. The vessel will be operating in waters 1.500 metres deep and drilling is expected to exceed 3.000 metres.

Spain's Repsol-YPF has sold some of its YPF assets back to Argentine interests, particularly the Eskenazi family which is very close to the Kirchner couple and had promised to go ahead with the Malvinas basin project.

Wednesday, September 15th 2010 - 05:44 UTC

Argentine militants demand return of Falklands' war booty docked in Buenos Aires

Argentine extreme militants belonging to a self proclaimed "Patriotic resistance" have taken over the Panama flagged Audax II docked in the port of Buenos Aires, which they allege was originally Argentine but lost to the British during the 1982 Falkland Islands conflict.

The Audax II, originally the "Yehuin" covered in graffiti (Pic El Malvinense) The Audax II, originally the "Yehuin" covered in graffiti (Pic El Malvinense)

The vessel, a 494 tons oil tender, under the name of "Yehuin" apparently participated in the Falklands conflict, but at the end of hostilities and when Argentine troops surrendered was requisitioned by the British , "and later sold to a company, having changed its name and flagging".

Because of its operations for the Cintra company, the vessel over the weekend arrived in Buenos Aires, where the extremist group was waiting to take it over. Simultaneously the group under the leadership of Juan Antonio Lopez presented a demand before a federal court "demanding its recovery for Argentina".

"We request the immediate intervention so that the government of Argentina proceeds to impede the departure of the vessel to international waters and orders its immediate

requisition since it is a vessel of great symbolic and patriotic value", according to the demand presented to Federal Judge Maria Servini de Cubría.

Apparently since 1999 there's a decree waiting to be signed declaring the Yehuin naval heritage, which was later to be supported by a Congressional bill. However none of this has happened.

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Thursday, September 16th 2010 - 05:10 UTC

Chile's first Antarctic base declared National Historical Monument

Chile's National Monuments Council has unanimously declared Chile's Arturo Prat research base naval in Antarctica a National Historical Monument. Their decision was based on the historic strategic value of the base and its functional construction for extreme weather conditions.

The base is located in Greenwich Island The base is located in Greenwich Island

This is an achievement for a base that was closed by the Chilean Navy in the summer of 2004 due to budget reallocation. But the importance of the base located in Greenwich Island led to its reopening four years later and this week marks a new milestone in its history.

Arturo Prat was Chile's first base in Antarctica, dating back to 1947. Its exterior is constructed of galvanized iron and the interior is made of wood. It has a pier and two heliports and resources for up to nine people.

Magdalena Krebs, vice-president of the council said, "With this declaration, we not only recognize the historic importance of the first Chilean base in the Antarctic, but also Chile's vision during that period and its contribution to environmental conservation and support for science."

Arturo Prat provides valuable information for understanding biodiversity and the continent's potential.

Although the new status will not prevent the closing of the base in the future – like in 2004 – it does indicate a move towards conservation.- By Dominique Farrell – Santiago Times.-

Thursday, September 16th 2010 - 01:50 UTC

NATO presence in South Atlantic “inappropriate” says Brazil

Brazilian Defence Minister Nelson Jobim assured that the Brazilian government would express reservations towards any military plan intending to unite the North with the South Atlantic.

He also commented that having the presence of NATO in the South Atlantic region was deemed “inappropriate”.

The South Atlantic is considered by Brazil to be a region of high strategic value, particularly following the recent discovery of large oil reserves.

The minister expressed his government’s concern while addressing the audience at the Lisbon Defence Institute. Jobim is currently on a European tour which includes the Czech Republic and Ukraine.

“Security measures for each side of the Atlantic Ocean are very different from each other,” he explained.

Only a year ago, Mr. Jobim met with US military authorities and strongly expressed his distaste for their decision to reactivate the Navy’s Fourth Fleet in 2008 after it had been disbanded in 1950.

Back in 2007, Brazil discovered oil reserves worth over 50 billion barrels along its coast and only a week ago government authorities announced they would be expanding their explorations for oil to 350 nautical miles, which means they will not allow for the presence of foreign oil companies in the region.

In related news Britain and Brazil signed this week a Defence affairs cooperation agreement. The document was signed by Acting Defence minister Rear Admiral Julio Soares de Moura Neto and British Deputy Defence minister Gerald Howarth, according to the Brazilian Defence ministry web site.

The agreement which has no commercial links specifies both sides willingness to develop long term cooperation in areas of defence such as industrial production, technology transfer, education and training, among other issues.

The main purpose of the UK/Brazil cooperation is to share research and development in the logistics support area, security technologies, acquisition of defence services and products, peace maintenance activities and exchange of military instructors.

Friday, September 17th 2010 - 20:43 UTC

Rockhopper declares Falklands' oil discovery will be commercially viable

Rockhopper Exploration (RKH.L) said it believed its oil discovery offshore the Falklands Islands will be commercially viable. A test at the Sea Lion 1 well in the North Falkland basin produced sustained rates of over 2,000 barrels of oil per day, in line with its hopes, Rockhopper said in a statement on Friday.

On the news shares soared 20% to 400 pence On the news shares soared 20% to 400 pence

In London, Rockhopper shares jumped over 20% to 400 pence on the news, valuing the company at around £ 770 million (1.21 billion USD).

Desire Petroleum (DES.L) which also has prospects in the North Falkland, rose 16% to 137 pence.

"Rockhopper is the first company to successfully flow oil to surface in Falkland Islands waters," said Executive Chairman Pierre Jungels.

"The test has provided vital information which will allow us to move forward through appraisal, a key step in proving the reserves discovered.

"We believe that Sea Lion is the largest fan sandstone body in the North Falkland Basin and, given this successful flow test, that the Sea Lion discovery will be commercially viable."

The company said the test was limited by logistics and that with the right equipment and a better well location, it expected to find significantly more oil.

Sea Lion 1 was drilled in a water depth of 451m during April and May 2010 and suspended for future testing, having encountered a gross oil column of 217m with net pay of 53m.

The well was re-entered during September 2010 and was flowed for 18 hours and "sustained rates in excess of 2,000 barrels per day with a maximum rate of 2,304 barrels per day".

According to the company's release the well produced no water, no H2S and negligible CO2.

Rockhopper now intends to plug and abandon the well as planned.

Monday, September 20th 2010 - 23:26 UTC

"Malvinas pending issue for United Nations", says Argentine ambassador Argüello

Every day it becomes more difficult for the UK to justify before the international community why it looks down on United Nations General Assembly resolutions, said the Argentine ambassador before the UN in direct reference to the Falklands/Malvinas sovereignty dispute.

Some countries ignore international law, claims Argüello Some countries ignore international law, claims Argüello

"The Malvinas question is becoming a stumbling block for the United Nations, Every day it becomes more difficult for the UK to justify its neglect of UN General Assembly resolutions", said Ambassador Jorge Argüello recalling the several times UN has called on London to accept sovereignty negotiations on the disputed South Atlantic islands.

The Argentine ambassador said that the dispute over the Malvinas has almost 200 years and has not been solved given the power-relation in the world, "where most powerful countries, as in this case, act above international law".

"Malvinas is a pending issue for the UN, and it's a question that involves not only Argentina and the UK, but also the 192 General Assembly members" said Argüello who anticipated there would be a strong demand from Argentina in this week's assembly.

Tuesday, September 21st 2010 - 01:54 UTC

Argentina denies "innocent pass" to Spanish trawler sailing from Falklands

A Spanish flagged trawler that operates in Falkland Islands waters and was heading to Montevideo to unload 700 tons of fish was denied "innocent pass" through Argentine waters and had to steam an additional 17 hours at a cost of 7.000 litres of fuel.

Costa do Cabo finally unloaded in Montevideo 700 tons of fish Costa do Cabo finally unloaded in Montevideo 700 tons of fish

The incident was considered "very serious" by Uruguayan agents and chandlers in the port of Montevideo who feel that the aggressive policy of Argentina towards Falklands/Malvinas sea and air contacts will force the Islands to look for alternatives, thus harming long established business with the fishing industry in the South Atlantic.

"Costa do Cabo" finally reached Montevideo where it unloaded 24 containers with 700 tons of fish and immediately left back for the Falklands. In her way up apparently she was denied "innocent pass" through the Argentine EEZ, for not having made the formal application to Buenos Aires authorities with a week of anticipation as indicated in the controversial decree 256.

The vessel therefore was forced to steam in international waters with the additional costs in fuel and time.

Innocent pass according to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea refers to ship's rights to enter and pass through a coastal state's territorial waters so long as it is not prejudicial to the peace, good order or security of the coastal state.

Reliable sources in Montevideo said that for the last thirty years Uruguay has become a reliable hub for fishing vessels operating in the South Atlantic which has meant jobs and income from the sale of services and logistic support, "but Argentina's latest decisions will have an impact on activities, and force the Malvinas people to find other options".

"We know that Port Stanley is expanding its port and reefer facilities and we shouldn't be surprised if Montevideo begins losing business to the Islands. We know that Punta Arenas in the extreme south of Chile has also seen its booming trade with Malvinas virtually frozen because of Argentina's policies. It is all very disappointing", said the source.

The latest incident with the fishing vessel denied "innocent pass" comes on top of the ongoing labour dispute with some Spanish vessels that have been forcibly docked in Montevideo, on occasion for months, until the case is solved by Uruguay's courts.

The Uruguayan parliament and government are addressing the labour dispute issue which has scared many fishing vessels from Montevideo. Spanish speaking crews, mainly from Peru are tempted by Uruguayan unscrupulous solicitors to demand their companies for alleged contract non fulfilments. Vessels are then seized and since the court process can take months, companies usually end up paying "an extortion fee" to end the case.

Wednesday, September 22nd 2010 - 07:22 UTC

Gibraltar apologizes to Madrid for illegal police search in Spain

The Gibraltar Government made public an apology to Spain at the weekend after a Madrid newspaper revealed that two Gibraltar policemen illegally searched a house in Alcaidesa and seized evidence without first informing the Spanish authorities.

Chief Minister Peter Caruana: "an incorrect intervention" Chief Minister Peter Caruana: "an incorrect intervention"

The two officers had no jurisdiction to work in Spain and did not have a court order for the search, which was carried out in connection with an investigation into a robbery in the Cellini jewellery shop. The officers believed they were operating legitimately because they attended the rented house together with the landlord, also a Gibraltarian.

But when the Spanish right-wing daily newspaper ABC splashed the news on the front page of its Saturday edition, the reaction from Opposition politicians in Spain was immediate and furious.

Jose Ignacio Landaluce, the Popular Party MP for Cadiz, said the incident would have "a very grave impact" on cross-border relations and called for the Spanish government to answer questions on the matter in the parliament.

Spanish Ministry for Foreign Affairs contacted Britain's ambassador in Madrid and Chief Minister Peter Caruana to express its "deep unease" at the events and to demand explanations.

In a statement, the Gibraltar Government said it had apologised for what it described as "an incorrect intervention" by the two officers from the Royal Gibraltar Police.

"This is a regrettable incident in which Gibraltar police have acted improperly and I have not hesitated in apologising to the Spanish Government just as they did when the Civil Guard alighted in a residential area of Gibraltar last year," Mr Caruana said.

"It is good and necessary that the enforcement agencies should co-operate between both sides of the border - a position to which the Gibraltar Government is committed - and it is also necessary they each comply with and respect the established procedures avoiding incidents and errors such as this one."

Wednesday, September 22nd 2010 - 18:16 UTC

Falkland Islands fishing industry unconcerned about Argentine interference

DUE to planned port developments in the Falkland Islands, fishery executives there appear unworried by Argentina's most recent attempt to interfere in their fishing industry.

Falkland Islands Government Director of Fisheries John Barton Falkland Islands Government Director of Fisheries John Barton

Catches are transshipped in FIPASS - Stanley port Catches are transshipped in FIPASS - Stanley port

Despite a Spanish flagged trawler that operates in Falkland Islands waters being denied passage through Argentine waters to Montevideo to unload fish this week, Falkland Islands Government Director of Fisheries John Barton indicated to Mercopress that the Falklands industry can take such incidents in its stride, particularly as it expands its port facilities.

Mr Barton explained, "A lot of vessels already do most of their business in the Falklands. Their catches are transshipped here and transported to market by reefer container or reefer vessel, and provisions and spares are brought in by whatever means.

"In a high catching season vessels will tranship here regularly and it might only be at the end of the season that vessels go to other ports. The ITQ system allows for more flexible

use of fishing vessels which may result in some vessels operating here for longer periods as companies can share catching capacity. The industry will adapt.”

Although plans for a new deep water port are still being examined in the Falkland Islands, Mr Barton said, “Operations can continue as they have with existing port infrastructure and there is ongoing investment to provide for increasing cargo volumes at FIPASS (the port at Stanley).”

Speaking of the developments in provisions for the increasing volumes of cargo, Manager of the Falkland Islands Development Corporation (FIDC), David Waugh, explained the Falklands Government and FIDC, “...naturally are of the view that the container shipping service to the rest of the world is a vital strategic link for the Falklands - economically and socially. That link is currently provided by a combination of the Falkland Islands Resupply Service which is operated by the Ministry of Defence between the UK and Mare Harbour, and the container ship service between Stanley and Brazil that is operated by South American Atlantic Services Ltd.

“The proposed development of a new port is largely intended to facilitate the sustainable growth of fishing catch transshipments into reefer containers in the Falklands as well as support other export industries such as meat and wool. In the meantime, it is recognised that FIPASS has various inherent constraints and that the shore-side infrastructure with respect to container handling, storage and management is inadequate for both the current situation and the planned growth in container traffic - especially of reefers. Thus FIDC and FIG have put into place a temporary container transit yard at Gordon Lines (nearby) and the Falkland Islands Government is currently building a new and more substantial container yard close by. This new yard will form part of the improved port infrastructure.”

Speaking to the Falkland Islands Radio Station this week a spokesperson for Sullivan Shipping Ltd. the ships agent in the Falklands, said the incident involving the trawler Costa do Cabo that forced it to take a much longer route, was inconvenient for the operators and had caused increased costs, “...but as people here in the Falklands are resourceful this economic blockade will not have a great effect and could possibly have a positive outcome if vessels decided that it was easier to do all their business here in the islands instead of in

Montevideo if the right facilities became available.” - By Lisa Watson - SealedPR – Stanley.-

Wednesday, September 22nd 2010 - 15:54 UTC

Royal Navy: HMS Gloucester snub will not affect good relationship with Uruguay

The Royal Navy is “disappointed” with Uruguay's treatment of a warship heading to the Falkland Islands, but the incident will not affect “the good defence relationship with the Uruguayans, writes Michael Powell The News from Portsmouth Defence correspondent.

The Type 42 destroyer based in Portsmouth is currently in the South Atlantic The Type 42 destroyer based in Portsmouth is currently in the South Atlantic

It was the second time in three years a RN warship has been denied entrance into Uruguay, whose government supports Argentina's claim to the Falklands, over which Britain went to war with them in 1982, points out Powell.

HMS Gloucester, a Type 42 destroyer based at Portsmouth, had clearance to visit Montevideo for a routine visit on September 15. But just a few hours before she was due to arrive, Uruguayan authorities made it clear she was not welcome.

A Royal Navy spokesman said: 'We can confirm that Uruguay withdrew diplomatic clearance for HMS Gloucester to visit Montevideo from September 15 to 17. The ship, which is currently deployed in the South Atlantic, was scheduled to make a short, routine port visit. We are obviously disappointed with this last-minute decision by Uruguay but respect their right to make it”.

In 2006 Argentina asked neighbouring countries not to allow their ports or airports to be used by British ships or planes heading to the Falklands.

This saw HMS Nottingham turned away from Montevideo in December 2007.

Uruguay historically has backed Argentina's claim to sovereignty over the Falklands and other islands in the South Atlantic, and has voted with it on the issue before international organisations.

The South American neighbours have been working closely together recently to improve relations following years of confrontation over the construction of pulp mills in shared water courses.

But despite last week's snub to HMS Gloucester, the Royal Navy and the Foreign Office insisted the incident will not harm Britain's relations with Uruguay.

A Royal Navy spokesman said: 'We have a long-standing close defence relationship with the Uruguayans. This incident will not affect those good links.'

In a statement, The Foreign Office said: 'We can confirm that HMS Gloucester was scheduled to make a routine port stop in Montevideo between 15 to 17 September. Uruguay subsequently withdrew diplomatic clearance for the short visit. We respect Uruguay's right to make such a decision'.

Saturday, September 25th 2010 - 03:14 UTC

Falklands Desire raises an extra £ 22.8 million for further oil seismic surveying

Desire Petroleum (AIM:DES), one of the Falkland Islands oil exploration companies announced Friday it had successfully placed 16,294,600 shares at 140 pence each raising £22.8 million before expenses.

The next survey phase is scheduled to begin in December The next survey phase is scheduled to begin in December

According to the company's release the funds will be predominantly used to acquire and process further 3D seismic over the Desire acreage on the east flank of the North Falkland Basin, NFB, in Tranches D and F.

Following the Sea Lion oil discovery by Rockhopper Exploration, Desire has concentrated on identifying prospects in the same play type as Sea Lion and has outlined a fan sandstone play fairway in the eastern flank.

These fan sandstones can only be fully identified on 3D data and currently Desire has 3D coverage over only half of this fairway on its acreage.

“Desire believes that it is essential that it acquires and processes new 3D seismic data as quickly as possible in order to fully understand the potential of this play”.

Tenders for a 3D seismic survey have been received and Desire intends to award a contract for the acquisition and processing of the survey in the near future. In addition, discussions are underway with other NFB oil operators regarding a joint seismic program that could go some way to mitigate the significant cost of the mobilisation/demobilisation of a seismic vessel to Falkland waters.

The Board of Desire currently expects that the seismic programme will begin in December 2010.

Now that Rockhopper has concluded the successful flow test on the Sea Lion discovery, the Ocean Guardian drilling rig will revert to Desire to drill a number of its prospects the first of which will be drilling the Rachel prospect.

Saturday, September 25th 2010 - 03:05 UTC

Technical constraints limit Falklands’ oil well flow test to 2.000 bopd

Rockhopper Exploration said that during the testing of its Sea Lion well in the Falkland Islands, problems limited the amount of oil extracted to just an average of 2000 barrels per day (bopd). Otherwise, it could have produced sustained rates of at least double that, at 4000 bopd, “without these constraints”.

Rockhopper believes a more accurate estimate flow would be 4,000 bopd Rockhopper believes a more accurate estimate flow would be 4,000 bopd

In a statement released on Friday, Rockhopper gave descriptions of the encountered problems, saying: "Rockhopper believes that the flow rate was inhibited by incomplete perforation, waxing of the tubing string above 800 metres, increased viscosity of the oil as it cooled in the upper part of the test string and a lack of specialist equipment."

"As such, the Company estimates that the well could have flowed at approximately 4,000 bopd without these constraints".

They added: "Rockhopper also believes that, with a more optimal well location and horizontal well completions, significantly higher flow rates could be achieved from future production wells."

Rockhopper was the first company of the several operating (and drilling) in Falklands' waters, to state that the Sea Lion prospects results were "commercially viable". However the latest update, although optimistic, is a reminder of the technical difficulties faced by oil companies in the South Atlantic.

Following the release of the update Rockhopper shares soared as much as 9.5% in London. The shares have accumulated an increase of 1.332% since the first announcement on the oil discovery in May.

The other companies with Falklands' government licences to explore for oil are Desire Petroleum, BHP Billion with Falkland Oil & Gas Ltd, Borders & Southern Petroleum and Argos Resources. Desire, Rockhopper and FOGL have drilled exploratory wells with the "Ocean Guardian" rig in Falklands waters since last February.

Friday, September 24th 2010 - 23:40 UTC

Cristina blasts UK and UN Security Council for lack of progress in Falklands/Malvinas

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly on Friday, President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner criticized the British government for continuing to ignore Argentina's request for sovereignty talks over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands.

The Argentine president displayed her speaker's talent and wardrobe at the UN The Argentine president displayed her speaker's talent and wardrobe at the UN

"Once again we have come to claim our sovereign rights over the Malvinas Islands. It's not a historic claim but an absolutely present-time claim", added Mrs Kirchner who blasted the UK for systematically refusing to comply with "the resolutions of this organism (General Assembly) which calls on all of us to begin sovereignty talks".

"That country (UK) is making unilateral decisions on hydrocarbons exploitation which means the plundering of natural resources that do not belong to her", emphasized Mrs. Kirchner. "The UK is responsible for any ecological catastrophe, just as it was for the British Petroleum oil spill" she warned.

The Malvinas' conflict served as the trigger for the Argentine President to heavily criticize the United Nations Security Council for "it has lost its power and it is not working taking into account the jeopardy the world is currently facing." "We are no longer in a bipolar world," she added.

"Situations and conflicts such as the Malvinas one are clear examples of the fact the Security Council is not working properly and is not preserving peace and security" affirmed Mrs. Kirchner.

The Argentine president also renewed her claim for the extradition of two high-ranking Iranian officials accused by an Argentine court of being involved in the 1994 Buenos Aires AMIA Jewish Centre bombing, urging the Islamic Republic to jointly pick a neutral country in which they can be taken to trial.

"Even though my country leads in human rights defence and justice, our justice system cannot judge and sentence anyone who's not present. Therefore, we demand their extradition".

Mrs. Kirchner blasted the Teheran regime saying that she was certain that even though this was her fourth public request for their extradition, this would not yield any results. "I know it is an evident fact there will be no outcome," she assured.

"Therefore, if the Iranian authorities do not trust the Argentina legal system, I ask them to join us into finding a third party, a third country in which those officials would be tried in front of several UN delegates, in order to take those responsible for this horrible attack to court," she said.

She used this "fourth public claim" as a way of highlighting the ones that were performed on 2007, 2008 and 2009. "I'm not after guilty people; I'm just looking for justice in the AMIA case investigation. If someone has committed a crime, he or she should be punished," she added.

"We should end with neutrality excuses" Mrs Kirchner emphasized. "We do not want an impartial trial, but a trial where we can try those who are accused for this horrible attack we suffered back in 1994," she concluded the matter.

At the start of her speech at the UN Mrs. Kirchner dealt with figures and statistics regarding her administration, which she highly praised for "helping Argentina come out of the 2001 crisis." Both her and her husbands (Nestor Kirchner) governments were the core of the words as soon as she began speaking, stating that "developing countries such as Argentina are currently receiving the impact of the world's economic crisis and are supporting the global economic crisis."

"During the last eight years, Argentina achieved the greatest economy growth of its 200 years of history", she said adding that "we were able to service public debt in a way that had never been recorded before".

As regards the debt Mrs. Kirchner stated that Argentina negotiated 93% of its debt and, "thanks to the implemented countercyclical measures that were drawn up in 2008 and 2009, the economy grew 9% during this past year".

Mrs Kirchner assured that the country "managed the reserves with intelligence" when she decided to use them to service public debt. "It was irrational for the country to be in the red, and that is why I decided to use the Central Bank reserves."

To conclude with figures and statistics, Mrs. Kirchner assured "multilateral credit bodies have to face the fact they need a strong reform, for they failed to maintain a stable economy at a global level."

Later on the Argentine president tackled several issues that accounted for highly controversial topics. She entered deeply into the Middle East conflict by assuring "it was great news to see that dialogue between Israel and Palestine was resumed." And added: "I believe we all wish for Palestine to be sitting in the following's United Nations General Assembly," she stressed, showing her satisfaction on the matter.

Mrs. Kirchner finished her speech by underlining: "It is relevant to be assured that the notions of security and peace are no longer associated with military issues, but with politics, freedom, equity and equality."

Monday, September 27th 2010 - 17:56 UTC

Falklands: Desire begins drilling second exploration well, Rachel 14/15-1

Desire Petroleum (AIM:DES) the first oil and gas exploration company to contract a rig and begin the current round of drilling in the Falkland Islands announced Monday the spudding of its second exploration well, Rachel 14/15-1.

"Ocean Guardian" spudded the second exploratory well for Desire "Ocean Guardian" spudded the second exploratory well for Desire

In an official statement the company which is wholly focused on the North Falkland Basin said that "the Rachel 14/15-1 exploration well was spudded at 15:45 (BST) on 27 September 2010".

The Rachel prospect is located in Tranche D, south of Sea Lion prospect and has an estimated target depth of 2,850 metres. Drilling operations are expected to take approximately 35 days.

So far in the current round Desire discovered natural gas in two zones of its Liz well and Rockhopper Exploration struck oil at its Sea Lion Prospect, with an initial flow of 2.000 bopd, in spite of 'technical constraints' encountered to gauge volumes.

"In order to give ourselves time to evaluate the results of the Rachel well we are most likely to drill the Dawn/Jacinta prospect following the Rachel well. Despite the disappointing (Rockhopper) Ernest well result the Dawn/Jacinta prospect continues to excite us" said Desire in a recent half year report to shareholders.

"Since the Sea Lion discovery, Desire's geo-science effort has concentrated on identifying similar prospects for early drilling. In addition to the already recognised Rachel, Anna and Ninky prospects an exciting new prospect named Elaine has been identified".

Commenting on the June 30 mid year balance Desire chairman Stephen Phipps said that the confirmation of oil and gas in the NFB has clearly significantly de-risked the rest of the drilling campaign, "we now enter an exciting period of drilling activity which may see us drilling up to four wells back to back."

Last week Desire announced Friday it had successfully placed 16,294,600 shares at 140 pence each raising £22.8 million before expenses. The funds will be predominantly used to acquire and process further 3D seismic over the Desire acreage on the east flank of NFB, in Tranches D and F.

The Board of Desire currently expects that the seismic programme will begin in December 2010.

Desire Petroleum director Ian Duncan and chairman Stephen Phipps plan to visit the Falklands at the beginning of October.

Monday, September 27th 2010 - 17:47 UTC

Hague announces review of policy towards Overseas Territories

UK Foreign Secretary William Hague announced a review of the overall approach of the coalition government towards the Overseas Territories and stated that contrary to France the UK does not regard OT as part of the home state nor has plans for such a move, reports Panorama.

"I have commissioned a review of our overall approach to the overseas territories. That review is not yet complete, but we look forward to discussing it with the Committee in future months. I've put in charge of that policy Minister Henry Bellingham", said Hague during questions in the House of Commons Foreign Affairs committee.

"We are not the same as France; we don't regard our overseas territories as parts of the home state. They do not have representatives in our national legislature, so they are in a different position. I think that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is the appropriate home, but we'll try to show over the coming years that we deserve that role", said Hague in reply to three basic questions from Conservative MP Andres Rosindell.

The Romford MP asked first, if there will be a new, more positive approach to bring the OT closer to Britain and make them feel British since at the moment, "many of them wonder why they remain under Britain". Secondly, if they are British OT, why are they under the Foreign Office? Finally Rosindell asked for reassurances that under the coalition Government, there will never again be a return to the 'colonial attitude' of the Government of Mr Blair in 2002, when they sought to impose a joint sovereignty deal on the people of Gibraltar, even though the people there had previously voted 99% against being annexed by Spain.

Hague mentioned as a clear strategy of the new UK coalition government towards the OT to assist them in their economic development and mentioned the recent decision to build an airport in the island of St Helena as well as support for some of the Caribbean territories to face fiscal crises.

"I think we have a responsibility to ensure the security and good governance of the overseas territories, as well as to support their economic well-being. They can create substantial challenges for the UK in many different ways, and we must recognise that. We need to manage those risks quite carefully, but I think we've moved quickly in the past few months to tackle certain problems. I have mentioned St Helena. There have been fiscal crises in some of the Caribbean territories, and a very severe problem in the Turks and Caicos Islands", pointed out Hague.

Finally, according to the Panorama report the Foreign Secretary regarding Gibraltar said that "as I'm sure you will have heard me say in the past, there will be no change in the position of Gibraltar and the people of Gibraltar without the consent of the people of Gibraltar".

Monday, September 27th 2010 - 15:10 UTC

Last airworthy Falklands 'veteran' Vulcan bomber running out of funds

The last airworthy Cold War British Vulcan bomber, and 1982 Falklands conflict veteran, could have made its final public flight on Sunday unless its owners can raise £400,000 by the end of October.

The XH558, owned by Leicestershire-based Vulcan to the Sky Trust, took to the skies at Coventry Airport's Fly-in fundraiser.

Chief executive Dr Robert Fleming said the recession was partly to blame for a substantial drop in donations. The bomber requires costly maintenance to ensure it passes safety tests.

It was introduced as part of the RAF's nuclear deterrent against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. But the aircraft only saw action during the 1982 Falklands War, when its crew bombed Port Stanley Airport, preventing its use by Argentine jets.

Dr Fleming said he hoped to keep it airborne for two further display seasons, including the year of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, which is also the 60th anniversary of the first flight of the Vulcan and the 30th anniversary of its role in the Falklands conflict.

"The airframe has limited time before it will no longer be possible to renew its Permit to Fly," he said.

"After that, we hope to develop a museum and educational centre around the plane, funded by conference, leisure and other commercial activities.

"But if we don't make it through October the tremendous opportunities offered by this magnificent aircraft will be lost forever."

The Vulcan was withdrawn from service in 1984, and later restored at Bruntingthorpe aerodrome in Leicestershire. It is hoped the plane will perform a fly-past at the opening of the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

Monday, September 27th 2010 - 14:57 UTC

Prince William "determined" to be posted in Falkland, says London press

Britain's Prince William is apparently battling to serve in the Falkland Islands with his Royal Air Force (RAF) search and rescue squadron. The pilot Prince is determined to fly alongside colleagues when they are sent to the UK outpost within the next two years.

However, RAF chiefs have security concerns and are worried that William's involvement would inflame a delicate political situation.

On Friday Argentine President Cristina Kirchner slammed the UK over the Falklands, making a new claim for the disputed islands.

The Prince, a flight lieutenant, graduated this month as an RAF search and rescue pilot. He can now co-pilot Sea King helicopters as part of a four-man crew based at RAF Valley in Anglesey.

"William is adamant he wants to join his squadron when they are seconded to the Falklands" News of the World quoted an insider as saying.

"He's let it be known that there is no reason why he shouldn't join his colleagues. But in the end it's not his call.

"It's incredibly sensitive at the moment, especially given the president's comments," the insider added.

William, 28, has now accepted he will be unable to serve on the frontline like his brother Harry did in Afghanistan. But he feels the Falklands posting would still show he is prepared to make a valuable contribution.

And he would be following in the wake of his uncle, Prince Andrew, who flew during the conflict with Argentina in 1982.

Tuesday, September 28th 2010 - 08:27 UTC

Falkland Oil and Gas Limited - Licence Update

FOGL, the oil and gas exploration company focused on its extensive licence areas to the South and East of the Falkland Islands, announces certain changes to its licence arrangements with the Falkland Islands Government.

Due to the tight rig market it is increasingly unlikely that the next phase of the drilling programme will commence in 2010 as required by the current terms of the licences.

Following recent discussions, the Falkland Islands Government ("FIG") has agreed to extend the first phase of the northern 2004 licences by one year, so that they will now expire on 15 December 2011. No additional work obligations or acreage relinquishment will be required in respect of this licence extension and the existing Phase 1 work commitments remain unchanged.

Southern licence area

Separately, BHP Billiton has advised FIG and FOGL that it has elected not to enter the second phase of the southern 2002 licences which commences on 3 December 2010.

FOGL believes, based on the drilling results from the Toroa well analysed to date, that these licences are still prospective. Furthermore, we are still awaiting the analysis of some key well data and these results are now expected to be available in October. FOGL has identified a number of prospects and leads which may prove to be of interest, particularly in the event of drilling success in the deepwater area of the northern licences, or in the south, where the licences are contiguous with acreage held by Borders and Southern Petroleum.

Having fulfilled all the work obligations of Phase 1, FOGL has therefore decided to enter the second phase of these licences. This will entail the drilling of a single exploration well by 3 December 2015. BHP Billiton will assign its 51% licence interest to FOGL which takes FOGL's interest back to 100%. FOGL expects to take over the operatorship of these licences during the next few months.

Assignment of interest and change of operatorship are conditional on the approval of FIG.

Tim Bushell, Chief Executive of FOGL, said:

"We welcome the Falkland Islands Government's understanding in agreeing to extend the licence terms. We intend to continue actively exploring the southern licences and with our joint venture partner, to secure a deepwater rig to resume drilling in the northern licences as soon as possible."-

Thursday, September 30th 2010 - 01:13 UTC

Guardia Civil and Gibraltar police physically scuffle in the Rock's waters

A suspected smuggler was removed from Gibraltar territorial waters by the Spanish Guardia Civil following physical scuffles and a tense stand-off with the Gibraltar police. The

incident was described as “very serious” and Gibraltar’s Chief Minister Peter Caruana warned that it could undermine the efforts of the Trilateral Forum to cooperate on law enforcement issues.

Gibraltar’s Chief Minister Peter Caruana: “totally unacceptable incident” Gibraltar’s Chief Minister Peter Caruana: “totally unacceptable incident”

“Today’s incident is wholly unacceptable and calls into question the viability of cooperation between the Royal Gibraltar Police and the Guardia Civil and the conclusion of agreements in this area in the Trilateral Forum,” Mr Caruana said.

“The Government takes a most serious view of the abusive behaviour of the Guardia Civil and will now consider the effect that it will have in related matters.”

The RGP had chased a suspicious boat along the west side of the Rock but the Guardia Civil intervened and insisted they were in Spanish waters, even though the incident was unfolding close to the Detached Mole.

When the RGP crew climbed on board to arrest the man at the helm of the suspect vessel, he retaliated and resisted, biting one policeman on the arm. Armed Guardia Civil officers then boarded the boat and claimed jurisdiction of the detained person and vessel, refusing to let the RGP take either of them away.

“A very tense situation developed with physical aggression being displayed by the Guardia Civil officers towards the RGP officers, physically impeding and manhandling the RGP officers preventing them from effecting the arrest and take control of the vessel and the arrested individual,” the RGP said in a statement.

The situation became highly volatile, prompting senior officers of both the RGP and the Guardia Civil to rush to the scene. When he got there the Commissioner of the RGP, Louis Wink, made it “unequivocally clear” that the intervention of the vessel had taken place within British Gibraltar Territorial Waters and that the Guardia Civil had no jurisdiction over the matter.

This was contested by the Guardia Civil senior officer who claimed to be acting on orders to take executive action in any of the waters surrounding Gibraltar. As this was unfolding at sea, British and Spanish diplomats on land worked the phones to try and defuse the situation.

"We were fortunate that this did not get out of hand," one official said. "Situations like this can easily turn nasty".

At its peak there were eight vessels involved in the face off, including three Guardia Civil patrol boats as well as vessels from the RGP, the Gibraltar Defence Police, the Gibraltar Squadron and the Gibraltar Port Authority.

Finally Guardia Civil officers facilitated the arrested person on to their vessel and took him away towards Algeciras, where following questioning and nothing illegal found in his boat, he was released.

A spokesman for the Foreign & Commonwealth Office confirmed that an incident had occurred but would not go into details. "We were in contact with the Spanish throughout to try and resolve the situation," the spokesman said.

"We will decide whether to take any further action once we've received further reports".

OCTOBER

Friday, October 1st 2010 - 05:02 UTC

Argentina grants political asylum to former Chilean guerrilla

Argentina granted political asylum Thursday to a former Chilean guerrilla fighter charged in his country with assassinating a senator and kidnapping a businessman, whose extradition was repeatedly requested by the government of Sebastian Piñera. The decision has the potential to sour bilateral relations.

Apablaza Guerra is accused of killing a Senator and kidnapping the son of the owner of El Mercurio in 1991 Apablaza Guerra is accused of killing a Senator and kidnapping the son of the owner of El Mercurio in 1991

Chile's government wants to extradite Galvarino Apablaza Guerra to face trial for the murder of right-wing Senator Jaime Guzman and the kidnapping of businessman Christian Edwards del Rio, son of the owner of El Mercurio newspaper, both incidents in 1991 when democracy had returned to Chile.

Prior to the announcement, the Chilean government exerted pressure on Argentina's National Refugees' Committee, CONARE, arguing that "there is no political crime or weakness of the Chilean rule of law". The statements were made by Chilean Foreign Affairs Minister Alfredo Moreno.

According to CONARE sources the decision was "unanimous".

The former member of the FPMR Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic insists he is the victim of political persecution in Chile. He agreed to not leave the country and present himself before the judge weekly.

Argentina's Supreme Court had approved a Chilean request for Apablaza's extradition and Chilean President Sebastian Piñera had urged his Argentine counterpart, Cristina Kirchner to follow through on the extradition.

"I think a person who has committed such a grave crime, that cost the life of a senator, and that was committed in Chile, should be tried in Chilean courts," Piñera said.

But Mrs. Kirchner rebuffed the pressure and said the last word would go to Argentina's national refugee commission, which is part of the interior ministry and includes a member of the United Nations refugee commission on its board.

Argentina's human rights groups also lobbied against the extradition because Apablaza would be tried under Chile's dictatorship-era anti-terrorism law, which allows for secret

witnesses, pre-trial detention, military courts and other legal mechanisms they said would violate his rights to a fair trial.

But some Chileans accused Argentina of tarnishing its human rights legacy by defending a man accused of assassinating a sitting senator during a democratic government. Both crimes occurred in 1991, after the end of the 1973-1990 dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

Apablaza, who requested asylum in Argentina in 2004, was an ideological leader of a branch of Chile's Communist Party that took up arms against Pinochet. With democracy restored to Chile, Apablaza's faction refused to put down its weapons.

Friday, October 1st 2010 - 04:24 UTC

Falklands' representatives meet with Liberal Democrats leader Nick Clegg

The Falkland Islands were represented at Britain's Liberal Democrat party conference which was held in Liverpool from Saturday until Monday, (September 17/20). Since the fall of Labour, Britain is ruled by a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition led by PM David Cameron and Deputy PM Nick Clegg.

Deputy PM Nick Clegg at the Lib-Dem party conference Deputy PM Nick Clegg at the Lib-Dem party conference

Member of the Legislative Assembly Roger Edwards and FIG London Representative Sukey Cameron attended the event.

"It went very well I think, from our point of view" MLA Roger Edwards said. "We had a very, very positive response from everyone we met."

They had the opportunity to meet the Liberal Democrat MP, Foreign Office Minister Jeremy Brown, and also briefly met Nick Clegg.

The statement made when the coalition was formed, that the new government would respect the Falklands right to self-determination, was reiterated at the conference.

"Indeed, all the MPs and lords we met, they were all very, very positive in their outlook towards us," MLA Edwards said.

MLA Edwards and Ms Cameron received briefings on the strategic defence review from a Liberal Democrat viewpoint and were able to meet with various members to put across their views about the situation concerning oil, fish and "the belligerence of the Argentines towards the Islands," Cllr Edwards said.

Although the FIGO representative in London Sukey Cameron has regularly done the conferences' round of UK's three main political parties, it was the first time a Falklands MLA attended the Lib-Dem event.

MLA Jan Cheek also attended the Labour and Conservative party conferences with MLA Edwards at the end of September. (PN).-

Friday, October 1st 2010 - 04:21 UTC

The red London taxi, potent symbol of Falklands' history goes into retirement

It was one of the most poignant moments of the Falklands War when chauffeur Don Bonner drove Governor Rex Hunt and his wife Mavis from Government House to Stanley Airport, as occupying forces raised the Argentine flag and ousted the Queen's representative from the Falklands.

Mrs. Thatcher, the top VIP to be carried by the red taxi, recalls Don Bonner Mrs. Thatcher, the top VIP to be carried by the red taxi, recalls Don Bonner

The red London taxi was a potent symbol of the Falklands' inextricable links with Britain, and Don ensured its safekeeping until Governor Hunt's return.

The Austin had first come into service as Crown car for Governor Neville French in 1976, and continued to carry royalty and VIPs for another 34 years. But as Governor Alan Huckle packed his own bags for the last time, the taxi too was retired.

"It's a bit sad really," said Don, one of five current and former drivers to be reunited with the car before it was sent to its new home at the Museum.

"They should have another one to replace it because it's one of our old traditions to have a London taxi."

Val Berntsen, who was the first chauffeur to drive the car, echoed Don's comments: "It's sad to lose another part of the Falkland Islands," he said. "It means a lot to me. Rudy Clarke was the first in the Islands to actually drive it. He was the head mechanic and he presented it to me. Every day he used to laugh at me and say who do you love, Cecilia or the taxi, because I was forever polishing it".

The car went into storage in 1996 under Governor Richard Ralph (1996-99), because of its condition and because many of the replacement parts needed to keep it going was obsolete.

It was restored in 2005 by Bruce Miller of Stanley Body Repairs and given a new licence plate F1 MNT in time for Governor Howard Pearce's wedding at Christ Church Cathedral.

Among VIPs to be carried in the taxi were British politicians Michael Heseltine, John Nott and Douglas Hurd, and Lord Shackleton and Sherpa Tensing.

But driving Margaret Thatcher remains one of Don's most vivid memories: "When I drove Maggie Thatcher into Stanley from the airport, everybody was out waving to her" he said.

"I'm quite pleased it's going up to the Museum and not being forgotten about because normally the old taxis, when they retired, went to the funerals as a hearse. I know a lot of tourists I've met have always asked about it."

Joining Don and Val for Saturday's photo shoot were fellow chauffeurs Glen Williams, Kevin Ormond and Geoffrey Stevens. June Clark was on leave. (PN).-

Friday, October 1st 2010 - 02:14 UTC

Post-82 Falklands generations ever more distant from Argentina

The "belligerent" policy of Argentina towards the Falklands/Malvinas Islands has only harvested the antipathy of the young generations of the Islands born since the 1982 conflict said elected Member of the Legislative Assembly Roger Edwards

MLA Roger Edwards attended the Labour party conference in Manchester
MLA Roger Edwards attended the Labour party conference in Manchester

"Instead of trying to win our support, they've done exactly the opposite", said MLA Edwards interviewed in Manchester where he attended the annual Labour party conference.

"The Argentine government has tried to corner us socially, politically, environmentally and any other way they can think of", added the Falklands' MLA.

Edwards warned that this attitude "has created a new strong-minded generation of Falkland Islanders contrary to Argentina" and any links with Argentina, which is "negative and totally counter productive".

"We would like to have a normal good-neighbours relation with Argentina", pointed out MLA Edwards.

"We could even be the best of trade partners and neighbours you can imagine; but as long as they continue with this nebulous claim over the Falklands, we simply can't be neighbours, which is regrettable", underlined Edwards.

Friday, October 1st 2010 - 02:00 UTC

"Emergency protocol" to avoid Guardia Civil and Gibraltar police future clashes

The British Government will discuss with Spain ways of ensuring coordination and avoiding volatile confrontations between law enforcement agencies at sea following the hostile stand-off this week in which Guardia Civil officers physically prevented Gibraltar policemen from arresting a suspected smuggler.

The latest incident in Gibraltar waters echoed in Madrid and London The latest incident in Gibraltar waters echoed in Madrid and London

"We are very concerned by [Tuesday's] incident" a spokesman for the Foreign & Commonwealth Office said. "We need to ensure effective policing".

"We are studying reports and will be discussing with Spain with a view to ensuring that our police work together against lawbreakers."

The talks between Britain and Spain are expected to take place imminently, reflecting the sense of urgency arising from the incident. One of the first things that officials will likely discuss is a practical, emergency protocol designed to defuse high-tension situations, irrespective of where they occur.

But implementing an effective protocol may be difficult given the current degree of antipathy between the Royal Gibraltar Police and the Guardia Civil.

The RGP said the Spanish officers had shown physical aggression and had "manhandled" the Gibraltar crew before removing the suspected smuggler from British waters.

Chief Minister Peter Caruana said the incident was "wholly unacceptable" adding "it calls into question the viability of cooperation between the Royal Gibraltar Police and the Guardia Civil and the conclusion of agreements in this area in the Trilateral Forum". (Gibraltar Chronicle).

Monday, October 4th 2010 - 01:05 UTC

Spain to cooperate with Gibraltar on maritime law enforcement, 'without affecting sovereignty'

Spain's Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos recognised the need for cooperation with Gibraltar on maritime law enforcement in this area.

Foreign Affairs minister Miguel Angel Moratinos Foreign Affairs minister Miguel Angel Moratinos

Speaking in the Spanish Parliament following the clash at sea between the Royal Gibraltar Police and the Guardia Civil when trying to arrest a suspected smuggler, he recognised that there had been "incidents" involving both forces.

"But we have to work in the 21st century [because] we're not in the 20th century," the minister said.

"What we're interested in is eradicating contraband and drug smuggling and we have to see how we can cooperate without this affecting sovereignty."

As for the Spanish position on the sovereignty of the waters around the Rock, Moratinos left no doubt of his position.

"There are no Gibraltar waters, only Spanish waters," he said.

Tuesday, October 5th 2010 - 20:30 UTC

Falklands' Governor Designate swearing in ceremony October 16th

The swearing in ceremony for Falkland Islands Governor Designate, Nigel Haywood CVO has been announced for Saturday October 16 and will be followed by a parade and a reception at Government House.

Nigel Haywood CVO last overseas job was Consul General in Basra, Iraq (Photo: The Irak Page) Nigel Haywood CVO last overseas job was Consul General in Basra, Iraq (Photo: The Irak Page)

The ceremony will take place in Stanley's Court and Assembly Chamber, Town Hall commencing at 1500 hrs. Because of limited space invited guests only are able to attend this ceremony.

A parade at Victory Green will follow the ceremony with a Guard of Honour consisting of a combined tri-service detachment of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force and a detachment from the Falkland Islands Defence Force forming up at 15.30 hrs. Youth Groups will also be in attendance.

At 15.40 hrs the Governor will arrive and the inspection, parade and 17-volley salute will commence. All members of the public are cordially invited to observe the Parade.

The Governor and Mrs Haywood will be hosting a reception at Government House immediately after the parade and cordially invite all members of the public to attend.

Governor designate Haywood has a long career in the British diplomatic service which he joined in 1983. This includes FCO, Ireland Desk Officer; Budapest, Second and later First Secretary; Desk Officer Israel and Lebanon; Deputy Consul-General in Johannesburg; Counsellor and Deputy head of delegation UKDEL OSCE in Vienna; FCO Assistant Directors Human Resources; 2003/08 ambassador in Estonia and from 2008 to 2009 Consul General in Basra, Iraq.

Mr Haywood spent four years at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, Lt, RAEC (Army); Truro School, New College, Oxford (MA, MPhil) and an MSc in Biodiversity Conservation.

He is married to Mary Louise and two children, Christopher, 198, Thomas, 1985 and Peter, 1991.

Wednesday, October 6th 2010 - 15:32 UTC

Falklands 'invasion broadcaster' short listed for Commonwealth Sports award

Falklands' news casting veteran Patrick Watts, known for his manning of the radio station during the Argentine invasion in April 1982, and an active promoter of the Islands worldwide, is on the shortlist for a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 29th Annual Commonwealth Sports Awards.

Patrick Watts, known for his manning of the radio station during the Argentine invasion in April 1982 Patrick Watts, known for his manning of the radio station during the Argentine invasion in April 1982

Falkland Islands Overseas Games Association (FIOGA) Chair Mike Summers said, "We are delighted to announce the inclusion of Patrick Watts on the shortlist for a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 29th Annual Commonwealth Sports Awards to be held in Birmingham on 6th November 2010. These are prestigious awards, and FIOGA would like to congratulate Patrick on his inclusion in the event. He will attend with his wife Sila."

It is through Mr Watts' determined efforts over many years that the Falklands began sending teams to both the Small Island Games and the Commonwealth Games.

From Holland Mr. Watts said he was highly motivated for having led the teams because it sends a strong message to the world that Islanders are proudly British.

"I have always felt a great deal of pride in leading our teams to participate at the Commonwealth and Island Games as it sends a message to the world that we are British and Falkland Islanders and proud of it."

Mr Summers spoke from Delhi where he is managing the Falkland Islands team at the Commonwealth Games. Islanders were delighted to hear in the past two days that their tiny team achieved a win in both badminton doubles over Uganda and in lawn bowls over Samoa.

He also added, "FIOGA is delighted to announce that they have been allocated an intern from the CGF/Canada jointly funded 2011-12 Capacity Support Programme to assist sports development in smaller countries. The intern will come to the Falklands for a year and assist in developing FIOGA, its affiliated clubs and other interested sporting bodies in whatever way they would wish. In particular FIOGA will help develop training and support programmes for clubs, source external funding for sports development and develop the FIOGA website to include access to Zeus (the CGF operational website) and Adams (the anti-doping website). It is anticipated these will greatly assist the administration of future games."

"FIOGA continues to appreciate the strong support of the people at home for our participation at the Commonwealth Games in Delhi," said Mr Summers, "and thanks our sponsors the Falkland Islands Government, Caribbean Alliance, Falkland Islands Company, Cable & Wireless, Standard Chartered Bank and South Harbour Consulting without whose assistance much of this would not be possible."- Lisa Watson – SeAledPR – Stanley.-

Friday, October 8th 2010 - 17:28 UTC

Falklands' private sector project for an oil industry multi-million port

An ambitious new multi-million pound port development – specifically for the burgeoning oil industry in the Islands – has been proposed for the western coast of East Falkland Islands.

Plans are to provide facilities for eight offshore supply vessels Plans are to provide facilities for eight offshore supply vessels

Plans have already been lodged with the Environmental Planning Office for the site, on 175 acres of privately owned land at Port San Carlos, opposite Camerons Point.

The proposed berthing is more than four times the size of the floating dock (FIPASS) currently used in Stanley harbour.

The private sector initiative comes from Port Smyley Ltd, a new company being incorporated by Cantray Ltd, the owners of Smylies Farm.

The naturally sheltered inlet with a small wooden jetty was previously used for ferry runs to nearby West Falkland before government provided the purpose built terminal at New Haven.

But if the plans go ahead, it could soon be providing berths and facilities for eight offshore supply vessels as well as a cargo and bunker berth.

Plans indicate that suitable material will be pushed out along the coast line to form the foundation of the structure, which would incorporate drilling mud storage, warehousing, container and pipe storage, water treatment plant, power station and sewage treatment.

A presentation was made to Assembly Members and senior Government Officers last Tuesday evening by directors of Port Smyley Ltd and its technical advisors.

The outline planning permission applied for relates to the land and the related Crown seabed (everything below the high tide mark).

Cantray Company director Lewis Clifton said he recognised that FIG would wish to take a little time to consider the issue and said he could offer little further information at the moment.

Director of Mineral Resources Phyl Rendell welcomed the news of a possible new port: "It's a very bold initiative led by local business people which is a real credit to them," she told the Penguin News.

"It's exactly what the oil industry will need in the event they move to a production phase. "It benefits the Falklands to have local companies involved at an early stage in any development phase.

Assembly Member Sharon Halford also welcomed the news: "I think that if this kind of development is going to happen, then Port San Carlos is the sort of place to have it, away from the main hub of the community."

Mrs Halford described the bid as a "fantastic private sector initiative" that could be a tremendous boost to the economy.

She added: "It's a move that could create new opportunities in the rural community."

Rural Development Strategy Coordinator Nuala McKay said that to date no oil related activity had been considered within the strategy, but that it was indeed very exciting news.

Miss McKay said she looked forward to learning more about the initiative and the possibility of harnessing opportunities for the rural community.

With the exploration oil round still to be completed and no guarantee that oil will ever be extracted in commercial quantities, it is an ambitious move to provide support for what is hoped will be the Islands' main industry.

The social and environmental impacts of the project on the area will of course have to be assessed, but it could be the start of repopulating the Camp in a way we never imagined possible. By Sharon Jaffray – Penguin News – Stanley.-

Friday, October 8th 2010 - 00:10 UTC

Repsol-YPF optimistic about finding oil in Islas Malvinas waters

Spanish oil and gas company Repsol-YPF praised its Argentine YPF associates and said he was hopeful that "soon" the company "would discover hydrocarbons in the Islas Malvinas waters", as has happened in Brazil.

Antonio Brufau, CEO of Spain's leading oil and Gas Corporation Antonio Brufau, CEO of Spain's leading oil and Gas Corporation

"The incorporation of the Petersen Group to Repsol-YPF in Argentina has been very successful because it gave a very locally oriented company a global outlook, plus helping

to consolidate an international company which was not integrated”, said Repsol CEO Antonio Brufau in Buenos Aires where he was honoured by the local Argentine-Spanish Chamber of Commerce.

“We hope more Argentine capitals join so we can further improve the company, which goes beyond the idea of having an YPF which is totally Argentine”, added Brufau addressing an audience that included most of the Argentine political, business and financial establishments.

However Brufau said he was not proud with what the company was doing in energy terms since “we are only actually catering to the automobile industry”.

In spite of repeated successes in Brazil and optimism about finding oil in the Malvinas waters “we are selling fuel in Argentina at a cheaper price than mineral water”.

Oil prices in Argentina have been frozen for several years now or only slightly adjusted which has created a significant investment deficit in oil and gas exploration while the country gobbles its proven reserves that are down to 3 to 5 years of current consumption.

Brufau said that a new energy production model is needed because by 2030 emerging countries will be consuming 40% more energy as millions of more vehicles are incorporated, while “we still have in the world 2.5 billion people with no access to electricity and will be demanding a fair deal, all of which will have an impact on global warming”.

“The energy sector must change its focus, act more intelligently in the search for alternative sources be it in the sea or on land, because in the last hundred years we’ve consumed most of the fossil reserves accumulated during millions of years”, underlined the Spanish entrepreneur.

“In Repsol and YPF we are working into new energy sources, besides oil and gas, such as bio-technology, bio-diesel, wind energy at sea and on earth, but most important creating

awareness that as producers and consumers, we must be more responsible and target a sustainable and equitable world”.

Friday, October 8th 2010 - 00:06 UTC

Argentina investigates Dutch company that surveyed in Falklands' waters

Fugro NV the world's largest surveyor of sea-beds and deepwater for the mining and oil industries, said it doesn't believe it broke the law when it carried out work near the Falkland Islands that has become the subject of an Argentine investigation.

“Fugro Meridian” surveyed Falklands' waters for BHP Billiton and FOGL “Fugro Meridian” surveyed Falklands' waters for BHP Billiton and FOGL

The company did survey work with the 'Fugro Meridian' vessel for BHP Billiton Ltd and its Falklands' associate Falkland Oil and Gas Ltd in preparation of drilling tests, Elly van der Helm, a spokeswoman for Leidschendam, Netherlands-based Fugro, said in a phone interview with Bloomberg. “In our view, this was completely legal as the work was done with a company that was granted a license from Argentine authorities”.

Attorney-General Esteban Righi ordered a state prosecutor to investigate “what criminal laws Fugro NV may have broken by exploring, on at least two occasions, the Argentine continental platform,” Righi's office said in an e-mailed statement October 5, a day after the order. Argentina says companies operating in the Islands' jurisdiction must request authorization from the government.

Argentina renewed a diplomatic dispute with UK over offshore exploration in the Falklands in February when Desire Petroleum Plc contracted an exploration rig and began searching for crude there. Rockhopper Exploration Plc, BHP and Falklands Oil & Gas Ltd. have also been involved in exploring the area. Argentina claims sovereignty over the Islands and their waters. In April 1982 Argentina invaded the Islands and by the following June a British Task Force expelled the aggressors.

Fugro gathers and sells information about possible petroleum and gas reservoirs under the sea floor in areas like the Gulf of Mexico, the North Sea and Brazil. It also carries out surveying work for mining companies. Fugro did work in the area off the Falkland Islands for BHP and FOGL, Van der Helm said.

BHP last month announced it won't enter the second exploration phase of its license south of the Falklands and has returned its 51% interest in the block to FOGL. However it remains committed to explore to the north of the Falklands.

Earlier this year with the Ocean Guardian rig, Rockhopper discovered oil and gas and Desire Petroleum gas.- More info: Fugro Says Falklands BHP Survey Was Legal Amid Probe.-

Tuesday, October 12th 2010 - 01:02 UTC

Falklands' military tests: CFK complains to UN; UK says it's 28 year routine

Argentine Ambassador to the United Nations Jorge Argüello confirmed Monday that a copy of the formal verbal complaint to London was channelled to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon as a way of deepening the protest over the military exercises being deployed by British forces in the Falklands/Malvinas Islands.

Argentine Ambassador before UN, Jorge Argüello
Argentine Ambassador before UN, Jorge Argüello

In London the British Foreign Office downplayed the exercises and the incident.

"These are routine military tests that have taken place every six months for the past 28 years, most recently in April this year," an office spokesman said. "Shipping alerts are always issued in advance and the tests take place entirely within Falklands' territorial waters."

Speaking with the official Argentine news agency Telam, Argüello said that "we are going to ask the UN Secretary General to distribute a copy of the complaint among members of

the organization as testimony of this new violation of UN resolutions” by the United Kingdom.

Previously, the government of President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner channelled the protest through British Ambassador in Buenos Aires Shan Morgan who had been summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Argüello went further: “we are going to insist that the Secretary General advances with the good offices task the General Assembly agreed to and which is geared to the opening of bilateral negotiations over the Islands sovereignty”.

The Argentine Ambassador assured “the United Kingdom has been failing to comply with several UN resolutions all these past years for example, the country should not refuse to negotiate diplomatically and bilaterally over the Islands sovereignty”.

Besides “the UK should not be granting unilaterally fishing licences in waters under conflict or allow the exploration or exploitation of minerals or hydrocarbons in disputed territory or be involved in military exercises with missiles in conflict areas”.

Argüello concluded that Mrs Kirchner “has been pointing out the issue before the UN General Assembly for years. We need to democratize the United Nations, for the Security Council and its five permanent members should not be awarded the right to veto or not comply with what has been overwhelmingly decided by the General Assembly which is the rest of the world community”.

On Saturday Mrs Kirchner through her twitter said the British decision to conduct military exercises in a disputed area such as the Falkland/Malvinas Islands was “something serious, very serious” of an “unprecedented gravity”.

Mrs. Kirchner said that the British military decision was a confirmation “of the militarization of the South Atlantic and the illicit and unmasked use of UK’s permanent seat on the UN Security Council.”

The Argentine president anticipated that her government would communicate “this in unison to the UN Secretary General, OAS, UNASUR, and member states of these organizations” and concluded that the British in “synthesis ... pirates for ever?”.

Tuesday, October 12th 2010 - 00:57 UTC

Falklands fishing boat and Argentine Navy “unsettling” encounter

An encounter between an Argentine Naval vessel and trawler fishing in Falklands waters was described as ‘unsettling’ today by Director of the Falkland Islands Fisheries Department John Barton.

Director of the Falkland Islands Fisheries Department John Barton
Director of the Falkland Islands Fisheries Department John Barton

Falklands’ vessel Venturer was fishing three and a half miles inside the Falklands Outer Conservation Zone southern sector on Thursday, when an Argentine Naval vessel approached and informed the captain that the vessel was fishing illegally in Argentine waters and demanded it leave the zone.

The Argentine naval ship moved on and the Falklands vessel, concerned about the close proximity of the armed ship, steamed further into Falkland’s waters.

Mr Barton said the Captain immediately informed Falklands Fisheries Operations of the incident and the position of the Venturer was polled on the vessel monitoring system in case of any debate.

He said a similar incident had not occurred for approximately four years, adding. “It is certainly a bit unsettling to see an unfriendly vessel comes into view but if folks are sure of their legal position then that should provide them with some reassurance. The Venturer moved further into the zone as the ships were clearly visible to each other - the Argentine vessel was right on the edge of the zone.”

Mr Barton said there are around twenty vessels currently fishing for finfish including rock cod and blue whiting, in Falklands' waters.

He added, "If the Argentine government was more interested in good conservation we would be keen to get back to the useful process of the South Atlantic Fisheries Commission."- By Lisa Watson – SeAledPR – Stanley.-

Tuesday, October 12th 2010 - 20:10 UTC

New UN Security Council members expected to push strongly for reforms

Germany, India, South Africa and Colombia have won two-year seats on the UN Security Council as non veto power members. Portugal got the other available place when Canada withdrew its bid after the second round of voting at the UN General Assembly in New York.

Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle: "the vote a success for Germany" Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle: "the vote a success for Germany"

China, Britain, France, the US and Russia are the five permanent members with veto power. The 15-seat Security Council is one of the most important UN organs and is considered the powerhouse of the UN with the authority to impose sanctions and deploy peacekeeping forces.

Every year, five of the non-permanent members step down after completing two years, and other countries battle to fill the seats. India, South Africa and Colombia all secured their places in uncontested votes and will take their seats January 2011.

The newly elected countries will take the places of Japan, Austria, Turkey, Mexico and Uganda and is anticipated will give the Security Council a completely new political profile.

Germany, India and South Africa have all been pressing for a permanent role in a reformed Security Council. Brazil is also part of the campaign for change and it will go into a second year on the council as a non permanent member.

"We will discuss a reform of the UN, but not now, not today. It's necessary to change the structures to make the UN more effective," said German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle.

"The vote is a success for Germany. It shows that the world has trust in us. We will do everything to justify that trust," he added, setting out Germany's priorities as peace, security, climate protection, development, disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

"Germany is reliable -- not only when it comes to its products but also when it comes to its foreign policy. The world knows it can rely on Germany," he told reporters.

India secured 187 votes and its UN ambassador, Hardeep Singh Puri, said his country was "humbled" by the score.

"It is a fact that many of the countries on the new council are also aspirants for permanent membership," said Puri, pointing to the presence of the emerging powers.

South Africa's Foreign Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane highlighted that "the majority of issues that go to the agenda before the Security Council are about the challenges of peace and security in Africa.

Britain's UN ambassador Mark Lyall Grant acknowledged the changes that the new powers would bring to the new 2011 Security Council.

"All of them will bring their own unique advantages and make this a very strong Security Council," he said after the UN General Assembly vote.

Lyall Grant highlighted that Britain supported India, Japan, Germany and Brazil becoming permanent members of a changed council and increased African representation.

"It will be a mini-reflection of the sort of reformed Security Council that the UK would like to see," he told reporters.

Tuesday, October 12th 2010 - 00:49 UTC

Netherlands Antilles disappear, become autonomous within the Kingdom

Dutch Caribbean dependency the Netherlands Antilles has ceased to exist with a change of the five islands' constitutional status. Curacao and St Maarten have become autonomous countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, joining Aruba, which gained the status in 1986.

St Marteen one of the famous tourism resorts of the Caribbean St Marteen one of the famous tourism resorts of the Caribbean

Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba are now autonomous special municipalities of the kingdom. The Netherlands retains responsibility for defence and foreign policy.

The Dutch government will also have initial oversight over Curacao's finances under a debt-relief arrangement.

Collectively, the islands had amassed a debt of around 2bn euros (£1.75bn; \$2.8bn), most of it owed to the Netherlands.

The smaller islands of St Maarten, Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba said the debt was mostly run up by Curacao, the largest island and de facto capital of the former Netherlands Antilles.

Curacao complained that it was carrying too much of the financial burden for the federation, especially for Saba, St Eustatius and Bonaire.

Tourism, petroleum refining and offshore finance are the mainstays of the islands' economies.

The Dutch colonised the islands, alongside Aruba, in the 17th Century. The territory, once called the Dutch West Indies, became the semi-autonomous Netherlands Antilles in 1954.

The new status, which came into effect on Sunday, followed referendums over the past few years in which Curacao, St Maarten, Bonaire and Saba opted to leave the federation while St Eustatius supported the status quo. None of the islands voted for independence. (BBC).-

Wednesday, October 13th 2010 - 07:26 UTC

Falklands' military operations trigger "formal and energetic" Unasur protest

The Union of South American Nations, Unasur severely criticized the United Kingdom for the announced military exercises with missiles in the Falklands/Malvinas Islands. Argentina claims sovereignty over the South Atlantic Islands which are a British Overseas Territory.

UK Ambassador in Buenos Aires Shan Morgan UK Ambassador in Buenos Aires Shan Morgan

The twelve member organization which includes Argentina "express their most formal and energetic protest" and demand that the British government "abstains from going ahead" with the military tests with missiles in Malvinas Islands, according to the release dated in Quito, Ecuador that currently holds the pro-tempore chair of the group.

The group rejects the military exercises because "they are totally contrary to the region's policy to search for a solution to the sovereignty dispute through peaceful means", adds the release.

Finally Unasur reaffirms its "full support to the legitimate rights" of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute over the South Atlantic islands and to the regional interest for London and Buenos Aires to resume negotiations so as to find, as quickly as possible, a peaceful and definitive solution to the controversy".

In Buenos Aires Foreign Affairs minister Hector Timerman informed President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner that there are different information from the Foreign Office and the British Embassy in Argentina regarding military exercises in the Malvinas/Falkland Islands.

On Monday UK Ambassador Shan Morgan was called by Deputy Foreign Minister Alberto Dalotto to receive the formal protest of Argentina on military activities and missile testing in Falkland Islands waters.

At the meeting, Morgan said that "the Embassy was not informed of any exercises" and that, after having a communication with the Islands' authorities she was made aware of the performance of certain routinely expeditions.

From London a Foreign Office spokesperson on Monday downplayed the whole incident arguing that "these are routine military tests that have taken place every six months for the past 28 years, most recently in April this year". The spokesperson added that "shipping alerts are always issued in advance and the tests take place entirely within Falklands' territorial waters".

According to Argentine sources it was a Royal Navy officer who informed the Argentine Naval Hydrographic Service that missile tests would be conducted in the Islands as part of land-sea exercise. Allegedly normally the communication would be channeled through the Argentine Navy.

Nevertheless Timmerman said that Argentina would ignore the UK provocations.

"We're very concerned by a recent escalation or provocation being carried out by the United Kingdom, but we're going to abide by what's dictated by the law, peace, and diplomacy," Mr. Timmerman said.

Wednesday, October 13th 2010 - 01:00 UTC

UK praises Argentine partnership and reiterates Falklands' self determination

The UK has a close and productive relationship with Argentina but "we will not discuss the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands with Argentina unless the Falkland Islanders so wish", said Minister of State Foreign and Commonwealth Office Lord Howell of Guilford during a question period in the House of Lords.

Minister of State Foreign and Commonwealth Office Lord Howell Minister of State Foreign and Commonwealth Office Lord Howell

"We regard Argentina as an important partner. We have a close and productive relationship on a range of bilateral and multilateral issues, but we will not discuss the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands with Argentina unless the Falkland Islanders so wish. UK is not a member of the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation, but we regularly make clear within the UN our support for the right to self-determination of the Falkland Islanders", underlined Lord Howell on Monday.

However in replying a question from Lord Brett (Labour) the Minister of State admitted it is very hard dealing with Argentina when all the time the counterpropositions and withdrawal of cooperation occurs.

"I mentioned the difficulty of getting co-operation, which we certainly have on offer, over the two items (fisheries and oil) that the noble Lord mentions. But on other things we are engaged. We are dealing with Argentina as an important country, which, incidentally, is a very beautiful country and is, potentially, a country of great wealth and prosperity. We are dealing with it on science, mining, education and energy. This is a very positive agenda, which we welcome. But on these difficult issues involving the Falkland Islands, we have seen the non-co-operation which we deplore and we would like to see it replaced by active co-operation".

Further on Lord O'Neill of Clackmannan (Labour), asked if nearly 30 years after the cessation of hostilities (1982 conflict) the role of the British government should not be to try to achieve a decree of reconciliation between "the megaphone diplomacy of the Kirchner Government and the obduracy of many of the Islands' elected councillors, who do not seem to realise that they live in a world in which their nearest neighbour could be a friend rather than a source of hostility?"

Again Lord Howell said that except for the question of the Falkland Islands right to self determination, "we wish to establish better relations with Argentina, but it is very hard if

all the time the counterpropositions and withdrawal of co-operation we have described occur”.

He added that the UN decolonization committee “is rather outdated and full of language about colonies British imperialism and so on. We have moved far away from that because the Falkland Islands is a self-governing overseas territory under the British Crown and that is what it remains”.

However when Baroness Falkner (Liberal Democrat) asked why twelve Commonwealth countries supported the Argentines in the UN committee, Lord Howell “it is always a pity when there is not full agreement, particularly among our fellow Commonwealth members with whom we operate closely on many issues. But they have their point of view, to which they are perfectly entitled. The debate goes on, but it is not a binding debate as no binding resolutions are involved. I expect that the debate will continue, particularly among not so much Commonwealth countries but other Latin American countries”.

Finally on a question from Lord Anderson of Swansea (Labour) about US support to the UK respect of the Falklands, Lord Howell said the US position has not changed: the US recognises the UK’s administration of the Falkland Islands. We are in regular touch with the US on this issue, as on many other issues. We expect that dialogue to continue”.

Thursday, October 14th 2010 - 06:12 UTC

Rockhopper planning further drilling in North Falkland basin

UK oil company Rockhopper Exploration said that the recent successful flow test at Sea Lion has confirmed the potential for commercial oil in the North Falkland basin.

Ocean Guardian semi-submersible drilling unit Ocean Guardian semi-submersible drilling unit

The company said that it is now preparing to progress its operational program, which will include appraising the Sea Lion discovery, shooting additional 3D seismic across the extent

of the North Falkland Basin and drilling further exploration and appraisal wells on its Northern acreage.

Diamond Offshore Drilling (UK) has recently made a proposal to Rockhopper, at Rockhopper's request, for a continuation of the drilling campaign under a new rig contract consisting of a possible three firm wells and five options extension.

Diamond Offshore Drilling is the owner and manager of the Ocean Guardian semi-submersible drilling unit.

The execution of any such contract with Diamond Offshore Drilling (UK) will be subject both to the deposit by the company into an escrow account of significant funds sufficient to cover the day rate and other obligations and to agreement on a form of contract acceptable to both parties.

Furthermore, the company has entered into two letters of intent with a seismic contractor to acquire additional 3D seismic using two separate vessels.

The company intends to enter into contracts to procure both vessels shortly and, if it does so, it expects that work will begin before the end of January 2011.-

Friday, October 15th 2010 - 06:31 UTC

G 24 president suggests "a better understanding" on Falklands/Malvinas

Argentina and Great Britain should understand each other regarding the disputed Falklands/Malvinas, suggested the president of the United Nations Decolonization Committee Ambassador Donathus Keith Saint Aimée, who arrived Thursday to Buenos Aires responding to an invitation extended last May by Argentine authorities.

Ambassador Donathus Keith Saint Aimée, President Cristina Kirchner and Foreign Affairs minister Hector Timerman. Ambassador Donathus Keith Saint Aimée, President Cristina Kirchner and Foreign Affairs minister Hector Timerman.

However the visit coincides with the twice a year routine exercises by British forces stationed in the Falkland Islands and which the Argentine government and media have picked up as another "provocation" by the UK. Earlier in the week the Foreign Office in a short comment described the exercises as "routine" that have been going on for the last 28 years (since 1982, following the end of the Argentine/UK conflict).

"We must be careful about the consequences of such actions" said the Santa Lucia's ambassador before the UN and head of G24. "I'm sure the British don't perceive it as a provocation, but Argentina effectively perceives it as a provocation".

"Maybe it is necessary to reach a consensus, to know what each of the two had in mind when they did what they did. What this whole action means" said Ambassador Saint Aimée after meeting with Argentine Foreign Affairs minister Hector Timerman.

"Both countries have always stated they are willing to negotiate (the disputed Islands). We must try and see how they can sit round a table and negotiate", said the Santa Lucia ambassador who later in the day was received by President Cristina Kirchner at Government House.

Timerman in a short release said the meeting had been "a good opportunity" for Ambassador Saint Aimée to perceive first hand "the peaceful negotiation willingness of Argentina".

"We want the ambassador to see what we Argentines feel about the Malvinas and the dialogue willingness of our country", he added.

The G24 president is scheduled to visit the province of Tierra del Fuego extreme south of Argentina which according to the country's legislation has jurisdiction over the disputed territories of Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands.

Finally Timerman said that Argentina is waiting for a reply to the official protest note presented to London last Monday. "If there's no formal reply in the coming days, Argentina will consider it as accepted".

According to the protest note Argentina was never anticipated or warned about “missile firing exercises in the Malvinas”.

Saturday, October 16th 2010 - 20:46 UTC

New Governor tells Falklands oil exploration is “your legitimate business”

THE Falkland Islands new Governor Nigel Robert Haywood CVO reiterated the United Kingdom’s support of the Falklands right to self-determination, during his speech at the official swearing in ceremony today in Stanley.

New Falklands Governor during swearing-in ceremony, flanked by Chief Executive, Mr Tim Thorogood New Falklands Governor during swearing-in ceremony, flanked by Chief Executive, Mr Tim Thorogood

He also noted, “The United Kingdom fully supports you in taking (oil) exploration forward – it is your legitimate business.”

At 3pm today Mr Haywood, his wife Louise and his ADC arrived at the Town Hall for the traditional ceremony that included him receiving a sword as part of his uniform.

The national anthem was played and Mr Haywood made the Oath of Allegiance and the Oath of Office. He then gave a speech during which he emphasised the UK’s support for the wishes of the Falkland Islanders, adding, “...some things bear repeating.”

Referring to Argentina he added, “Yes we want friendly relations but based on the principle of self determination.”

After greeting assembled guests, including Members of Legislative Council, Heads of Government Departments, the press and representatives of the Chilean and St. Helenian communities in the Islands, Mr Haywood inspected a Guard of Honour on Ross Road opposite Victory Green on Stanley’s waterfront.

At the parade the Falklands' flag was lowered and the Governor's standard raised before the Governor received the Royal Salute. A 17-volley salute was then given, before Mr Haywood departed to nearby Government House for a public reception.

Mr Haywood, the 34th Governor of the Falkland Islands, describes himself as a man who does not like "being stuck behind a desk," but prefers to roll up his sleeves and, "...and get on with my job." By Lisa Watson - SeAledPR - Stanley

Sunday, October 17th 2010 - 15:04 UTC

Argentina warned: "Falklands' defences remain strong

As the United Kingdom reviews the strength of its armed forces amid severe Government economic cuts, the Secretary of State for Defence, Doctor Liam Fox, has declared that the defence of the Falkland Islands remains strong.

The Typhoon strike aircraft deployed at Mount Pleasant military base
The Typhoon strike aircraft deployed at Mount Pleasant military base

In a BBC television interview he dismissed suggestions that Britain could not now launch a 1982 type Falklands rescue attempt if Argentina ever attempted to invade again. He replied: "If anyone thinks that the Falklands Islands defence is weak, they should think again".

The Defence Secretary's assurance comes as Argentina persists in pursuing its campaign for sovereignty over the Falklands as the Islands continue to prosper as a democratically-ruled British territory enjoying self-determination.

Dr Fox said Britain is far stronger militarily than Argentina and that the Falkland Islands are defended by some of the most modern weapons such as Typhoon strike aircraft deployed at Mount Pleasant military base. He said that the Islands are also defended by submarine patrols. The Mount Pleasant base, constructed since 1982, facilitates rapid reinforcement not available at the time of the Argentina invasion.

While some parts of the armed services face economic cuts, the Defence Secretary said Britain would maintain its ability to project air power wherever in the world this was needed. He confirmed that Britain is going ahead with the building of two huge aircraft carriers already under construction, ordered by the previous Labour Government.

He rejected suggestions that Britain would be vulnerable between deployment of the future joint European strike aircraft on the carriers and the phasing out of the present Harrier jump-jet force, which performed so effectively in the Falklands war. Harriers have been deployed along with helicopters on three smaller aircraft carriers with upswept decks to facilitate Harrier take-off – the Ark Royal, Invincible and Illustrious.

Doctor Fox has first-hand knowledge of Falklands' defences which he inspected on a 25th Anniversary visit in 2007.

In the television interview, he dismissed concerns about the viability of a future Falklands Task force expressed by defence experts such as Lord West, a former head of the Royal Navy and captain of HMS Ardent sunk in the Falklands war with many of his crew killed or wounded.

Dr Fox said Britain's defence capability is designed to meet the commitments of the future not the past, a reference to the run-down of forces deployed in Europe left over from the Cold War threat from the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, has agreed that cuts to Ministry of Defence spending will be much smaller than for most other Government departments.- Harold Briley, London.-

Monday, October 18th 2010 - 20:52 UTC

Falklands/Malvinas: Argentina thanks Mercosur partners for renewed support

Argentine Foreign Affairs minister Hector Timerman thanked his Mercosur counterparts for "renewing their support towards Argentina for its legitimate, constant and unlimited right to claim the Malvinas Islands' sovereignty to the United Kingdom".

Foreign Affairs minister Timmerman addressing the Parlasur plenary in Montevideo (Photo EFE) Foreign Affairs minister Timmerman addressing the Parlasur plenary in Montevideo (Photo EFE)

Timmerman message was delivered Monday at the Mercosur Parliament, Parlasur plenary, in Montevideo, Uruguay during a meeting of the block's foreign affairs ministers.

The Argentine representative was joined by Brazil's Celso Amorin, Uruguay's Luis Almagro and Paraguay's Héctor Lacognata, and was the first speaker at the 26th Parlasur Plenary session. Timmerman sought to gain support towards the currently-in-the-spotlight disputed Falklands/Malvinas issue.

In his address Timmerman devoted himself to praise Argentina's pro-tempore presidency of the Mercosur bloc in the first half of this year stating that goals "had been achieved." According to his words, certain objectives were reached "always bearing in mind that the core of the bloc's agenda is that of maintaining a regional productive integration."

According to Argentine diplomatic sources Timmerman appears to be after the bloc's partners to sign a "support declaration" document, which would state firmly that the neighbouring nations do support Argentina in its claim.

However, Brazil is believed to have its second thoughts about signing such a binding document since the Brazilian diplomacy is 'more flexible' and always likes to have room for the extra edge. Furthermore it is already engaged in a defence-related cooperation agreement with the United Kingdom which was signed last month.

The administration of Cristina Kirchner is determined that countries in the region provide no logistics support to any vessels or Royal Navy units heading to or coming from the Falklands. Uruguay last month was exposed to a dose of that medicine when at last moment it banned HMS Gloucester from entering Montevideo in spite of a previous authorization.

"Our priority is good relations with Argentina", admitted President Jose Mujica in a personal apology to the UK ambassador in Montevideo.

Earlier in the day the four Mercosur members Foreign Affairs ministers had expressed their concerns about the military missile tests that UK forces are currently conducting at the Falklands/Malvinas Islands.

The official communiqué was signed and released during the Parlasur plenary. Parlasur also ratified the expressions and documents of disagreements submitted by the South American Nation's Union (UNASUR) and the Río Group regarding UK's military test firing in the Falklands.

The ministers also rejected the comments made by British officials from the Foreign Office indicating that these kind of drills are "routine and have been taking place every six months for the past 28 years".

Argentina alleged that the UK behaviour is clearly violating the "international security codes".

Last Friday the US Department of State during a press conference supported the Foreign Office comment that the "missile firing was routine, and has been for the last 28 years (since the end of the Falklands/Malvinas war)", adding that the dispute is bilateral and has to be decided by both sides.

"If and only if, both sides so request it, would the US consider acting as a mediator in the dispute", said Philip Crowley, State Department spokesperson. He also added that the Foreign Office was acting with 'transparency' on the issue.

According to Minister Timmerman, Argentina also presented before the International Maritime Organization a formal note of protest regarding the "missile firing tests" in Malvinas waters.

Monday, October 18th 2010 - 21:58 UTC

Rockhopper plans to raise £ 200 million for further oil drilling in Falklands

Rockhopper Petroleum Plc, an oil explorer focused on the Falkland Islands, plans to raise about £200 million (318 million USD) through a share placement to pursue additional appraisal of its Sea Lion prospect.

Success in Sea Lion prospect but no luck at Rachel prospect
Success in Sea Lion prospect but no luck at Rachel prospect

"The recent successful flow test at Sea Lion has validated the potential for commercial oil in the North Falkland Basin," Salisbury, England-based Rockhopper said in a statement Monday. The funds will be used to drill additional exploration and appraisal wells in the area, the company said.

Rockhopper has been one of the most successful explorers in the Falklands after the May discovery of the Sea Lion prospect. The shares, which have gained seven-fold in six months, tumbled Oct. 13 when the explorer said it would delay a resource evaluation report while it carried out more appraisal work after consultants said resources may be less than estimated.

Merrill Lynch & Co. and Canaccord Financial Inc. are acting as joint book runners for the placing, which is being conducted through an accelerated book-building process, Rockhopper said.

The company's share sale may be priced in a range of 300 pence to 320 pence apiece, according to terms of the deal obtained by Bloomberg News. Rockhopper rose 43.75, or 15%, to 336.75 pence Monday in London.

Diamond Offshore Drilling Inc., the largest US deep-water oil driller, has offered Rockhopper the Ocean Guardian semi- submersible rig for three wells and possibly five extensions, according to today's statement.

Last week Rockhopper took notice of the announcement by Desire Petroleum (the Falklands' pioneering exploration company) regarding the Rachel 14/15-1 well, in which Rockhopper has a 7.5% working interest:

Desire Petroleum plc (AIM:DES) reported that the on the Rachel prospect has reached a total depth of 2,877 metres and initial wire-line logging showed that no hydrocarbons have been found. However a substantial thickness of sandstone was encountered in the upper part of the target zone, comprising 103m of gross sandstone of which 81m is net reservoir with an average porosity of 23%.

"The Rachel well has provided much new valuable data on the distribution of the reservoir targets within the Eastern Flank play and in particular the calibration of the 3D seismic data for sandstone ediction".

Based on the latest information from this well, potential sandstones have now been identified down-dip from the existing location, closer to the mature oil source rock, significantly reducing the oil charge risk. As a result the well will be sidetracked to this location to evaluate the prospectivity. The sidetrack will commence when the present logging operations are complete. The total depth of the sidetrack is planned to be 3,418 metres measured depth (2,970 metres vertical depth) with an offset of circa 1.2 kilometres from the total depth of the original vertical well. The sidetrack will be designated 14/15-1Z and is expected to take 20 days and the Company will make a further announcement upon completion of this sidetrack.

The Rachel well is the first in a likely four well drilling campaign operated by Desire. Following the 14/15-1Z sidetrack it is intended to move the rig to the next location 25/5-1 on the Dawn/Jacinta prospect in the Desire 100% Tranche I licence.

Tuesday, October 19th 2010 - 04:07 UTC

Falkland Islands, new destination for successful UK online Travel in Depth

A United Kingdom independent online travel company specializing in wilderness adventures is expecting at least a 10% rise in sales in the next year after adding extra destinations to its portfolio, including the Falkland Islands.

Paul Carberry is setting off on a two-week tour of the Falkland Island Paul Carberry is setting off on a two-week tour of the Falkland Island

Travel in Depth specializes in trips to New Zealand but has recently launched Wilderness In Depth, creating holiday experiences in some of the more wild and remote areas of the world, according to a report from Shelina Begum in the Manchester Evening News.

So far the Buxton company which was set up in 2003, is providing trips to Tanzania and Guyana and hopes to expand into Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia and the Falkland Islands as well as creating a separate site for holidays to Australia.

Boss Paul Carberry hopes sales will reach the £1m mark during the next three years. Turnover to the end of May was £700,000.

Founder Paul, who is setting off on a two-week tour of the Falkland Islands this month said he was excited about the new developments.

"We have created a niche market for people who don't want to go on the normal beach holidays and want to get off the beaten track. We cater for hundreds of people throughout the year from all over the UK, and from the US, Malaysia and even Japan", he said.

"Many of our clients who had been to New Zealand often came back and asked us about other countries, so we decided to set up the wilderness arm of the group to cater for this market.

"The Falkland Islands, for example, is a totally new destination which we think will attract a lot of interest, not only because of its historical link to Britain but also because it's got beautiful landscapes and its wildlife is diverse, with penguins, dolphins, whales and seals.

"I've been fascinated by the Falkland Islands since I was boy watching the television in 1982 and I was determined to get there one day. Of course the Falklands are well known to most people in the UK because of the conflict but that is as much as many people know - more than one of my existing clients has quipped about there surely being nothing there other than sheep and landmines.

"What surprises them is to hear about the diversity and abundance of the wildlife and add to this the beautifully stark landscapes and the fact that very few people are prepared to make the effort to get there and you have a fabulous destination for anyone looking for a unique "off the beaten track" experience.

As we are a small company, introducing the Falkland Islands as one of our key destinations is a significant investment for us and a bit of a leap of faith as I recognise that the market is not enormous. However, I believe that the island experience is as much about the people as it is the wildlife and scenery.

The fact that we are a small, owner operated business presents us with a rare opportunity to work very closely with both our clients and operators on the ground in the islands to create truly special personalised experiences that I hope will lead to us becoming recognised as one of the principal specialists in Falkland Islands holidays.

Paul, who runs the business from home, decided to set up the business after traveling himself. After working at Michelin Tyres, he decided to quit and start his own enterprise.

"I gave up a £30,000-a -year job with benefits and a car to set up my own business," he said.

"My father was in the industry – he even worked for Air New Zealand and had his own travel company where I used to help out.

After my own travels to New Zealand, I knew the travel industry was something I would like to get back into.

"We specialized in New Zealand in the first few years until my business partner Yvonne Cohen joined us in 2005, and we started looking at developing the business and taking on new destinations.

"Our clients come from all walks of life and they all want a different holiday experience.

"We work very closely with them and will often go and visit them at their homes and talk through their requirements.

"Some people can pay between £7,000 for a holiday up to £30,000; it depends on what they want. A lot of our business comes from referrals which we are proud of and believe is a result from the close attention we pay to our customers".

Friday, October 22nd 2010 - 02:40 UTC

Sea levels around Falklands have risen since mid XIX century, says NOC

Sea levels around the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic have risen since the mid nineteenth century and the rate of sea-level rise has accelerated over recent decades, according to newly published research. The findings are as expected under global warming and consistent with observations elsewhere around the globe.

Benchmarks left by James Clark Ross on the cliffs of Port Louis have been crucial for the research
Benchmarks left by James Clark Ross on the cliffs of Port Louis have been crucial for the research

"We have been fortunate in being able to compare modern sea-level measurements obtained from tide gauges and from satellite radar altimeters with historical measurements made at Port Louis in the Falkland Islands in 1842," explained researcher Prof. Philip Woodworth of the National Oceanography Centre.

In 1839, distinguished naval officer and polar explorer James Clark Ross (1800) set off on an expedition to the Southern Ocean with two ships, HMS Erebus and HMS Terror. In April 1842, he stopped at Port Louis, primarily to make magnetic field and other measurements,

but also to make repairs to his ships which had been badly damaged in the Drake Passage. Having set up a winter base, he took the opportunity to make careful measurements of sea level relative to two benchmarks cut into the cliffs and marked with brass plaques.

These marks remain in good condition to this day. This fact, along with the apparent good quality of Ross's data, has allowed Woodworth's team to compare the sea level records from 1842 with measurements taken at Port Louis using modern instruments in 1981, 1984 and 2009. They also used information from nearby Port Stanley, where a permanent tide gauge was operated in the 1960s and 1970s and where NOC has had an operational gauge since 1992.

After correction for air pressure effects and vertical land movement due to geological processes, the researchers find that sea levels rose by an average of around 0.75 millimeters a year between 1842 and the early 1980s. They point out that this figure is similar to previous estimates for the long-term rate of sea-level rise at Port Arthur in Tasmania, measurements with which Ross was also associated, and at other locations in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

However, they also find evidence that the rate of sea-level rise has accelerated over recent decades. Specifically, they estimate that sea levels around the Falkland Islands have risen by an average of around 2.5 millimeters a year since 1992, a figure consistent with measurements made by satellite radar altimeters over the same period.

Longer-term data from the Falklands, and from many other locations, are needed to establish whether the apparent acceleration in sea-level rise is due to increased global warming, or the result of some kind of decadal fluctuation.

"The benchmarks left by James Clark Ross on the cliffs of Port Louis will facilitate future studies of sea-level change, just as Ross intended," said Woodworth.

The researchers are Philip Woodworth and David Pugh (National Oceanography Centre, UK), and Richard Bingley (Institute of Engineering Surveying and Space Geodesy, University of Nottingham, UK).

The work was funded by the UK Natural Environment Research Council and the Shackleton Fund.

Publication: Woodworth, P. L., Pugh, D. T. & Bingley, R. M. Long-term and recent changes in sea level in the Falkland Islands. J. Geophys. Res. 115, C09025 (2010). doi:10.1029/2010JC006113 <http://www.agu.org/journals/jc/jc1009/2010JC006113.->

Thursday, October 21st 2010 - 10:57 UTC

In one of his last acts, Moratinos announces ease of tension with Gibraltar

In what could very well have been one of his last comments as Foreign Affairs minister, Miguel Angel Moratinos said Spain would be removing the scientific buoys that it laid in Gibraltar waters as from Wednesday October 20.

Former Spanish Foreign Affairs minister Moratinos
Former Spanish Foreign Affairs minister Moratinos

During a news conference Tuesday in Madrid with the Rumanian Prime Minister, Moratinos was asked about statements on the subject made in London Monday by the UK Minister for Europe David Lidington.

"The buoys were placed there as part of a hydro-graphic survey of tides and currents carried out by a Spanish scientific vessel that has as its objective the safety of maritime traffic in the area. They will now be removed as from the 20th of this month which is when the study will be concluded," said Sr Moratinos quoted in Europa Press.

According to Europa Press, "the buoys have annoyed Gibraltar Chief Minister Peter Caruana because they are located in waters within the three nautical mile limit which UK and Gibraltar claim as their own."

Moratinos also rejected that the removal of the buoys should be interpreted as “a gesture toward” or “an attempt to please” the Gib Chief Minister, following last week's ministerial statement when Caruana announced his Government's decision to postpone planned technical talks on law enforcement cooperation under the Tripartite Forum, following serious incident at sea caused by the Guardia Civil and involving the RGP.

“Our respective position regarding the sovereignty of the disputed waters is extremely clear”, he declared.

Moratinos reiterated that Spain continues to work closely with UK and Gibraltar to “be able to hold the planned meeting of the Tripartite Forum before the end of the year”.

Saturday, October 23rd 2010 - 03:03 UTC

Radar system in the Falklands to monitor the “Southern Lights”

Physicists and engineers at the University of Leicester and the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) have installed a radar system on the Falkland Islands to monitor the upper atmosphere activity which creates the ‘Southern Lights’.

The BAS-Leicester university project is based at Goose Green The BAS-Leicester university project is based at Goose Green

The University’s Radio and Space Plasma Physics Research Group already operates radars in Iceland and Finland which measure activity in the Arctic region. Now, in partnership with BAS, they are able to do the same in the Antarctic. The radar station itself is a group of 16 fifty-foot aerials which can bounce radio signals off charged particles in the ionosphere.

The new radar joins a network of 22 such radars, the international Super Dual Auroral Radar Network or SuperDARN. Data from SuperDARN is made available across the internet in real time, monitoring the upper atmosphere to understand its link with the lower

atmosphere, where our weather is, and the impact of the Sun's 'solar wind' on our environment.

Solar wind particles are carried to Earth where our planet's magnetic field focuses them towards the poles where they collide with atmospheric particles, creating the spectacular light effects of the Northern Lights (aurora borealis) and Southern Lights (aurora australis).

"There are several radars already covering parts of Antarctica but the Falklands location is particularly interesting," says Dr Steve Milan. "The magnetic field in that area is relatively weak, a phenomenon called the South Atlantic Anomaly. Also, winds rising over the Andes mountain range affect the upper atmosphere there."

The Falklands radar is funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

The radar is collaboration between the University of Leicester which supplied the masts, and BAS, which provided the electronic equipment.

"The electronics come from a long-established BAS radar station which is currently being moved and rebuilt because it's on an ice shelf which is slipping into the sea," explains Dr Milan. "When the equipment came back to the UK for refurbishment, we realized that we could combine it with a spare set of antennas and temporarily establish a station on the Falklands."

The radar station was built with the aid of engineers from Leicester and BAS over several weeks at the start of this year and went operational on 14 February. It is based at Goose Green, a remote community which was the site of a famous battle during the 1982 Falklands conflict.

"Although the Earth receives most of its energy from sunlight, it's not clear how important the solar wind is for atmospheric dynamics," says Dr Milan. "Climatologists need to be able to factor the influence of the solar wind into their measurements and calculations."

Friday, October 22nd 2010 - 03:50 UTC

Two Falklands' exploration companies to begin 3D seismic surveying in January

Two Falkland Islands hydrocarbons exploration companies have signed contracts for marine seismic acquisition services with Polarcus Limited. The contracts were announced Thursday and should be operational by early January 2011.

Argos chairman Ian Thomson Argos chairman Ian Thomson

Polarcus will carry out a "substantial" 3D seismic survey covering all of the Argos' acreage in licence PL001, as well as adjacent areas.

The seismic vessel MV Polarcus Asima will be available by early January next year and it is estimated the survey will take 50 days.

Rockhopper Exploration (LON:RKH), which owns the successful Sea Lion field adjacent to the Argos acreage in the North Falkland Basin, has signed an identical contract with Polarcus, allowing Argos and Rockhopper to share the vessel and costs.

A separate contract to process the acquired data will be put out to tender shortly.

However, Monarch Geophysical Services has been retained to provide specialist acquisition and processing supervision throughout the 3D seismic project.

Argos chairman Ian Thomson said: "At the time of our listing in July we stated that it was our aim to secure a seismic vessel to commence shooting in the austral summer of late 2010/early 2011, allowing the possibility to commence exploration drilling as early as the fourth quarter of 2011.

"Signing this contract secures the front end of this timetable. The MV Polarcus Asima is a state-of-the-art vessel which should ensure an efficient seismic acquisition programme."

"We are also delighted to have been able to sign this contract in a co-operative arrangement with Rockhopper. This allows both companies to share mobilisation and demobilisation costs and to capture the technical and cost efficiencies resulting from a larger program".

"As a result of these savings, I am pleased to note that Argos should be able to acquire more 3D coverage, over the whole of PL001 and adjacent areas, than originally envisaged at the time of listing."

"The primary objective of this 3D seismic acquisition programme is to define the aerial extent of the Sea Lion fan, following our oil discovery earlier this year, as well to examine other areas and play types within PL032, PL033 and adjacent areas, which will help us to identify future prospects" said Sam Moody, Chief Executive of Rockhopper Exploration.

Sunday, October 24th 2010 - 02:46 UTC

Falklands' defence ready for any crisis, "including external aggression"

The Falkland Islands will continue to be defended by one of the most capable military forces in the world and Mount Pleasant remains configured to allow for rapid reinforcement should it become necessary to deal with external aggression, according to the British Forces South Atlantic Islands HQ, BFSAI.

MPA configured to allow for rapid reinforcement MPA configured to allow for rapid reinforcement

The much announced UK Strategic Defence and Security Review, SDRS, has been published and, according to a statement from the office of Chief of Staff HQ BFSAI, Group Captain Steven Russell, it heralds "a new strategic approach, based on rigorous risk management and conflict prevention."

While maintaining highly capable military forces, any emerging risks can be stopped and dealt with before they become a crisis, the statement read, adding that the formation of the National Security Council was an important new development that would bring

together key Ministers and defence and intelligence chiefs to ensure that cross-government resources were employed to best effect.

“Whilst some priorities are familiar, such as counter-terrorism, new priorities, such as cyber-security, have been identified that will attract increased investment.

The SDSR process has been subject to rigorous prioritisation, based on clear understanding of UK’s priorities, but will be implemented in challenging financial circumstances,” it said.

And it is very much business as usual for British Forces in the Falklands: “The Islands will continue to be defended by one of the world’s most capable, balanced and integrated military forces. Additionally, Mount Pleasant remains configured to allow for rapid reinforcement should it become necessary to deal with any crisis, including as a result of external aggression.”

Earlier in the week Foreign Secretary William Hague said that the British military presence in the Falkland Islands would be maintained in spite of Argentine complaints and the latest defence and security review.

Hague said that military exercises in the Falklands are routine and will continue as announced and planned “as has been the case periodically for at least the last twenty years”.

The Foreign Secretary also emphasized that Britain is in conditions to defend the Falklands in spite of the budget pruning announced this week which represents an 8% cut for defence.

“We are committed and there are no doubts that we are totally equipped to defend the Falkland Islands. There won’t be any reductions in that area”, insisted Hague.

Tuesday, October 26th 2010 - 02:44 UTC

Argentine population in Antarctica 230, including nine families and 16 children

Argentina's population and housing census which this week took off in Antarctica revealed that 230 people live in the six Argentine bases including nine families and 16 children. The survey was done two days before the official launching in continental Argentina and was considered a "very successful experience".

Esperanza base even has a primary school for the 16 children
Esperanza base even has a primary school for the 16 children

Military personnel were in charge of compiling the census data from the 230 people in the Antarctica Argentine sector, distributed in the Orcadas, Marambio, Jubany, Esperanza, San Martín and Belgrano II bases.

At the most extreme south base, Belgrano, the census revealed 19 people between civilian and military personnel. While in Esperanza, the only base with families and a primary school, the number was 66, "which includes 9 families and 16 children".

The data collected was made public through a video conference at the Joint Chiefs of Staff office in Buenos Aires and from there to the Statistics Office, Indec which is coordinating the census operation nationwide in Argentina.

According to the military team the whole census operation in Antarctica involved an hour and a half, but had to be done under freezing conditions of minus 3 degrees Celsius.

Marambio which is the main Argentina base has 75 people between military personnel and scientists. The Argentine Air Force together with the Weather Forecasting Office have 41 people at the base including three scientists who are currently researching a volcano, 250 kilometres away.

Wednesday, October 27th 2010 - 10:42 UTC

Falkland Islands: Desire Petroleum announce a 3D Seismic Programme

Desire Petroleum plc (AIM:DES), the oil and gas company wholly focused on the North Falkland Basin, is pleased to announce the signing of a contract for marine seismic acquisition services with Polarcus Limited for the use of the seismic vessel MV Polarcus Nadia.

Under the terms of the contract Desire Petroleum will acquire a 3D survey over (a) the areas of Tranches C and D not previously covered by 3D and (b) most of Tranche F to ensure that the east flank fan play fairway, on Desire acreage, has complete coverage. In addition, it is intended to acquire 3D data over the northern part of Tranche I and adjacent areas.

A contract to process the data will be the subject of a separate invitation to tender, which will be issued shortly. Monarch Geophysical Services Limited has been retained to provide specialist acquisition and processing supervision throughout the project.

Rockhopper Exploration plc (Rockhopper) has simultaneously signed an identical contract with Polarcus allowing Desire and Rockhopper to share the vessel for acquiring seismic data in each company's adjacent licences and other areas.

The vessel is expected to commence the joint survey in December with completion by end-April with the Desire share of the survey lasting around 90 days.

MV Polarcus Nadia Specifications.

Wednesday, October 27th 2010 - 16:38 UTC

Argentina complains to IMO British military exercises in Falklands/Malvinas

Argentina informed the International Maritime Organization (IMO) of a letter from the United Kingdom referred to missile test firing in the Falklands/Malvinas Islands, which it wishes to circulate among IMO members as a way to warn of the deliberate violation of IMO regulations by the British government.

The Argentine government also requested the letter be included in IMO agenda for immediate debate, and that the organization reiterates to Britain the fact that since 1974 Argentina is responsible for the safety of navigation in the Southwest Atlantic.

According to the Argentine Foreign Ministry, "the British government presented a letter on October 21 in response to the Argentine protest regarding the announcement of missiles firing from the Malvinas Islands between October 11 and 23 of the current year."

"As a response, the British government assured it has been carrying out these kinds of exercises for almost three decades, although it explicitly recognized it has never deliberately communicated these activities in the past," the text read.

It adds that "the Argentine government has answered the British letter by rejecting its content and reiterating that the current military exercises violate the obligation not to innovate recognized in Resolution 31/49 of the United Nations General Assembly, of the object and purpose of the existing measures to build confidence in the military field, and of the IMO regulations regarding the safety of life at sea."

The Argentine response also mentions the international community's rejection of these kinds of practices, as well as that of the militarization of the area where they are to be held. All of this was made public through declarations from Mercosur, Unasur, Grupo de Río and the OAS Secretary General.

Likewise, the letter from the Argentine government claims Argentine sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia, and South Sandwich, along with the surrounding maritime areas that make up part of the "national Argentine territory".

At the beginning of the month, London began military exercises in the archipelago, which led to wide-spread criticisms, mainly from the Argentine government, which considered that these manoeuvres are a "provocation" and a violation of UN regulations.

The Foreign Office and the Falklands' elected government downplayed Argentine protests recalling that the exercises are "routine" and have been so for the last 28 years, since the

establishment of a British military airport (MPA) following the end of the 1982 conflict when Argentine military forces invaded the Islands and were defeated in a 74 day war by a Task Force by then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Thursday, October 28th 2010 - 05:09 UTC

Falklands' Desire shares soar amid speculation of bid approach

Shares in Falkland Islands exploration company Desire Petroleum (DES.L) more than doubled on Wednesday following internet bulletin board speculation of a bid approach for the Falklands focused explorer and an oil find, traders said.

Desire drilling another well on its Rachel prospect Desire drilling another well on its Rachel prospect

An approach at two pounds per share was being talked about, one unnamed trader told Reuters.

Desire shares later pared earlier gains to trade up 50% at 99 pence.

Desire said earlier in October it would drill a sidetrack well on its Rachel prospect in the North Falklands basin after the original well failed to find oil. It said on Oct. 15 the sidetrack would take 20 days to drill.

"I would expect a statement from the company very soon because the share price has just rocketed and that indicates that there is some leakage somewhere as far as the news goes, and given the direction it's gone, it would indicate it's positive," said Westhouse Securities analyst David Hart.

NOVEMBER.-

Monday, November 1st 2010 - 16:39 UTC

Falklands' exploration company Desire unable to reach drilling target depth

Falkland Islands oil explorer Desire Petroleum (DES.L) said a closely-watched sidetrack well on its Rachel prospect in the Falkland Islands was unable to reach target depth and it would clean the hole out before trying again.

The Ocean Guardian oil drilling rig in Falklands' waters The Ocean Guardian oil drilling rig in Falklands' waters

The company said last month that the original Rachel well (14/15-1Z) in the North Falkland basin did not find oil but that it was going to drill a sidetrack well as it had identified a more prospective zone nearby.

"Due to well-bore stability issues through the deviated section of the well-bore (forty degrees' hole inclination) it was not possible to reach the target depths in the first wire-line logging run. The hole is now being cleaned out prior to making a further attempt", said the official release from the exploration company.

The Ocean Guardian drilling rig is targeting a total depth of 3,418 meters on the sidetrack well, which is being drilled to evaluate the prospectivity of a 103-meter sandstone identified down-dip from the original Rachel well.

Rockhopper (RKH.L), another Falkland Islands-focused explorer, owns a 7.5% stake in the licence where the Rachel prospect is located, with Desire owning the balance.

Shares in Desire, which last week rose as much as 78% in one day on speculation the sidetrack had found oil, opened down 12.1% before recovering to trade down 1.3 percent at 95.75 pence.

Wednesday, November 3rd 2010 - 22:23 UTC

The "Entente Frugale" and Falklands: controversy in UK press

Elements of the British press have expressed concern that despite close political ties at present, a 50-year military treaty with France could jeopardize Britain's ability to react

independently, for example in the Falkland Islands, according to France 24-International News which makes a summary of the British press reactions.

It has been dubbed the 'Entente Frugale' – the United Kingdom and France on Tuesday signed an unprecedented military cooperation treaty designed to help both countries remain global players while also saving money.

The 50-year deal includes a new joint rapid reaction force of up to 5,000 troops, a shared nuclear testing facility and, by 2020, the sharing of aircraft carriers.

The deal is seen as essential by defense leaders on both sides of the channel as huge cuts are made to military budgets.

Defense chiefs from both countries set out their stall in editorials in Britain's respected right-leaning broadsheet the Daily Telegraph and France's equally conservative Figaro on Tuesday.

UK Defense Secretary Liam Fox told the BBC there was "nothing in this treaty that restricts either country from acting where we want to in our national interest". But in Britain's traditionally anti-French popular press the mood was far more skeptical.

The UK's two biggest-selling tabloids, the Daily Mail and the Sun – which together sell almost six million newspapers a day –, both raised the specter of a catastrophic falling-out over issues that have the potential to divide the two nations politically.

Top of the list for the tabloids are the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic that was the scene of a bloody conflict in 1982 between the UK and Argentina, which both claim the Islands as their own.

Both papers argue that having an operational aircraft carrier – backed by independent political will – would be essential to counter any renewed aggression from Argentina.

And both believe this is an issue over which the French – unlikely to be led by a right-wing anglophile President like Nicolas Sarkozy for ever – would be likely to offer a “so-what” Gallic shrug and resolutely refuse to cooperate.

An opinion piece in the Daily Mail by retired Royal Irish Regiment Colonel Tim Collins – titled “Will we ever trust the French?” – opens with a reminder that “Horatio Nelson famously instructed his officers that, ‘you must hate a Frenchman as you hate the devil’ and that the Duke of Wellington proclaimed: ‘We always have been, we are, and I hope that we always shall be detested in France.’”

“Well it seems now we are to be one with them – at least militarily,” he writes. “I must admit I am skeptical.”

Col. Collins remembers that France opposed British deployment to the Falkland Islands after the Argentine invasion of 1982, and worries that reliance on French aircraft carriers could put the British territory at risk.

“The problem is that, if we want to use a French aircraft carrier, we then have to seek the permission of the French” he says. “If, for instance, the Falklands crisis were to flare up again, would they agree to their aircraft carrier braving the French-made Exocet missiles they sold to the Argentines to recover our islands? I very much doubt it.”

The Sun, which supported British Prime Minister David Cameron’s Conservative election campaign, is equally wary of cooperation with France.

Political editor Tom Newton Dunn writes that when the sharing of carriers begins in 2020, Britain and the UK “will take turns to jointly operate the 65,000-ton HMS Queen Elizabeth and 42,000-ton Charles de Gaulle.

“Paris could veto any British plea to dispatch the Charles de Gaulle to the South Atlantic if Argentina threatens UK territory again.”

Remembering France's staunch opposition to the 2003 Iraq invasion, he concludes: "A strong, right-wing president like Nicolas Sarkozy would seem the perfect ally to our PM.

"He may be right. Today. What happens when elections come faces change and agendas are redrawn?

"Neither man would have cooked up such a wing-and-a-prayer strategy if they weren't both broke", concludes the article.

Wednesday, November 3rd 2010 22:04 UTC

"We have not plan to retake the Falklands, because we don't plan to loose them"

The incident occurred in the House of Commons and involved UK Defence Secretary Liam Fox and Labour MP Thomas Docherty, as was reported by James Kirkup in the Daily Telegraph.

Thursday, November 4th 2010 - 15:49 UTC

Spain wants to renew bilateral talks with UK on Gibraltar's sovereignty

New Spanish Foreign Minister Trinidad Jiménez has declared that her objective in respect of Gibraltar is "to generate enough confidence to renew bilateral talks about Gibraltar's sovereignty with the British Government."

Spanish Foreign Affairs minister Trinidad Jimenez Spanish Foreign Affairs minister Trinidad Jimenez

She was speaking in the Madrid senate ahead of a planned political meeting of the Tripartite Forum (UK, Spain, Gibraltar) with Chief Gibraltar Minister Peter Caruana in relation to police, customs and judicial cooperation and territorial waters.

Responding to criticisms of the Tripartite Forum made by the opposition PP spokesman Javier Arenas, Ms Jimenez declared that Spain's objectives in respect of sovereignty "could

not be modified as this is a consequence of the defence of Spanish national interests, which are above situations and people”.

However she reaffirmed the Spanish Government’s support for the Tripartite Forum as an instrument that could deliver agreements “that benefit the population on both sides of the fence without entering into sovereignty discussions.”

The Minister also called on the Partido Popular to show “the same loyalty” she had professed to the then PP Foreign Minister Josep Pique during the time she was international secretary of the PSOE party.

Saturday, November 6th 2010 - 08:04 UTC

Falklands’ fishing industry concerned with levels of rock cod discarded

More than 15,000 tonnes of rock cod has been discarded so far this year from the Falkland Islands finfish fisheries. Rock cod has taken over from Southern Blue Whiting as the key finfish species in local waters, but such high volumes of waste are a concern for industry regulators.

Director of Fisheries, John Barton Director of Fisheries, John Barton

The total catch of rock cod so far in 2010 is 67,000 tons, of which it is reported that 23% has been discarded. And, while not an illegal activity, officials are eager to explore ways of reducing the discard level.

“It is clearly in the interests of the fishery and the industry which relies on it to reduce discards,” said Director of Fisheries John Barton.

All vessels are obliged to report catches and discards accurately, as a failure to do this would constitute an offence. The discarded fish are included in the overall assessment, and therefore effectively count against the total allowable effort or catch. But the reasons for discarding vary, and some issues are easier to address than others, said Mr Barton.

"The majority of fish being discarded are too small to process. In some cases a total catch of 30 tonnes of rock cod may be caught by a trawler in a day, of which 1– 3 tonnes might be discarded.

"In other cases small rock cod re-caught as a by-catch of the loligo fishery and are discarded. In the first case it may be possible to reduce the catch of small fish by increasing mesh size, and we need to run some trials on that. In the case of the loligo fishery it is difficult to alter the mesh size significantly as the current mesh size is appropriate for that fishery"

There also is an element of discarding of rock cod of all sizes by some companies who see it as low value, or perhaps do not have the right processing equipment.

This type of discarding should be deterred or stopped, said Mr Barton, and the obvious solution would be for such vessels to change fishing area. While there might be some issues surrounding the accuracy of discards, vessels generally reported discards, he said, regardless of whether or not they had fishery observers on board.

"Rock cod have become widely distributed throughout the zone and some discarding of small fish is a common feature," said Mr Barton.

"Area restrictions would have their limitations, as it might be difficult to maintain viable fishing opportunities while avoiding the smaller fish. Increasing the mesh size of the nets may be the solution, and that is to be investigated.

The other issue which has been considered is whether discards could be retained and subsequently processed onshore.

"The initial interest was in whether this could provide a local source of fertiliser. There would be a number of technical issues to overcome in terms of storage and processing. While such a process would reduce wastage it is unlikely to be a low cost operation".
(PN).-

Monday, November 8th 2010 - 23:26 UTC

Falklands achieves philatelic milestone: completes national stamp collection

The Falklands has achieved a philatelic milestone – the completion of the country's national stamp collection.

The Falkland Islands' 1933 £ 1 centenary stamp The Falkland Islands' 1933 £ 1 centenary stamp

Following the donation of a Falkland Islands 1928 2d Provisional in September, Stanley Gibbons has completed the collection for the museum with a further donation of a Falkland Islands 1933 £1 Centenary.

The Falkland Islands Philatelic Study Group (FIPSG) has, for some months, been trying to compile a basic mint collection of stamps, after it was found that the collection bought previously was incomplete.

The 1933 £1 Centenary stamp is regarded as one of the most handsome and recognisable stamps of the British Empire, said Stanley Gibbons Director of Philately, Dr Philip Kinns.

The central design is the finest portrait of King George V ever to appear on a postage stamp, according to Stanley Gibbons, and the colour of the frame and superb quality of production enhance the noble effect.

Only 2,711 were sold and, catalogued at £2,000 unused and £2,750 used, it is the most valuable "basic" stamp of the Falklands (when varieties, shades and errors are excluded).

The complete collection was presented to Falkland Islands Government Representative Sukey Cameron, at a special ceremony at Falkland House in London before being flown to its permanent home at the Falkland Islands Museum later next month. (PN).-

Monday, November 8th 2010 - 17:37 UTC

30 years on Argentine wool man returns to Falklands

VETERAN Argentine wool-man Joaquin (Jack) B Allolio (71) whose Falklands/Argentine agricultural trade ambitions were interrupted by a war, is to achieve his dream of returning to the Falkland Islands after thirty years.

Jack Allolio photographed at Estancia El Salvador Tierra Del Fuego Jack Allolio photographed at Estancia El Salvador Tierra Del Fuego

In 1981 Jack was Manager of Caminos & CIA S.A. a new wool exporting company wholly owned by Río Gallegos farmers. Jack convinced his principals that, "...it would be an interesting initiative to visit the Islands in search of trade. This would involve selling sheep genetics and eventually live rams, as well as general supplies and at the same time buy up some of the Islands' produce, like sheep and lambs for slaughter in Tierra del Fuego and eventually sheepskins and even wool to be processed in Argentina."

He said, "I always liked geography, history and maps, so it was natural that during the years I took a particular interest on those far away islands and like any schoolboy in Argentina, I was taught about the islands and the entire situation entailed."

Jack's trading initiative was, "At the time wholly supported by Colin Smith from Knaresborough in Yorkshire, who was our wool agent in the UK, and part owner of San Carlos."

Thus, at the end of May 1981 he made the journey to Comodoro Rivadavia and flew to the Falklands to be received by the Secretary of the Sheep Owners Association Jim Clement.

"My first evening in Stanley was socially quite pleasant, meeting most important local people at the Colony Club, during a cocktail celebrating Terry Spruce's anniversary. At the Upland Goose Hotel I met Governor Rex Hunt and the General Manager of the Falkland Islands Company (FIC). The next day Richard Cockwell took me to the floating store of the FIC to inspect some sheepskins, which I later bought up and were then shipped first to B.A. and onwards to a final destination in Mazamet, in Southern France."

Jack joked that when his comment, that he had been served "solid British food" at the Upland Goose was passed around the Islands and taken as a slight, it had the consequence of him being served a filet of veal for dinner on arrival at his next destination of San Carlos.

During his visit he was able to meet with a great number of Falklands Farmers and he left with the aim of eventually buying live sheep and lambs

He told Mercopress, "An unidentified important farmer, whom I believe to be from the West, commented to Colin Smith about my visit that I was, 'quite competent for being an Argie.'"

Unfortunately for the future of Falklands/Argentine agricultural relations the 1982 invasion interrupted. Jack said, "The conflict was a big disappointment for me, because all of our personal and commercial efforts went down the drain.

"In the subsequent years I kept in contact with a few growers, and little by little kept building up personal connections and trying to be useful with technical and breeding information.

"I am a regular reader of the Falkland Islands Government Department of Agriculture's (DoA) technical magazine The Wool Press and in this coming November issue they will publish an article I wrote for them about the recent World Meat Congress which took place here in Buenos Aires.

"My contact with the Australian and British officials of the DOA has grown closer in the recent time simply because now they know I have access to a lot of technical information on wool, sheep and lambs.

"The other way round, recently I translated into Spanish an interesting article on sheep genetics, with permission from The Wool Press."

"Some years ago I was in touch with Mr John Fowler when he was in charge of Tourism and more recently with the late Ms Jane Cameron regarding a book she had been writing together with Mrs Joan Spruce. Thus, despite my obvious main professional interest in wool, sheep, farming and management plus genetics, I have a genuine visitor's interest in the Islands, first of all their people, and second their geography and history.

"It would be naive to tell you I have neutral feelings about the Islands, but all this time after a stupid conflict I understand that pilots from both sides have met, even with those who shot them down. I also had the opportunity two years ago to give advice to a small group of Argentine veterans, former infantry foot soldiers, who later had the chance to enjoy drinks with British veterans in a pub in Stanley.

"My mother was Argentine, my father German, and I was born in Rivera, Uruguay. I am a real Mercosur product with mixed origins; an Italian family name and direct German and Argentine ancestors. I believe my grandson (who I gifted with a German passport) should become a citizen of the world, if possible speaking Spanish, English, German, French and Italian as I do. There's no need for flag waving as far as I am concerned."

Jack's initial dream was to return to the Islands to purchase greasy wool to be processed in Argentina and then exported as wool tops, grown in the Falklands processed in Patagonia (in one of Trelew's combing mills) and then shipped abroad to world markets.

"My dream now is much more limited, just meeting people, enjoying their genuine hospitality, and offering useful information, as I do with my articles here and in Chile for the farming magazines."

Jack will next week be speaking in Mercedes (Corrientes) in the North of Argentina, as part of a panel of specialists from Uruguay and Brazil, on the subject of Present Prospects for Wool and Lambs, for an audience of growers during the Expo Ovina which begins on November 10.

Jack will visit the Falklands at the end of January next year. By Lisa Watson – SeAledPR – Stanley.-

Tuesday, November 9th 2010 - 04:10 UTC

Getting around sovereignty

By Roberto Cox (*) - Few people in Argentina, or Britain for that matter, are aware that in the years leading up to the war that was fought over the possession of the Islands that Argentina calls the Malvinas and Britain the Falklands, the British government was trying to integrate them with the mainland. Out of deference to the islanders — the Kelpers as they are called — I will not be so bold as to write that Britain was intent on giving the islands and their inhabitants to Argentina, but that was the general idea.

Thus, in the famous phrase of Talleyrand, the war that claimed the lives of 907 people “was worse than a crime, it was an error.” It was a desperate bid by the military dictatorship to regain what was left of its rapidly diminishing and totally undeserved popularity. In mid-1982, the mantle of fear and self-deception that had enveloped Argentina when the military took over was coming loose and people were openly protesting. It was, however, the failing economy, not mass murder, routine torture or ferocious repression that aroused the people.

The war was the last gasp of a cruel dictatorship, particularly galling and wounding for me, because it was unnecessary and stupid. And to rephrase Talleyrand, no error can be worse than the crime of war.

Britain had made a decision that the islands were too costly to maintain and, for several years, successive British ambassadors had been working with successive Argentine governments to restore communications and trade with the islands, which had been severed during the presidency of Perón. The popular dictator made the disputed islands into an aggressively nationalistic issue, stressing sovereignty to the detriment of other considerations, like the people who would be affected by his political populism. As a consequence, the islands, which for many years were closely linked to Patagonia, become isolated. Ties between kith and kin on the Islands and the mainland were broken and the Kelpers had to look to Britain, 6,000 miles away, to sustain them.

I was on close terms with Michael Hadow, the British ambassador to Argentina from 1969 to 1973, when the British government was actively encouraging a closer relationship with the mainland. Scholarships for children to attend bilingual schools in Argentina were arranged. There was an exchange of teachers. Argentina was supplying gas and other valued commodities. Marvel of marvels, the islanders could buy fresh fruit from Río Negro. All was going well. .

Ambassador Hadow told me that his frequent visits to the Islands were paying off. He held town meetings to explain to the islanders how much better their lives would be if they had close ties with Argentina. The problem, he said, was that the Kelpers could not bring themselves to accept Argentina while this country was torn by violence and had no record of stable democratic governance. I recall him telling me how frustrating it was when, having secured agreements that could lead to integration something would happen in Argentina that would scare off the islanders. An obituary in *The Independent* noted that the then Sir Michael Hadow, "correctly predicted that one day, under an irresponsible government, Argentina would probably attempt an invasion of the Falkland Islands."

There is no need to go into details to explain what the consequences of the war have been. What is clear is that aggressive nationalism and overemphasis on sovereignty, not to mention the crime of war, will not serve anyone's interests, least of all those of Argentina. As long as the islanders view Argentina as an undemocratic country with an aggressive government they will resist initiatives that would lead to the eventual integration of the islands with the mainland.

Another way must be found to reconcile the Kelpers with their continental Argentine neighbours, so that one day, perhaps, they can become relatives.

Over the years I have pondered the importance of sovereignty and, as someone born on one of the British islands, I have always been intrigued by the success that the Channel Islanders have had in overcoming the negative aspects of nationalism. The Channel Islands are both British and French. Some of the islands have changed flags half a dozen times. There are few places in the world as tranquil and as successful as the Channel Islands. They provide a model for what the South Atlantic Islands could be.

It is my view that both Argentine and British government policy should seek to lower tension over the islands. Every time a rash statement is made by either government, the media in Argentina and Britain go into a tizzy.

I think that the British government made an enormous mistake when it ordered, or authorized, military operations that involved the firing of missiles. With respect, I think that President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner erred when she fired up her Twitter account and got all the twitterers buzzing.

"Serious, very serious," President Kirchner twittered. "Royal Navy, occupying colonial force ... Islands, reports military exercise with missiles ... Typical nineteenth century colonialism. Anachronistic use of force in violation of international law. They do not care. A clear example of double standards. Conclusion ... pirates for ever?"

Her twitters were erased, but the damage, in terms of raising tension, was done.

I have been delighted to discover that, thanks to that controversial phenomenon Facebook, there is a way to bypass sterile government exchanges and overcome provocative statements.

There is a cool, civilized site on the Internet that seeks understanding and reconciliation. Visitors to the site are reminded: "The Falklands/Malvinas conflict caused the death of 907 people. It's time to put grudges aside, and to seek for reconciliation. Welcome to our Friendship and Reconciliation Project. We invite anyone with a progressive interest in this subject affecting our great nations."

Here's the link: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=66099778791>

Published in the Buenos Aires Herald

(*) Robert J. Cox, also known as Bob Cox, is a British journalist who worked as editor of the Buenos Aires Herald newspaper, in Argentina. Cox became famous for his criticisms of

the military dictatorship (1976/1983). He was detained and jailed and was later released and forced to leave Argentina in 1979 due to threats against his family. He moved to Charleston, South Carolina, US, where he became editor of The Post and the Courier, owned by the same publishing company that owned the Buenos Aires Herald. In 2005 the Buenos Aires legislature recognized Cox for his valor during the dictatorship era.

Tuesday, November 9th 2010 - 15:09 UTC

Falklands' Desire given the green light to drill second well in Rachel prospect

Falkland Islands Desire Petroleum confirmed Tuesday it had secured regulatory and partner approvals to drill a second well 14/15-2 well in the North Falkland basin Rachel prospect.

The Ocean Guardian oil rig is waiting for weather conditions to improve to spud the second Rachel prospect well The Ocean Guardian oil rig is waiting for weather conditions to improve to spud the second Rachel prospect well

The 14/15-1 Rachel well had to be prematurely abandoned following mechanical problems which meant it was unable to carry out the necessary tests to establish how successful the well could have been. But Desire was sufficiently encouraged to consider a second drill in more or less the same place.

The Rachel North well will be drilled vertically with an estimated total depth of 3,050 meters. The bottom hole location will be 1.7km from the Rachel sidetrack 14/15-1Z bottom hole location. Drilling operations are expected to last around 35 days.

Desire said it was intended that this well would evaluate the sands with oil shows encountered in the Rachel sidetrack as well as a number of possible additional sands not seen in the sidetrack.

The company thanked the regulatory authorities and its partner Rockhopper Exploration (LON:RKH) for their speedy approvals to move to the new Rachel North location.

Desire is one of a handful of exploration companies currently drilling for oil in the Falklands using the Ocean Guardian rig. In anticipation of the latest well, shares in the AIM listed company jumped from 95p at the start of September to a high of 168p in early October. They closed Monday at 119.75p.

The value of shares in its partner Rockhopper Exploration has soared since the end of May when it became the first of the group to strike oil with a discovery at the Sea Lion prospect. Rockhopper holds a 7.5% working interest in the Rachel well.

Wednesday, November 10th 2010 - 04:47 UTC

"Newly valuable" Falklands open to attack by axing Ark Royal and the Harriers

A group of former Royal Navy admirals have called for the decision to scrap the aircraft carrier Ark Royal and the fleet of Harrier jets to be reversed. The cuts were announced as part of the government's Strategic Defence Review.

Lord West and Royal Navy retired officers furious with the "perverse decision" Lord West and Royal Navy retired officers furious with the "perverse decision"

In a letter to The Times the group says defence cuts will leave the "newly valuable" Falkland Islands open to attack and call the plan to axe the Harrier fleet "financially perverse".

But ministers insist the UK will still be able to defend the Falklands.

Defence Secretary Liam Fox told The Times: "It is simply not the case that decommissioning the Harrier would impact upon our ability to defend territories in the South Atlantic.

"We maintain a wide range of assets, not least a well-defended airfield to ensure the defence of the Falkland Islands.

"The Harrier force has made an impressive contribution to our nation's security over the decades but difficult decisions had to be made... and I'm clear that rationalising our fast jet fleet makes both operational and economic common sense."

BBC defence correspondent Jonathan Beale said the strongly-worded letter from a group which includes two former heads of the Royal Navy - Lord West and Sir Julian Oswald - confirmed the deep anger felt in the Royal Navy over the cuts.

The letter is also signed by Vice-Admiral Sir Jeremy Blackham, Vice-Admiral John Mcanally and Major-General Julian Thompson.

They say the prime minister was badly advised over the decision to scrap the Harrier force and HMS Ark Royal and to rely entirely upon Tornados. They say the Harrier is more versatile and will be cheaper to maintain.

The letter says: "The existing Tornado force will cost, over 10 years, seven times as much to keep in service as Harrier. Was the recent exercise not supposed to save money?"

The admirals also warn the decision will leave the Falklands open to attack.

They write: "In respect of the newly valuable Falklands and their oilfields, because of these and other cuts, for the next 10 years at least, Argentina is practically invited to attempt to inflict on us a national humiliation on the scale of the loss of Singapore.

"One from which British prestige, let alone the administration in power at the time, might never recover".

The decision means no planes will be able to fly from British aircraft carriers until 2019.

"The decision to axe the entire Harrier force is strategically and financially perverse," the admirals continue.

"The government has, in effect, declared a new '10-year rule' that assumes Britain will have warning time to rebuild to face a threat.

"The last Treasury-driven '10-year rule' in the 1930s nearly cost us our freedom faced with Hitler" argue the admirals. (BBC).-

Wednesday, November 10th 2010 - 02:38 UTC

Falklands should not interfere with UK's Latin America renewed approach

The Falkland Islands dispute must not get in the way of Britain boosting its relations with Latin America, Foreign Secretary William Hague said Tuesday. London has neglected its ties with the region for too long and Britain must re-launch its relations with Latin America as its importance on the global stage grows, Hague said.

Foreign Secretary William Hague recalled when Britain was the leading investor in Latin America Foreign Secretary William Hague recalled when Britain was the leading investor in Latin America

He made clear there would be no change to Britain's sovereignty over the Falklands, the Islands in the South Atlantic which are claimed by Argentina.

"It is our intention not to let differences come in the way of closer cooperation," Hague said in London in the annual Canning Lecture on British-South American relations.

"There will be no change to Britain's long-standing position on the Falkland Islands. But this should not be an obstacle to the positive relations we seek."

Hague said Britain has a track record of underestimating Latin America and neglecting its opportunities: "over the last 20 years there has been a steady decline in UK interest."

He noted that by World War I, 50% of foreign investment in Latin America came from Britain, while British exports now make up barely one percent of all international exports to the region.

"We export over three times more to Ireland than we do to the whole of Latin America," he said, adding that other major European countries like Germany, France and Italy had "left us behind".

"Now is the time for Britain at last to think afresh about Latin America and the opportunities it presents for political cooperation and trade and investment."

Hague said he wanted Britain to be the first port of call for Latin American countries looking to expand abroad, and called for a climate change alliance between Europe and the region. He also reaffirmed Britain's support for Brazil to be given a permanent seat on a reformed and expanded United Nations Security Council.

Read the full speech "UK's retreat from Latin America is over":

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=25092682.->

Wednesday, November 10th 2010 - 14:16 UTC

Falklands government "satisfied and grateful" for UK level of defence

The Falkland Islands government said Wednesday in an official statement that it is "satisfied and grateful for the levels of defence on the Islands".

The statement follows claims to the contrary from retired Royal Navy chiefs who argue the latest defence cuts make the Falkland Islands vulnerable to attack from Argentina.

Former RN chiefs claim PM Cameron has been badly advised
Former RN chiefs claim PM Cameron has been badly advised

In a letter to The Times, the commanders condemned the decision to scrap the aircraft carrier Ark Royal and the fleet of Harrier jets, calling it "perverse". The signatories, who include former Navy boss Lord West, said PM David Cameron was badly advised before agreeing to the measures.

"In respect of the valuable Falklands and their oilfields, because of these and other cuts, for the next 10 years, Argentina is practically invited to attempt to inflict on us a national humiliation on the scale of the loss of Singapore" wrote the RN former chiefs.

"One from which British prestige, let alone the administration in power at the time, might never recover".

However the Falklands government said it was satisfied and grateful for the level of defence of the Islands, "which Her Majesty's Government has assured us are adequate to maintain an effective deterrent".

Furthermore "there are no direct defense cuts relating to the Falkland Islands" and "Members of the Legislative Assembly are content with the reassurances that they have been given by Her Majesty's Government that the Strategic Defense Spending Review does not in any way change the UK's ability to maintain the deterrent in the Islands."

Besides scrapping HMS Ark Royal and the versatile Harriers, the Strategic Defence Spending includes cutting the number of British Army troops by around 7,000, taking it to 95,000 by 2015, and scrapping the planned Nimrod MRA4 maritime reconnaissance aircraft, despite spending £3bn on its development.

They said the Harrier decision was "strategically and financially perverse", claiming that keeping Tornado jets would cost seven times as much in maintenance during the next decade.

They conclude: "We believe that these decisions should be rescinded in the overriding national interest, before it is too late".

Thursday, November 11th 2010 - 16:32 UTC

Falklands' Defence Row

The controversy over Britain's ability to defend the Falkland Islands against Argentine attack has continued in the United Kingdom with the former Defence Secretary at the time of the 1982 invasion, Sir John Nott, joining in.

Sir John Nott and Lord West: carriers or no carriers? Sir John Nott and Lord West: carriers or no carriers?

Claims by the former head of the Royal Navy, Lord West, and other retired naval chiefs that the UK's recently announced cuts in military spending are tantamount to an invitation during the next ten years for Argentina to mount another invasion, were outlined in a letter to the Times newspaper. The navy chiefs' fears have been rejected by the British Government, and the Falkland Islands Government says it is content with the UK's assurances that their defence is sound.

But Lord West has gone on television to describe as "bonkers" (mad) the UK's decision to do away with its two remaining aircraft carriers and their Sea Harrier jump jets. HMS Ark Royal has already been decommissioned while her sister ship, HMS Illustrious, which briefly took over defence of the Falklands immediately after the 1982 conflict, remains in service until two new bigger aircraft carriers now being built are ready in a few years' time. Lord West says it would have been cheaper and more effective to retain the carriers and Sea Harriers instead of land-based Tornado warplanes.

Sir John Nott went on television to declare that the UK will not need a carrier strike force in future and should sell off the new super carriers as soon as possible after they are built. But Lord West said Sir John Nott had never understood the value of aircraft carriers, which continue to give valuable support to land operations in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

As Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Defence Secretary, Sir John Nott imposed severe spending cuts on the Royal Navy before the Falklands' invasion including the sale of two aircraft carriers which later played a vital role in the liberation of the Falklands. His cuts, then also opposed by Navy Chiefs, would have been disastrous but fortunately for the UK the two carriers had not been delivered to their new owners.

Lord West, a military adviser to the previous Labour Government, was commander of the warship HMS Ardent, which was repeatedly bombed and sunk by Argentine aircraft in 1982, with the loss of 22 crew dead and another 37 wounded.

The retiring head of the armed forces, Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, says that during his four years as Chief of the Defence Staff, coinciding with major operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, he gave a good deal of thought and attention to the defence of the Falkland Islands.

The security of the Islands depends crucially on possession of the military and air base at Mount Pleasant and on rapid reinforcement through Ascension Island in mid-Atlantic. Regular warship and submarine patrols, radar surveillance and Rapier anti-aircraft missiles, as well as about 1,400 military personnel, are a formidable deterrent to Argentina whose forces have been depleted since 1982. It says it will continue its claim for sovereignty of the islands by diplomatic, but no longer military, means. By Harold Briley, London.-

Friday, November 12th 2010 - 02:22 UTC

Second oil rig to join Falklands' oil exploration round next year

A second oil rig is scheduled to begin exploratory drilling of two wells in Falkland Islands waters in a year's time following a letter of intent signed by Borders & Southern Petroleum with Ocean Rig UDW this week in Houston.

Semi-submersible Eirik Raude is currently drilling offshore Ghana Semi-submersible Eirik Raude is currently drilling offshore Ghana

According to a corporate release the 'at least two wells' with up to 'three optional' are to be drilled in the Southern Falkland basin Darwin and Stebbing prospects by the Eirik Raude dynamically positioned, harsh environment semi-submersible rig.

The Eirik Raude rig is currently working on the Jubilee development offshore Ghana and on completion of its drilling program should be mobilized to the Falkland Islands in the fourth quarter of 2011.

The company's Environmental Impact Statement, covering the two proposed drilling sites in the South Falkland Basin acreage was approved last June by the Falklands Executive Council

Borders & Southern Petroleum which was formed in 2004 holds five licenses 150 km southeast of the Falkland Islands (19,598 square kilometres) awarded by the local government.

To date, the Company has fulfilled all work program obligations of the production licences, having acquired, processed and interpreted 2,862 km of 2D seismic data and 1,492 km of 3D seismic data, as well as having commissioned and completed numerous technical studies.

In November 2009 Borders & Southern Petroleum raised £113.1 million net of expenses through a placing by Mirabaud, Ocean and Panmure Gordon with institutional investors of 234,234,234 new Ordinary Shares in the Company at 50p per share.

When Eirik Raude arrives it will be the second rig to have operated in Falklands' water during the current exploratory round.

"Ocean Guardian" contracted by Desire Petroleum has been drilling in Falklands' waters since February with at least two wells considered successful, Desire's Liz prospect (gas) and Rockhopper's Sea Lion prospect (oil).

Currently six companies are involved in hydrocarbons exploratory operations in the Falklands: Desire Petroleum; Rockhopper Exploration; BHP Billiton with associate Falkland Oil and Gas Ltd; Argos Resources and Borders & Southern Petroleum.

Friday, November 12th 2010 - 13:32 UTC

Falklands present at China Fisheries and Seafood Expo in Dalian

Falkland Islands and South Georgia took their place in a world class fisheries exhibition in China last week.

One of the most visited stands of the Show One of the most visited stands of the Show

Georgia Seafoods, part of the Fortuna Group, was one of more than 750 companies exhibiting at the 15th annual China Fisheries and Seafood Expo held in Dalian.

There were representatives from 450 Chinese companies alone, with national pavilions from many other countries, and more than 15,000 qualified buyers from around the world.

The Georgia Seafoods stand was manned by James Wallace, with support from a translator and an assistant. James said it was a huge success and many visitors commented that the stand was one of the busiest at the show, attracting more than 500 visits.

Several important deals were signed during the three days.

The Chinese market for seafood is now larger than that of the United States and there was a keen interest among buyers in talking direct to James as a vessel owner.

One of the main objectives also was to develop closer relationships with the end users of Falklands and South Georgia products, in addition to developing wider contacts and building awareness of domestic seafood in this rapidly developing market.

Following the expo, James took the opportunity to visit a number of major clients and to see the facilities at some processing plants where another company of the Fortuna Group, Loligo Products Limited, has contracted squid processing for a number of years. (Penguin News).-

Tuesday, November 16th 2010 - 04:55 UTC

UK/France have not considered carrier's defence of Falklands: "not necessary"

There have been no discussions between Britain and France on whether aircraft carriers could be sent to defend the Falkland Islands, United Kingdom Armed Forces Minister Nick Harvey said.

United Kingdom Armed Forces Minister Nick Harvey
United Kingdom Armed Forces Minister Nick Harvey

The British Government "have not seen this as necessary", Mr Harvey said, despite the two countries recently agreeing to share carriers as part of a defence cooperation treaty, according to a piece from UK Press Association.

The deal raised concerns that the UK could be left without carrier strike capability if only a French ship was available and Paris decided it did not want to take part in military action that was not in its national interest.

Defence Secretary Liam Fox conceded there was "no means" of coercing France into action, saying of the deal: "Would that mean that we would be able to force the French to do something against their will during that period or vice-versa? Of course it wouldn't."

Last week a group of British retired senior commanders warned that defence cuts - including the decision to scrap the Harrier force and the aircraft carrier Ark Royal - "practically invited" Argentina to attempt to take the "newly valuable" Falklands.

In a written parliamentary question, the DUP's David Simpson (Upper Bann) asked whether Dr Fox "has had discussions with the French government on the possible deployment of aircraft carriers to the Falkland Islands".

Mr Harvey replied: "There have been no discussions with the French government on the possible deployment of aircraft carriers to the Falkland Islands because we have not seen this as necessary."

Part of the wide-ranging Anglo-French defence deal will see the creation of an integrated carrier force with the two countries co-ordinating the refit programs of their single remaining carriers to ensure that from the 2020s onwards at least one ship will always be available for joint operations.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has sought to play down suggestions that France would not be prepared to deploy its carrier in support of British interests if the UK vessel was in dock.

"This is a decision which is unprecedented and shows a level of trust and confidence between our two nations which is unequalled in history," he said when the treaties were signed.

Monday, November 15th 2010 - 18:58 UTC

Falklands' wind power contribution new record: 40% of Stanley's consumption

Annual wind power contribution in the Falkland Islands has set a new record with the significant milestone of 40% of renewable contribution, according to Stanley Power Station Manager Glenn Ross.

The Islands have six wind turbines; the last three became operational in February The Islands have six wind turbines; the last three became operational in February

This month the Sand Bay Wind Farm produced 40% of the total electricity required by Stanley. This beats the previous high of 38% achieved in August.

The Sand Bay Wind Farm produced 115,272 units of electricity at an hourly average for the week of 686 kilowatts. The highest hourly output was 1200 kilowatts and the highest hourly percentage was 57%.

Glenn Ross said that fuel Displacement was 30,290 litres which gave an estimated weekly saving of £14,720.

The Falklands currently have a total of six wind turbines the last three became operational on line last February.

The installation of the first three wind turbines in 2007 resulted in the displacement of 26% of annual fuel consumption, reported at the time the Falklands government.

"This figure (40%) compares favourably to the UK Government's goal for 20 per cent of electricity produced in the UK to be renewable by 2020, proving the Islanders' commitment to renewable energy. As well as reducing their carbon footprint in order to protect the pristine environment of the Islands, the increase in renewable energy has meant that the cost of electricity has been reduced by six pence per unit for Islanders", said the Falklands' government release.

The latest turbines to be incorporated are the same type and make as the first three turbines: 330 kilo-watt synchronous variable speed and variable pitch turbines manufactured by Enercon (Germany).

The next phase in the development of the wind farm will be energy storage, achieved by charging a 2MWh battery during optimal wind times and discharging the battery when wind is not available. This will ensure that energy production is kept more constant.

Wednesday, November 17th 2010 - 16:16 UTC

UK launches new Overseas Territories' strategy at London meeting

A new strategy that will reinvigorate the UK's relationship with its Overseas Territories will be at the heart of discussions at the annual Overseas Territories Consultative Council which begins Wednesday 17 November.

Foreign Office Minister for the Overseas Territories Henry Bellingham Foreign Office Minister for the Overseas Territories Henry Bellingham

Hosted by Foreign Office Minister for the Overseas Territories Henry Bellingham, the meeting will bring together Premiers, Chief Ministers and elected representatives from

across Britain's Overseas Territories for discussions on issues such as public finance; the environment; criminal justice; transport safety and security; and good governance.

And in a sign of renewed cross Government support for the Overseas Territories, Ministers from the Departments for International Development, Transport, Environment, Energy and Climate Change, the Treasury, Home Office and Ministry of Defence will attend.

Speaking ahead of the meeting, the Minister for the Overseas Territories said:

"I am delighted to welcome elected leaders from the Overseas Territories to this year's Overseas Territories Consultative Council. Much has happened since Territory leaders gathered in London 12 months ago. The UK government wants to develop a new strategy for the Overseas Territories which provides more effective support for their development and better risk management; one that involves, and is agreed by, the whole of UK Government.

We have got a great deal to discuss. I am looking forward to open and frank discussions and to working with Territory leaders to resolve issues and to strengthen our relationship. We value our ties with the Overseas Territories highly and are keen to maintain that bond of friendship."

In addition to the Council meeting, leaders and elected representatives will have an audience with Her Majesty the Queen and meet the Foreign Affairs Committee; as well as having bilateral meetings with Minister Bellingham.

Thursday, November 18th 2010 - 17:08 UTC

UK promises stronger and closer relationship with Overseas Territories

A wide range of issues of mutual interest and concern were addressed by the UK Minister for the Overseas Territories Henry Bellingham and leaders from the Overseas Territories. The OTs Consultative Council is currently meeting in London.

Minister Bellingham emphasised the Coalition Government's determination to improve and strengthen the UK's relationship with the OTs and to represent their interests in international fora. He also made clear that other Government Departments were now more closely involved in Overseas Territories work.

The Caribbean Territories welcomed the important emergency assistance provided by the Atlantic Patrol Task (North) during the recent hurricane season. The Minister noted that the Coalition Government had restarted the vital Air Access project for St Helena and had agreed to provide assistance for Tristan da Cunha's harbour. All parties agreed on the need to work together to help the commercial and economic development of the Territories.

At the criminal justice session there were discussions about rising crime in some of the Territories; about drugs and organised crime; and about possible UK technical assistance to the OTs in these areas. In the session on transport there were discussions about maritime and aviation safety regulations; and the importance of meeting international safety standards. Territory leaders raised concerns about the cost of this and about Air Passenger Duty.

During the session on the environment, it was agreed that OT Governments and relevant UK Departments would work together to help manage the natural environment and the impact of climate change in the Territories, including highlighting examples of good practice and successes already achieved in the Territories.

The session on passport issues, the UK and the Overseas Territories discussed arrangements for handling the printing of passports in light of the UK Government's decision to repatriate to the UK the printing of all British passports.

In a separate session on financial services and public finances, the UK and the Caribbean Territories and Bermuda agreed: a) the importance of complying with international financial sector standards (on tax transparency, financial regulation and anti-money laundering/counter terrorism financing) and that these standards must be applied without

discrimination; b) the importance of continuing to take action to return public finances to a sustainable footing and c) to take forward work on a framework for fiscal responsibility.

During their separate session the South Atlantic Territories agreed a number of areas in which they could work together more closely.

Sunday, November 21st 2010 - 21:09 UTC

Garré claims Malvinas sovereignty during ceremony at South African vessel

Argentina claimed sovereignty over the Malvinas and South Atlantic Islands and criticized UK's unilateral actions in fisheries and hydrocarbons during the signing on Saturday of a defence cooperation and development agreement with South Africa.

SAS Drakensberg docked in Buenos Aires SAS Drakensberg docked in Buenos Aires

"Argentina currently suffers the usurpation by the UK in the South Atlantic of part of its territory. This includes Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and adjoining maritime spaces and has been aggravated by British unilateral actions referred to fishing licensing, hydrocarbons exploration and even military exercises", Minister Nilda Garré said during the meeting her South African counterpart, Lindiwe Sisulu.

"As established in our constitution, we expect to recover those Islands following International Law", added Ms Garré.

South African Minister of Defence and Military Lindiwe Sisulu visited Buenos Aires with a delegation from the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). The agreement was signed on board South African Navy SAS Drakensberg docked in Buenos Aires, which together with submarine Charlotte Maxeke were in Argentina participation in joint naval exercises.

"I'm really proud that two women Defence ministers are signing this first military cooperation agreement between two nations enjoying full rule of the law and democracy", said Garré

The Argentine minister emphasized Ms Sisulu background as a strong militant in South Africa's struggle against "apartheid" for which she was jailed for three years and tortured. She has also been a Member of Parliament, Deputy Minister of Interior and head of Intelligence Affairs.

Garré praised the visitor. "Ms Sislu personal history in her fight against discrimination and for the full exercise of human rights and democracy in South Africa is an example of determination and commitment".

"We Argentines still remember when the notorious top leaders of the military dictatorship enjoyed safaris in Africa with their apartheid cronies and hosts" said Garré adding that both nations were an example for the world in the recovery of democracy and transitions signalled by long processes "in search of the truth and justice for the irreparable crimes against humanity".

Ms Sisulu pointed out to the fact that it was two women who were signing the agreement indicating that "we both have something which very typical of our gender, common sense".-

Tuesday, November 23rd 2010 - 03:10 UTC

Falklands' oil company contracts exploration rig to operate end of 2011

DryShips has won an exploration contract to drill offshore the Falkland Islands. The Greek company received a letter of intent for the Eirik Raude and will drill two wells for approximately 90 days beginning in the fourth quarter of 2011.

Eirik Raude will drill for two wells and a further optional three. Eirik Raude will drill for two wells and a further optional three.

The 77 million US dollars contract will have three further optional wells that could extend the contract by 135 days.

The contract from a British exploration company will begin immediately after completion of the current contract, which is expected to end in October 2011.

DryShips chairman and CEO George Economou said the rate achieved reflects the unique nature of the two harsh weather semi-submersibles and a strengthening ultra-deepwater drilling market.

"We see strong demand for these two rigs and for our state-of-the-art sixth generation drillships, and are confident that all our available capacity in 2011 will secure employment at attractive rates," Economou said.

DryShips Inc., based in Greece, is an owner and operator of drybulk carriers and offshore oil deep water drilling units that operate worldwide. As of the day of this release, DryShips owns a fleet of 39 drybulk carriers (including newbuildings), comprising 7 Capesize, 30 Panamax and 2 Supramax, with a combined deadweight tonnage of over 3.5 million tons and 6 offshore oil deep water drilling units, comprising of 2 ultra deep water semisubmersible drilling rigs and 4 ultra deep water newbuilding drillships.

DryShips's common stock is listed on the NASDAQ Global Select Market where it trades under the symbol "DRYS."

Wednesday, November 24th 2010 - 21:21 UTC

Falklands/Malvinas: Brazil joins Argentina in criticizing UK's "unilateral actions"

The Brazilian government questioned UK's "unilateral actions" regarding the (Falklands) Malvinas Islands and called for the sovereignty "long standing dispute" to reach "as soon as possible a solution".

Brazilian Defence minister Nelson Jobim Brazilian Defence minister Nelson Jobim

The words belong to Brazilian Defence minister Nelson Jobim who met with his Argentina peer Nilda Garré on the sidelines of the IX Conference of Ministers of Defence from the Americas which is taking place at the Bolivian city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

A release from the Argentine Defence ministry underlines Brazil's support for Argentina's claim over the Falklands and other South Atlantic Islands and adjoining maritime spaces, pointing out that unilateral measures and actions are not compatible with United Nations resolutions.

Minister Jobim recalled regional interest for the long standing sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom referred to "the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and adjoining maritime spaces to reach as soon as possible a solution according to the pertinent resolutions from United Nations; declarations from the Organization of American States, Mercosur, Unasur and other regional and multilateral forums".

Argentine Minister Garré thanked her Brazilian peer's support statement adding that such declarations "contribute to consolidate even more the strategic alliance between both countries".

On Monday during the opening speeches of the different ministers at the conference, Garré criticized the "persistent British occupation of the Malvinas Islands and the UK's systematic denial to abide by United Nations resolutions".

She also questioned UK "military exercises" in the Islands and "unilateral actions referred to the exploitation of natural resources which do not belong to the UK".

The Argentine minister also warned about the possibility of a "major environmental catastrophe" in the Falklands/Malvinas waters (similar to what happened in the Gulf of Mexico with BP) because of the hydrocarbons activities.

In the framework of the Defence Ministers conference Argentina and Brazil signed a Joint Declaration calling for intensified Argentine-Brazilian defence cooperation in several fields.

Thursday, November 25th 2010 - 20:04 UTC

HMS Scott leaves Plymouth for the 2010/2011 Antarctic season

The Royal Navy deep water survey ship HMS Scott deployed to the Antarctic early morning Thursday from Plymouth, which coincides with the 100th anniversary of Captain Scott's final expedition to the area.

The 13,500 tons vessel is the Royal Navy's deep-water ocean survey vessel and the sixth largest vessel in the fleet. The 13,500 tons vessel is the Royal Navy's deep-water ocean survey vessel and the sixth largest vessel in the fleet.

In her second deployment to the region, HMS Scott's aim will be to demonstrate the UK's ongoing commitment to the Antarctic Treaty during the Austral summer 2010/2011. The UK was the first state to ratify the treaty, which came into force in 1961, and remains committed to upholding its core values of preserving the continent for peace and science.

During her deployment to the region earlier this year HMS Scott, based at HM Naval Base Devonport, surveyed 3,000 miles of uncharted ocean and provided information for the safety of navigation and entirely new seabed views of interest to scientists, including newly discovered undersea volcanoes.

The ship's current mission will again be in support of the Foreign Office and the British Antarctic Survey. HMS Scott will provide hydrographic data for the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office using her state-of-the-art multi-beam sonar system to collect information in the data sparse waters of the Antarctic.

HMS Scott is built to sail through ice only up to 80cm thick and I therefore, not officially an ice-breaker. The ship's commanding officer, Commander Gary Hesling, said: "The fact that HMS Scott can undertake useful and valuable tasking, despite not being an ice-breaker, shows the utility and flexibility of the Royal Navy. It could be no more fitting that HMS Scott, named after Captain Scott, is to conduct operations in the Antarctica in the 100th anniversary year of Captain Scott's final Antarctic expedition."

At 13,500 tons HMS Scott is the Royal Navy's deep-water ocean survey vessel and the sixth largest vessel in the fleet. Her size is a consequence of her unique sonar, capable of

surveying the deepest oceans in continuous lines of up to 400 miles in length.

The ship also completed survey operations in the North Atlantic during the summer. In preparation for her forthcoming deployment HMS Scott has recently undertaken a package of training with the staff of Plymouth-based Flag Officer Sea Training.

HMS Scott was commissioned in 1997 and has a crew of 78. She operates a crew rotation system whereby 52 are onboard at any one time during a standard 35 day operational cycle. The remainder of the crew take leave and by operating in such a manner the ship maximises its operational availability and effectiveness by being at sea for 307 days per year.

The UK has long-term strategic, scientific, environmental and sustainable resource management interests in the Antarctic, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, and wider South Atlantic. By taking a leading role in the Antarctic Treaty System through a policy of presence, governance, and commitment to deliver our international obligations the UK protects its interest and Sovereignty. The Ice Patrol Ship plays an essential role in delivery of UK objectives in the region.

The UK's claim to the British Antarctic Territory (BAT) is the oldest in Antarctica dating back to letters patent issued in 1908. Claims lodged by Argentina and Chile in the 1930s and 1940s largely overlap with the BAT. Other States which claim territory in Antarctica are Norway, Australia, France and New Zealand.

Article IV of the Antarctic Treaty deals with territorial sovereignty and effectively places in abeyance all such claims, recognition and non-recognition of claims, and precludes any activity to assert any new claim or enlarge any existing claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica.

Saturday, November 27th 2010 - 12:06 UTC

Unasur unable to agree on secretary; closes all ports to 'illegal' Malvinas flagged vessels

The presidents of Unasur (Union of South American Nations) meeting at a summit in Guyana paid homage to former president Nestor Kirchner, agreed to incorporate a "democratic clause" to the group's charter, left for next month a decision on who will be named the next secretary general and had a special mention to the Falklands/Malvinas sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the UK. Argentina also revealed that the post should be occupied by an Argentine.

The summit was considered a diplomatic success by Argentina. The summit was considered a diplomatic success by Argentina.

The democratic clause imposes sanctions on any member country of Unasur that breaks or attempts to break constitutional rule or the democratic system. Sanctions will be: suspension at the UNASUR; partial or total close of borders; suspension of commerce, air and maritime traffic, communication, energy provision and services; promoting penalization and political sanctions.

The clause has been taken as a priority after the recent conflict in Ecuador (when part of the police forces mutinied and attacked President Correa), and the coup in Honduras on June 28, 2009.

Regarding the Falklands conflict several articles of the final declaration state that all Unasur ports will be closed to vessels operating under the "illegal flag of Malvinas".

This last statement and another referred to "vulture funds" or the organized hold-outs of sovereign bonds that do not accept debt rescheduling programs and demand full payment of capital and interest through international courts were seen as triumphs of Argentine diplomacy.

Before the official opening of the summit Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa (whose country held until Friday Unasur's presidency) asked for a minute of silence to honour the memory of former Unasur Secretary General Nestor Kirchner who died of a heart attack a month ago. As the minute concluded the dignitaries present applauded and cheered.

In her speech Argentine president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner praised her husband's will to walk down a path in the region from which there's no way back and said that reaffirming the organization's direction is the best way to honour his memory. "His goal was achieving growth and tirelessly fighting inequality and social differences"

Mrs Kirchner then thanked her peers from Brazil and Venezuela. "We have to remember him fondly. I would have loved to have him a few more years with me, but God only knows why these things happen. I would love to thank Lula da Silva, because along with him my husband could prove that there was no animosity between Argentina and Brazil. And also I would like to thank President Chavez for helping Argentina when no one would".

Finally Mrs Kirchner recalled her husband as "a great creator of paradigms in South America and he was a unique, unrepeatable and wonderful man. He lived his sixty years intensely". "Reaffirming Unasur direction is the best way to pay homage to Kirchner".

Brazilian president Lula da Silva also praised the former Secretary Genral saying "he will always be a source of superior inspiration for the region's politicians", He added that "his dreams were shared by all South Americans".

However in spite of the speeches and praise for Mr. Kirchner the presidents were unable to agree on a name for the next Secretary General.

Correa said "we must keep sounding and talking", and recalled that when the post was created it was agreed it had to be a former South American president.

Several names had been originally floated: Brazil's Lula da Silva who steps down next January and Uruguay's Tabare Vazquez.

However Lula da Silva has his own plans to promote Brazil in Africa and Argentina would never accept Tabare Vazquez because of the long conflict over the pulp mills and it is

known that there was personal animosity between the Kirchner couple and the former Uruguayan leader.

Venezuela's Hugo Chavez added that the next Unasur secretary general did not necessarily have to be a former president, "there are great personalities that could very well be nominated, but I won't advance names".

Nevertheless he agreed that a decision should be reached at the coming Ibero-American summit scheduled for early December in Mar del Plata.

Brazilian sources in Montevideo said that following talks with several Unasur countries, the name of Marco Aurelio Garcia was seen as a strong candidate. Garcia is President Lula da Silva's foreign affairs advisor and has been the driving force behind the creation of Unasur and promoting other regional integration processes.

Under Brazil's long term strategy, Unasur in a near future should begin talks to join up with the Caribbean and Central American group of countries.

The Georgetown summit ended with Ecuadorian president handing the Unasur pro-tempore presidency for the next twelve months to his Guyana counterpart, Bharrat Jagdeo.

Out of the twelve member presidents, only eight were present since heads of state from Chile, Peru, Bolivia and Uruguay could not attend.

Saturday, November 27th 2010 - 00:23 UTC

Argentine Falklands top expert Ambassador Garcia del Solar dies in Buenos Aires

One of Argentina's main experts on Falklands/Malvinas affairs Lucio Garcia del Solar and former ambassador before the United Nation, United States, the former Soviet Union and UNESCO, among other diplomatic posts died Friday morning in Buenos Aires.

Garcia del Solar was instrumental in having the UN General Assembly approve resolution 2065 (Pic Clarin) Garcia del Solar was instrumental in having the UN General Assembly approve resolution 2065 (Pic Clarin)

The veteran and knowledgeable diplomat was born in Mar del Plata 88 years ago. He received a PhD degree in International Relations at the Paris Institute of Diplomatic Studies in 1958 and since dedicated his life to the dispute with the United Kingdom over the Falkland Islands.

In spite of his youth he was named ambassador in United Nations during four years and was instrumental in the Argentine diplomatic strategy to have the UN General Assembly approve in 1965 the 2065 resolution calling on the UK and Argentina to proceed with negotiations on finding a peaceful solution to the sovereignty question.

The 2065 resolution has become the foundation of all Argentine claims for the resumption of sovereignty talks over the disputed Islands with London.

García del Solar was also ambassador in the United States and the Soviet Union and Unesco. He was named special representative for the normalization of bilateral relations with the United Kingdom following the 1982 South Atlantic conflict when Argentina invaded the Falklands and was later expelled by a British Task Force.

"One of the strongest points of Argentina's position is having always claimed the Malvinas Islands since they were taken over by Britain", said the Malvinas expert during an interview in the nineties.

"Malvinas is the foreign policy issue most deeply rooted in the spirit of Argentines. However our Congress does not debate on the issue as does the British parliament. What really happens is that in Argentina overall there is no discussion on foreign policy", claimed Garcia del Solar in one of his last interviews earlier this year.

Monday, November 29th 2010 - 20:01 UTC

Unasur ban 'huge negative impact' on Falkland Islands?

"A HUGE negative impact on us," is how one Falklands fishing company views the Union of South American Nations' declared intention to close their ports to Falklands flagged vessels, or in their words, 'the illegal flag of the Malvinas'.

Stuart Wallace of Fortuna Ltd Stuart Wallace of Fortuna Ltd

Sheila Stewart, Assistant General Manager of fishing company Argos Ltd told Mercopress that such a move by Unasur would be "very costly" for Argos as their vessel crews were picked up in Montevideo along with supplies.

The declaration was made at the Unasur Presidents Meeting at a summit in Guyana. There it was agreed to incorporate a 'democratic clause' to the group's charter and special mention was made of the Falklands sovereignty dispute.

Stuart Wallace of Fortuna Ltd was more cautious in his response saying, "It is difficult to know what force such a declaration has, if it, for example, requires ratification by the governments involved. Of course if such a policy were to be implemented it would have the unfortunate effect of a significant loss of business for some South American ports. It would inconvenience Falkland vessel owners but we would deal with any new circumstances. "Perhaps most importantly such an aggressive blanket ban would make it clear internationally that we face a tightening blockade aimed at destroying our economy."

Manager of Work Boat Services Ltd Adam Cockwell agreed it was difficult at this stage to judge the affect, adding, "but obviously if all South American ports do decide to block all access to FI flagged vessels then it raises a serious issue for us as we will not be able to go to any ports for our dry docking requirements. Day to day operations for us would not be seriously affected as we do not regularly go to the coast."

The Falkland Islands Government is certainly concerned about the declaration. Member of the Legislative Assembly Gavin Short said, "We are naturally concerned at the content of media reports on this issue. We have not yet seen the text of the statement or agreement,

so are not yet sure of its full implications for us. Once we have seen the text we shall be able to say more and shall then be able to consider our reaction.”

He added, “This will be discussed in depth at our General Purposes Committee meeting on Wednesday. If anyone was in any doubt about the hostile intent that Argentina has towards us and their drive to blockade us then the Georgetown statement, if being reported correctly, should dispel those doubts.”.-By Lisa Watson –SeAledPR – Stanley.-

DECEMBER

Wednesday, December 1st 2010 - 22:38 UTC

Gibraltar’s Chief Minister Caruana entangled over the Andorra status

Gibraltar Chief Minister Peter Caruana has moved to lance the bubble of speculation that followed reports of his mention of the Andorra (*) status at a talk to political and business leaders in Seville last week.

Caruana: “No degree of Spanish sovereignty of any part of Gibraltar is acceptable”
Caruana: “No degree of Spanish sovereignty of any part of Gibraltar is acceptable”

And in a detailed statement to the Chronicle he sets out to roundly rebut remarks made by 1970s opposition leader Maurice Xiberras, in a letter to this newspaper. Mr Caruana absolutely rejects the analysis that he has crossed any red line or indeed said anything new.

“No degree of Spanish sovereignty of any part of Gibraltar is acceptable,” Mr Caruana has insisted.

Mr Caruana was in Seville last week to address the Nueva Economía Fórum at the Alfonso XIII Hotel where he was asked about a future status for the Rock by a reporter. He responded saying that Gibraltar is not displeased with its current status but that if any proposals were put they would have to be freely accepted by the people of Gibraltar.

"For example, I have said many times that a proposal, which I do not think Spain would make, is not minded to make, now, or perhaps ever, a proposal for a possible solution to the Gibraltar issue, which to a certain extent is problematic for everyone, would be, for example, a status like Andorra which is a situation in which, well, you all know the Andorra post its new Constitution of 1993, obviously not the one before," he told the Forum.

"Well, if that were viable, I would say, well, let's put it to the people of Gibraltar in Referendum. I would even not see it as impossible that I might recommend it to the people of Gibraltar, but in the end the one who is going to decide the future of the people of Gibraltar is not Caruana or Caruana's successor, it is the people of Gibraltar who are the ones who have the right to decide their future and to not be victims of imposition," he told the Seville audience.

He also said that if such a proposal were viable then it might be put to the people.

In his statement today Mr Caruana says that Mr Xiberras has based his analysis and conclusions on a false premise. He states that the post 1993 Andorra model is not a case of joint sovereignty between Spain and France and that neither country exercise sovereignty over Andorra.

"The application of the Andorra Model to Gibraltar would not involve Spain having any sovereignty of Gibraltar," he says adding: "It is absurd to imagine that, having spent the last 10 years defending Gibraltar from joint sovereignty (including right now in relation to territorial waters), I might now find it acceptable. No degree of Spanish Sovereignty of any part of Gibraltar is acceptable".

(*) The Principality of Andorra is located in the eastern Pyrenees mountains and bordered by Spain and France. It has an area of 468 km² and an estimated population of 83,888 in 2009. Andorra is a parliamentary co-principality with the President of France and the Bishop of Urgell (Catalonia) as co-princes. This peculiarity makes the President of France, in his capacity as Prince of Andorra, an elected reigning monarch, even though he is not elected by a popular vote of the Andorran people. The politics of Andorra take place in a framework of a parliamentary representative democracy whereby the Prime Minister of

Andorra is the head of government, and of a pluri-form multi-party system. Responsibility for defending Andorra rests with Spain and France. Andorra is a member of the United Nations as well as a number of other international organizations.

Thursday, December 2nd 2010 - 04:00 UTC

Argentina takes Falklands' sovereignty claims to the Maritime Organization

Argentina renewed this week its sovereignty claims over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands and accused the United Kingdom of deliberately not complying with the International Maritime Organization regulations by exposing the security of shipping in the South Atlantic.

IMO Secretary General Efthimios Mitropoulos IMO Secretary General Efthimios Mitropoulos

During this week's meeting in London of the IMO Maritime Security Committee Argentine delegate Osvaldo Marsico ratified that the British military exercises with missiles in the Falklands/Malvinas not only is "an unacceptable provocation but also were done in open violation of IMO regulations", UN resolutions and other international organizations.

According to a release from the Argentine Foreign Affairs ministry the IMO plenary session was attended by the organization's Secretary General Efthimios Mitropoulos and Neil Ferrer president of the Maritime Security Committee.

Argentina's position was supported by presentations from Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, Panama, Chile, México, Venezuela, Cuba, Colombia, Peru, Spain and South Africa.

The Brazilian delegate was particularly articulate in supporting Argentine sovereignty claims over the Islands recalling the recent Unasur declaration rejecting UK's missile practice shooting from land to sea.

Apparently no country member in the Committee came out in support of the UK.

The IMO Maritime Security Committee took note of Argentina's complaints and decided to keep a file with the support statements and called on all governments to abide all security and safety regulations referred to operations that may endanger shipping.

Argentine delegate Marsico said that it was necessary to expose before the committee serious incidents that reveal the repeated and deliberate violation by the UK of IMO regulation, endangering the security of shipping in the South Atlantic.

"On Friday October 8 for the first time the UK informed the Argentine Naval Hydrographical Service, as coordinator of NAVAREA VI, that military exercises including the firing of missiles from Malvinas Islands during October 11 and 23".

Thursday, December 2nd 2010 - 01:50 UTC

US was concerned about Argentine reactions to Falkland Islands exploration round

New cables released by the website Wikileaks and published by the Spanish newspaper El País state the US Secretary of State worries in June 2009 about the sudden change in the language of Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's government in Antarctica and Falkland/Malvinas Islands case.

Former Argentine Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana: "read the small print" Former Argentine Foreign Affairs minister Jorge Taiana: "read the small print"

According to the document, the cable reports the visit of Ambassador Anthony Wayne to the Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana, which refers to an accord elaborated in 2004 with the US government and "other key governments," that has been abandoned by Buenos Aires Government.

Although it does not specifically quote the text of the accord, it affirms that Argentina had "abandoned the specific language agreed" after presenting in April 2009 new claims over the Antarctica before the United Nations Committee that deal with the continental shelf.

Taiana admitted that it occurred this way, but assured it was due to problems in Argentina's electoral agenda. The US Ambassador ascribed the following explanation to Taiana: "If you read carefully our claims, you will see that our language respects the Antarctic Treaty." According to Wayne, the Minister added that Argentina's first issue was not the Antarctic, "of course," but protecting their claims over the (Falkland) Islands sovereignty.

The Falklands/Malvinas controversy was resumed during the beginning of this year when a new round of drilling operations in the watershed of the Islands was authorized by the local government and supported by London.

The State Department remembered what happened in April 2009 and is interested on finding out if the Argentine government's answer to the British decision could cause damage to the US companies involved in the project. I also requests if there is some kind of debate between the Argentine military, or inside Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's government about possible actions, "by their own or with other regional allies, such as Venezuela."

State Department analysts allegedly have been monitoring Falklands/Malvinas oil exploration operations, with US companies interests in mind and since the area is exposed to an international dispute. "This in spite of the fact that a telegram from the US embassy in London, February 2010, includes the opinion of Exxon-Mobil CEO Brad Corson who believes there is not enough oil in the Falklands continental platform to make it commercially viable".

State Department documents that refer to the Islands as Falklands, while the cables from the Buenos Aires embassy use the neutral Falklands/Malvinas, underline its interest in gauging the potential Argentine reply to the companies involved in taking an oil rig to the Islands. "We would appreciate you inform us how we can anticipate the Argentine reaction including possible military actions". To this effect they ask for any information on any discussion on the issue inside the Argentine government or "among military officers".

The State Department is interested in knowing "if there are divisions among members of the government or high military commands". Given the current economic conditions in Argentina, it is possible that they could use the exploration round as an excuse to reaffirm claims over the Islands and the surrounding waters".

In any case the US embassy acknowledges that Argentine policy towards the Falklands/Malvinas has become tougher reacting to the British move and that three levels of action have been adopted: formal protest to the UK; warning letters to each company involved in the operation, recalling that their activity is illegal and they could be sanctioned, and letters to the governments related to the companies with a similar content. "We could be receiving a note under the third category because the US company Diamond Drilling owns the oil rig heading for the Islands". The embassy recalls an Argentine resolution from 2007 which threatens to expulse (from Argentina) any oil company operating in the Falklands/Malvinas without authorization from Buenos Aires, and argues that currently there are no US corporations under those circumstances.

A later telegram reflects US concern about the Argentine government's decision to impede any vessels with final destination Falklands/Malvinas from calling into Argentine continental ports. British diplomats warned their US peers that warning letters have already arrived to companies involved and ask if the non-call resolution could also apply to US cruise vessels heading for Antarctica and which make a brief call in Falklands/Malvinas.

Simon Thomas from the British embassy has expressed "surprise" because the US government has received no letters to that effect in spite of the fact that the oil exploration rig contracted by the British company Desire Petroleum "is operated by a US company".

The State Department is also interested in knowing about Barclays bank which some UK media had published is a Desire Petroleum equity holder and as such could be reached by the Argentine sanctions. However Finance Secretary Hernan Lorenzino clears the issue: "there's no problem because the bank (which happens to be the main operator for the rescheduling process of the Argentine sovereign debt) only owns a fund which manages funds for a third party which at the same time is a shareholder of that company".

Thursday, December 2nd 2010 - 09:14 UTC

Falklands: Rachel North Exploration Well 14/15-2 Oil Discovery

Desire Petroleum plc (AIM:DES) the oil and gas company wholly focussed on the North Falkland Basin, wishes to advise that the 14/15-2 Rachel North well has reached a total depth of 3052 metres.

The Ocean Guardian rig (Photo by Cap. A Jensen) The Ocean Guardian rig (Photo by Cap. A Jensen)

Preliminary data collected indicate that this well is an oil discovery. The company has run an initial suite of wireline logs and this together with the drilling data indicate that the well encountered a 349 metres gross interval from 2621 metres to 2970 metres of sands and shales with hydrocarbons ,of which 57 metres is net pay in multiple zones. The thickest zone is 8 metres thick with an average porosity of 20%. Other zones are thinly bedded and lower porosity but require further analysis from additional wireline logs to establish reservoir potential.

Desire now intends to complete the wireline logging and wireline sampling programme to obtain more information on the reservoir quality, the hydrocarbon saturations and the fluid type to assess the significance of this discovery. Further information will be released in due course.

Commenting on the well, Stephen Phipps Chairman of Desire said, "It is highly encouraging that the initial results from the Rachel North well endorse both our findings and geological model from the previously drilled Rachel sidetrack well. This discovery combined with Rockhoppers' Sea Lion discovery confirms our belief that the eastern flank play fairway in the North Falkland Basin is highly prospective and that further oil fields will be discovered in this area".

Subsurface support is provided to Desire Petroleum by Senergy (GB) Ltd and the results reported today are based on the work of the Senergy operations team.

This statement has been approved by Dr Ian Duncan of Desire Petroleum plc, who is a Fellow of the Geological Society, Chartered Geologist, and a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists with over 35 years experience in petroleum exploration and management.

Saturday, December 4th 2010 - 03:20 UTC

Falklands' referendum planned on 'single constituency'

Despite a resounding 'no' nine years ago, from the Falklands' Camp (rural) community, to the idea of a single voting constituency, the Islands government has agreed that the question will be asked again.

Polling Day in the Falklands

Member of Legislative Council, and a Camp representative, Sharon Halford, who at the recent meeting of the Legislative Assembly introduced the motion that a referendum on the subject be held prior to the next General Election, asked the question that in the light of continued population decline in Camp, was it a sustainable option for the future to continue with the split constituency system?

MLA Halford claimed the division was unnecessary bearing in mind that once elected, Members worked for the betterment of the Falklands as a whole.

She suggested that a number of her constituents would have preferred to be able to vote for the entire Assembly and not just three of the eight.

While the Assembly agreed to hold a referendum all Members do not support Halford's views.

MLA Luxton, also a Camp representative, felt an eventual 'yes' vote might lead to the rural community being "unrepresented" saying he would campaign vigorously for a 'no' vote. He said he did not think it was, "...an artificial division, there is a very clear division between the way people live and think."

MLA Luxton believes that individuals living in the Falklands capital Stanley "lose the awareness of what is going on out there."

East Falklands' farmer Ben Berntsen agreed saying, "We will always need an experienced Camp person to represent our views and see things in a realistic way."

From West Falklands, Nigel Knight commented, "I think the Single constituency is a bad idea. I realize that some Stanley MLA's do work on behalf of Camp residents but I do not think there is any substitute or other way of appreciating the problems of living and working in Camp (especially West Falklands and the outer islands) than residing there."

Stanley man Tim Miller feels such fears are unfounded saying, "We think it is an excellent idea and overdue. The current three for Camp five for Stanley is distorted in favour of Camp and if anything leads to allegations of excess membership power.

"The place is too small and no longer is the population evenly spread as in the past. You often get ex campers representing Stanley anyway.

"All members vote on all issues and those who stand are not idiots - they know the Falklands is a 'whole' and we need to look after and keep the 'whole' Islands going.

"With a single constituency you could easily end up with four or five elected and living in Camp - so what - as long as we all had a say in voting for them. We have often wanted to vote for one or two campers in preference to all of the five Stanley candidates on offer".

Another observer commented, "It seems a strange idea to have single constituency because the amended Islands Plan singles out Camp, and devotes an entire policy to its preservation and development, so it seems reasonable to presume that it would also apply to the matter of constituencies.

"Also the Economic Development Strategy is going to be developed separately from the Rural Development Strategy because in fact there are issues that are very particular to the Camp in terms of how they effect decisions about investment and suchlike.

"When you look at government's most important strategies- the Islands plan and the EDS its clear that Elected Members have already recognized that the social and economic development of Camp should be managed separately from Stanley to reflect Camp's

specific circumstances - why shouldn't the political development of Camp not also be representative?

The single constituency will only go ahead if the referendum results in two thirds of the Stanley electorate and two thirds of the Camp electorate vote in favour.

Nine years ago 49% of the Stanley electorate voted 'no' as did a massive 78% of the Camp electorate.

The last referendum on the subject was considered 'advisory' and not a final decision, (however, representatives followed the wishes of the majority of the electorate.) In this case MLA Halford made it clear in her speech relating to the Motion that it was very much, "up to the people."

According to the 2006 census, the Falklands population was 2.478 (Stanley 2.155 and the Camp 363). The 2001 census number is 2.379 (1.989 and 390). By Lisa Watson – SeAledPR – Stanley.-

Saturday, December 4th 2010 - 00:24 UTC

Falkland Islands Government wants a louder voice in the world stage

The UK Coalition Government would like to see the Falkland Islands being more proactive in getting the message to the world that the Islands are a modern democracy with good above international governance standard.

FCO minister Jeremy Browne and Falklands MLA Dick Sawle FCO minister Jeremy Browne and Falklands MLA Dick Sawle

Assembly Member Dick Sawle, just back from the Overseas Territories Conference (OTCC) in London and meetings with Minister Jeremy Browne, says this wish stems from the determination of the British Government to view their overseas territories as assets rather than liabilities.

"The UK government's new outlook on all OT is refreshing and there is no doubt (as we have seen since the new coalition government was formed) that we have the fullest possible support of the UK government", said MLA Sawle.

He added that the way in which OTs link with London "is to be enhanced with a greater working together of Whitehall departments; they are very keen to listen to us and work together with us to better define what our needs are and meet them wherever possible".

This more positive view brings with it a responsibility on the part of the territories to come up to scratch in areas concerning good governance, but also to define clearly what it is they want out of the relationship with the British Government, Cllr Sawle says, adding that it was made clear in the main conference that home rule was the goal towards which all British Overseas Territories should be striving.

MLA Sawle says he hopes people will not misunderstand being proactive as implying another agreement with Argentina like that made in 1999.

He says he and his Assembly colleagues realise there is a need for the Falkland Islands to speak more loudly to the world and ways of doing this are being actively considered.

At the moment the Argentine Government is winning the public relations war "hands down," says Cllr Sawle. But he hopes that with the aid of recently available historical findings, the Falkland Islands Government can begin to explode the myth upon which the Argentine sovereignty claim is based, namely that an Argentine civilian population was expelled from the Falkland Islands by the British in 1833.

"Our desire to make sure that our voice is heard clearly on the world stage was recognised. It is important to us that we are clear with our history – where we came from, who we are now and the way in which we have developed. It is also equally important that world leaders realise that the Argentine claim over the Falklands, which is based on the myth that we expelled an Argentine population in 1833 is just that – a myth with no substance in truth whatsoever".

While this attempt is not likely to be successful in Buenos Aires, says Cllr Sawle, he hopes that a start may be made next year to win over the Caribbean countries, including some members of the British Commonwealth, who last year voiced their support for sovereignty negotiations.

Saint Helena Councillor Tara Thomas will provide the political lead to a working group set up by the South Atlantic Territories at the OTCC, which will investigate ways in which these territories -Falkland Islands, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha and Pitcairn - may work more closely together in the future.

The feeling was that there were several areas of interest, like tourism, fishing, renewable energy, environmental protection and telecommunications which were common to all and might benefit from a consolidated approach.

Initially, said Cllr Sawle, this group would be something of a "talk shop" until its aims and objectives can be defined.

This, it was hoped, would happen before next year's meeting of the OTCC.

Other issues relevant to the Falkland Islands arising out of the OTCC included easier access for overseas territories to European Union funds, possibly even to the UK's Lottery Fund.

Finally MLA Sawle pointed out that the Overseas Territories are a fairly diverse set of islands around the world but the common goals, set by the UK, are those of self-governance and self-reliance.

"We are required to have modern democracies and good governance. Our standards of governance have to meet or exceed international standards and here in the Falklands we are proud that we meet those expectations".

Monday, December 6th 2010 - 07:32 UTC

Falkland Islands: Desire drilling update

Desire Petroleum plc (AIM:DES) the oil and gas company wholly focussed on the North Falkland Basin, today provides the following update on the latest logging results from the 14/15-2 Rachel North well which, following additional wireline data, will be plugged and abandoned with oil shows .

The results from the new logging data can be summarised as follows:

1. As announced on 2 December 2010 preliminary results from the interpretation of the initial log data indicated that the well had encountered a 349m gross interval of sands and shales with hydrocarbons, of which 57m was net pay in multiple zones.
2. However sampling of the main sand has shown that the hydrocarbons are residual and that the mobile fluid is water.
3. Analysis of the formation water recovered by sampling indicates much lower salinity than anticipated and when this value is incorporated into a revised log interpretation it is confirmed that the sands are water bearing. The salinity impacts the resistivity of the formation water (R_w) which is used to calculate the saturation of hydrocarbons in sands. Using industry standard procedures, the initial interpretation was based on a calculated R_w value from a clear water sand only 55m above the target sand, of the same stratigraphic age and depositional setting. This calculated value was consistent with measurements from other wells in the basin. Unexpectedly, the actual R_w value in the sample taken from the main sand turned out to be markedly different and the target sand is now interpreted to be water-bearing.
4. Formation pressures and sampling confirm the presence of good reservoir quality in the upper sands.
5. A deeper target is still interpreted to be oil bearing, but the interval is thin and reservoir quality is poor.

The wells drilled by Desire in the Rachel area have identified five fan systems of varying areal extent and reservoir properties. Good reservoir development has been recorded in a number of the fans. Some of the sands are of a similar age to the sands in Rockhopper Exploration's Sea Lion discovery. All of these fans will now be remapped incorporating the data from the wells to identify areas where better quality reservoir can be expected and stratigraphic traps developed. As these fans can only be mapped on 3D seismic, final mapping will therefore need to await the new 3D data acquisition, which is expected to commence shortly.

The company will now proceed with collecting the final logging data prior to plugging and abandoning this well. A full evaluation of all the data will then be undertaken. After completion of the Rachel North well the rig will move to drill the Dawn/Jacinta prospect in Tranche I in which Desire has a 100 percent interest. This prospect is independent of Rachel and is targeting sands at a number of levels and will explore the prospectivity on the southern margin of the basin immediately updip from the main oil source rock.

After the Dawn/Jacinta well, Desire is likely to drill another well at a location as yet still to be decided but the forward drilling schedule is still to be finalised.

Desire's current cash balances are circa £75 million GBP equivalent. These funds will enable us to drill the Dawn/Jacinta well, an additional well and to cover our 3D seismic costs.

Commenting on the well, Stephen Phipps Chairman of Desire said:

"Having seen the highly encouraging results from the first logs, the LWD, PEX and CMR, on this well, plus accompanying oil shows, it is extremely disappointing that the subsequent wireline logs and fluids sampling have dashed all the earlier promise of this being Desire's first oil discovery in the North Falkland Basin. Despite this setback, the presence of hydrocarbons and good reservoir development have been identified in a number of the Rachel fan sands and we therefore continue to believe in the prospectivity of the East Flank Play fairway for future oil discoveries."

Subsurface support is provided to Desire Petroleum by Senergy (GB) Ltd and the results reported today are based on the work of the Senergy operations team.

This statement has been approved by Dr Ian Duncan of Desire Petroleum plc, who is a Fellow of the Geological Society, Chartered Geologist, and a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists with over 35 years experience in petroleum exploration and management.

Tuesday, December 7th 2010 17:08 UTC

European countries can't influence UK Falklands' decisions, admits Spain

In spite of the fact that the Ibero-American leaders' summit last weekend in Mar del Plata approved a document in support of Argentina's sovereignty claims over the Falklands/Malvinas and other South Atlantic islands, Spain admitted European countries can not influence London's decisions.-

Thursday, December 9th 2010 08:13 UTC

New Protocol For Travel to Antarctica Seeks To Address

By Dominique Farrell - With the tourist season underway, a tourism expert discusses new Antarctic protocol with The Santiago Times.-

Wednesday, December 8th 2010 - 16:47 UTC

Madrid's position on Gibraltar territorial waters "lacks legal basis" says former ambassador

A retired Spanish diplomat has sparked controversy after circulating a number of opinion articles that contradicted the official Spanish position on key issues including Gibraltar.

The diplomat wrote in clear, unequivocal terms that the traditional Spanish position on the issue of Gibraltar's territorial waters was "weak" and "lacks any legal basis".

Jose Antonio de Yturriaga, who held ambassadorial posts in Iraq, Ireland and Russia, sent the articles to the Association of Diplomats for the benefit of its members, which include most serving Spanish diplomats.

But the move drew the ire of the Spanish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which pressured the association to withdraw the distribution.

The move to censor the material upset Sr Yturriaga, who has now posted the reports on his blog: <http://opinionesdejay.blogspot.com/>

His position on the issue of Gibraltar waters – an article he wrote following this summer's clashes at sea – was that Spain was wrong to say Gibraltar had no territorial waters.

He said that there were various reports within the Asesoría Jurídica Internacional of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs – of which he was head for some time – that made clear there was no legal basis for the Spanish position.

"The Ministry, however, has not dared to change its position and has maintained it, albeit with a low profile," he wrote.

In the article, the retired diplomat explored possible avenues for a long term solution to the Gibraltar question and said Spain and the UK should intensify discussions to that end, perhaps under the 'two flags, three voices' formula.

But on the specific issue of the waters, he said Spain should reconsider its position and recognise that Gibraltar had a right to territorial sea. The exact scope of the waters would have to be negotiated under the terms of UNCLOS.

He said such a move would bolster friendly cross-border relations and strengthen cooperation on issues such as law enforcement and navigational safety. He also warned that to constantly put forward the traditional, and legally unjustifiable, Spanish position on the waters could ultimately be prejudicial to Spanish interests. (Gibraltar Chronicle).

Thursday, December 9th 2010 - 15:21 UTC

Foreign Secretary lays out policy to help Commonwealth achieve its potential

British Foreign Secretary William Hague laid a statement in Parliament on how the UK plans to reinvigorate the Commonwealth with a vision to strengthen the Commonwealth as “a focus for promoting democratic values and development”.

“A focus for promoting democratic values and development”, William Hague “A focus for promoting democratic values and development”, William Hague

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office will lead a co-ordinated cross Whitehall approach to help the Commonwealth achieve its potential and which underlines the UK commitment to this unique global organisation, underlined Hague.

“Our relationship with the Commonwealth has been primarily based on its history, values and common bonds. But the modern Commonwealth, including countries that were never British colonies, has been transformed. Today’s Commonwealth bridges all of the continents, embraces almost two billion people, and represents all of the world’s major faiths. Its membership includes many of the fastest growing and increasingly technologically advanced economies in the world. These are the great markets of today and tomorrow. Equally important is the forum it provides for numerous smaller nations which may feel that their voice is lost in the wider United Nations structure and who find the more informal Commonwealth setting an ideal place to be heard.

“The Commonwealth of the 21st century should stand for democracy, development, and human rights, and act as a recognised force for good on the issues of our times. It could also be used much more effectively to further the United Kingdom’s foreign policy priorities and worldwide economic interests. The United Kingdom is already at the heart of this ready made network, which fits perfectly into the new global environment. In the words of the Head of the Commonwealth, Her Majesty the Queen, the Commonwealth is indeed ‘the face of the future’. It is a future in which the United Kingdom will play a full part.

“To achieve this, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will work closely with Whitehall partners to:

- define and develop ways in which the modern Commonwealth can add value to the delivery of United Kingdom policy goals and act as a global soft power network.
- use the Commonwealth to develop trade and investment opportunities for the United Kingdom and to promote intra-Commonwealth trade.
- support Commonwealth development programmes and bilateral assistance in Commonwealth countries.
- reform, strengthen and renew the Commonwealth structures and purposes through the Eminent Persons Group, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group reform process, and in concert with key partners ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2011.
- focus Commonwealth activity where it has strengths and conclude activity where others are better placed and better resourced.
- strengthen the Commonwealth through expanded membership and partner and observer agreements.
- work with the Commonwealth Secretariat better to demonstrate the benefits of membership to the public in Commonwealth nations
- use the Commonwealth in other international institutions (e.g. the United Nations, the Group of 20) where we can develop common foreign policy aims.
- connect with the “internal Commonwealth”, the many United Kingdom communities with close ties to Commonwealth countries, to the benefit of social cohesion within British society”.

Friday, December 10th 2010 01:54 UTC

British expedition claims to have established Antarctic land-crossing record.-

British expedition to Antarctica says it has succeeded in establishing a new record - the fastest land crossing of the southernmost continent.-

Friday, December 10th 2010 - 10:25 UTC

Falklands invites C-24 president to “balance” recent visit to Argentina

The Falkland Islands government has officially extended an invitation to the chairman of the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization Ambassador (C 24), Donatus

Keith St. Aimee to visit the South Atlantic Islands with the purpose of 'balancing' a recent similar invitation from Argentina and to defend the Falklands' people right to exercise self-determination.

In the letter addressed 7 December FIG points out that during the visit to Argentina, Ambassador Donatus Keith St. Aimee is reported to have made a number of statements "which were either factually incorrect or marginalised the people of the Falkland Islands along with the founding principles of the United Nations Charter and UN Resolution 1514 (XV) on which the Decolonisation Committee is based".

Therefore FIG decided it would set out its position and "offer you the chance to balance what you heard in Argentina through a visit to the Falkland Islands".

Furthermore, "we believe that, as you have visited the territory of Argentina (Tierra del Fuego) which claims to be affected by the Falkland Islands Question, that you should also now visit the territory that is actually affected; namely the Falkland Islands".

The letter describes some of Argentina's attitudes to isolate and subjugate the Falklands by strangling the local economy and denying their people the exercise of the basic right to self determination.

In the letter the relationship of the Falkland Islands with the United Kingdom is described as having evolved naturally and progressively over the years and "it is certainly no longer colonial - it is a relationship that the people of the Falkland Islands have chosen freely".

During the visit to Argentina Ambassador Donatus Keith St.Aimee was quoted by the Buenos Aires press saying that "the visit is important because it helps to collect the most information possible, to have an idea of the feelings and it all helps for a better understanding and action at the (UN) Committee. I can read hundreds of documents and resolutions, but nothing equals contact with reality".

Follows the text of the letter:

H.E. Mr Donatus Keith St. Aimee

Chairman, United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation

Your Excellency

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONIZATION: FALKLAND ISLANDS

The question of the Falkland Islands is discussed annually at the United Nations at a meeting of the Special Committee on Decolonisation. As elected Chairman of the Special Committee on Decolonisation it is your responsibility to oversee these discussions.

The Falkland Islands Government is aware of your recent visit to Argentina, where you spoke about the Falkland Islands and the Decolonisation Committee. While the Falkland Islands Government appreciates that the Argentine Government and media have their own agendas, you are reported as making a number of statements which were either factually incorrect or marginalised the people of the Falkland Islands along with the founding principles of the United Nations Charter and UN Resolution 1514 (XV) on which the Decolonisation Committee is based. The Falkland Islands Government therefore decided it would set out its position and offer you the chance to balance what you heard in Argentina through a visit to the Falkland Islands.

The Republic of Argentina wishes to subjugate and exploit the people of the Falkland Islands, against their will, under its own full sovereignty. It justifies this by claiming that descendents of immigrants from Europe who settled in the Falkland Islands do not have the same human right to self-determination as descendents of immigrants from Europe who settled on the American continent during the same era. Conversely, the United Kingdom wishes to give the people of the Falkland Islands, like any other people, the right to self-determine freely their own political status and pursue freely their economic, social and cultural development. The Falkland Islands wishes to defend its people and its right to exercise self-determination.

The Falkland Islands and the world are very different today to what they were in the 1960s when the original language for the question of the Falkland Islands was drafted. While the islands and the world have modernised, along with the constitutional

relationship between the Falkland Islands and the United Kingdom, the language of the question of the Falkland Islands within the United Nations has remained remarkably similar. It is now outdated.

The Falkland Islands Government understands that as Chairman you wish to modernise the work of the Decolonisation Committee. We believe that , as you have visited the territory of Argentina (Tierra del Fuego) which claims to be affected by the Falkland Islands Question, that you should also now visit the territory that is namely the Falkland Islands. Therefore, on behalf of the Falkland Islands Government, I would like to invite you formally, in your capacity as Chairman of the United Nations Decolonisation Committee, to visit the Falkland Islands in order that you may appreciate the real situation. Because of the Argentine Government's attempts to stifle our economic development, flight options are limited. I would be happy to advise you on the best way to travel to the islands. A visit, including travelling time would take at least a week out of your schedule.

The Falkland Islands' relationship with the United Kingdom has evolved naturally and progressively over the years and it is certainly no longer colonial - it is a relationship that the people of the Falkland Islands have chosen freely. The Falkland Islands Government hopes to show you that relationship during your visit.

I have asked that the United Kingdom Permanent Mission to the United Nations send a copy of this letter to the United Nations Secretary General and request its circulation as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 45.-Yours Sincerely.-Gavin Short
MLA.-On behalf of Members of the Legislative Assembly.-

Monday, December 13th 2010 - 01:19 UTC

Falklands' friends: HMS Scott to Antarctica; HMS Invincible to the scrap

The future of the Royal Navy's ice patrol vessel HMS Endurance may remain in doubt well over a year after it nearly sank in the Straits of Magellan and returned to Portsmouth on the lift ship MV Target, but there is no doubting the UK's ongoing commitment to the Antarctic Treaty.

HMS Scott is not officially an icebreaker but is doing HMS Endurance's job HMS Scott is not officially an icebreaker but is doing HMS Endurance's job

One hundred years after the death of the explorer after whom she is named, the Navy's deep water survey vessel HMS Scott left Plymouth early on the morning of November 25, bound for the Antarctic.

Earlier this year Devonport based HMS Scott surveyed 3,000 miles of uncharted ocean and provided information for the safety of navigation and entirely new seabed views of interest to scientists, including newly-discovered undersea volcanoes.

The ship's current mission will again be in support of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Antarctic Survey.

HMS Scott will provide data for the United Kingdom's Hydrographic Office using her state-of-the-art multi-beam sonar system to collect information in the data-sparse waters of the Antarctic.

Despite the fact that HMS Scott is not officially an icebreaker, she can sail through ice up to 80cm thick. Commanding Officer Commander Gary Hesling said: "The fact that HMS Scott can undertake useful and valuable tasking, despite not being an icebreaker, shows the utility and flexibility of the Royal Navy."

While one relatively new ship to the Falklands makes its way here under full steam, another old friend is about to suffer a very different fate. The aircraft carrier HMS Invincible, which was Britain's flagship vessel in the Falklands war, has been put up for sale as scrap metal on an auction website similar to eBay.

Decommissioned in 2005 after 32 years of service, and with her four Rolls Royce gas turbine engines removed, the government is hoping that the 10,000 tons of mild steel in her hull will be worth more than £2 million.

Should any reader with deep pockets and a welder be interested, the aircraft carrier has been put on www.edisposals.com where it is currently listed as "in stock".

Latest reports suggest that no bids have been received, but Leavesley International – who scrapped HMS Intrepid in 2008 - have indicated that they are interested.

HMS Invincible was due to be sold to Australia for £175 million in 1982, but the sale was hastily stopped when the war in the Falklands broke out.

Built by Vickers in Barrow-in-Furness, HMS Invincible was laid down in 1973 and entered active service in 1980. She was mothballed in 2005 after a refit which was supposed to extend her life by ten years. (Penguin News).-

Monday, December 13th 2010 - 14:17 UTC

Ceremonies at London's Cenotaph and the Falklands to remember Battle Day

The 98th anniversary of the Battle of the Falkland Islands or Battle Day was commemorated at the Cenotaph in the heart of London last Saturday under dull skies, but in good spirits, and with a good turnout.

Sukey Cameron MBE and former Gov David Tatham go forward to lay their wreaths. (Photo P.Pepper) Sukey Cameron MBE and former Gov David Tatham go forward to lay their wreaths. (Photo P.Pepper)

Guards with arms reversed at Falklands Battle Monument (Photo PNews) Guards with arms reversed at Falklands Battle Monument (Photo PNews)

A similar event was held in Stanley last Wednesday 8 December, the most important date of the Falklands' calendar together with June 14, Liberation Day.

Battle Day originally commemorated the defeat of the German fleet, under the command of Admiral von Spee, which was advancing on Stanley on that day in 1914 and now also

remembers those who fell both in the Second World War and in the liberation of the Islands in 1982.

In London the Colour Guard was formed by Royal Navy sailors from Portsmouth and by cadets from Pangbourne Naval College, and led by Air Commodore Peter Johnson, a former commander of British Forces in the Falklands.

Colonel Chris Keeble laid the wreath for the Armed Forces, and inspected the Colour Guard after the ceremony. He took over command of 2-PARA at the Battle of Goose Green after Colonel "H" Jones was killed. Both he and Air Commodore Johnson are now on the Falkland Islands Association Committee.

FIA Chairman David Tatham laid the wreath for the Association and Falklands Islands Government Representative Sukey Cameron on behalf of the Falklands. Many other wreaths were laid.

The service was conducted by the Reverend Stephen Palmer who has taken over as Chaplain to the FIA following the sad death of the Reverend Peter Millam earlier this year. Stephen Palmer is also a chaplain to the Queen, and is a former rector of Christchurch Cathedral in Stanley.

The ceremony was followed by the AGM of the Falkland Islands Association at the Union Jack Club in London, which was conducted by Chairman David Tatham.

Sean Moffat was awarded the Bill Hunter-Christie prize as the outstanding Falklands student of the year in Britain. He has just graduated as a design maker from Plymouth University and is now studying design technology.

In the Falklands a service in the Stanley Cathedral was followed by a parade and an act of remembrance including wreath-laying at the Battle Monument.

After the parade, which was led by the band of the Royal Marines School of Music, Governor Nigel Haywood SVO and the Commander of British Forces South Atlantic Islands Commodore Philip Thicknesse took the salute from a dais outside Government House.

Military units taking part in the parade included the Falkland Islands Defence Force and a combined services detachment. Falkland Islands youth groups were also represented. HMS Clyde was at anchor in the inner harbour, dressed overall for the occasion and the events at the Battle Monument were concluded with a flypast by an RAF Hercules. (P.Pepper from London/PNews).-

Wednesday, December 15th 2010 - 01:51 UTC

Falklands' war film to be done in Isle of Man on time for 30th anniversary

An independent feature film about the Falklands War will be made on the Isle of Man next spring. The project is called 'Betrayed' and charts a soldier's battle with post traumatic stress disorder.

The idea for the film came from a series of acting workshops held in the island this year by actor Lee Boardman.

Boardman said: "We have been staggered by how much talent there is on the Isle of Man so we have tailored the roles to fit the actors we have worked with".

"We want to make a movie about the war, but make it on a really low budget which has never really done before. It will be an Isle of Man feature film made only with actors from the Island", he added.

The three weekend-long workshops were organised by DAM Productions and held by Director Lesley Manning & actor Lee Boardman both of whom have spent the past few months developing the film script.

The aim of the project is to provide a platform for Manx actors and to give them an opportunity to work in the world of professional feature film.

Boardman continued: "We are now sure that we have the talent, dedication and inspiration to make this happen, it's a huge undertaking but we are just going to jump in and get started in spring."

The project is described by Producer Phil Gates as "A man's journey through the battle and the aftermath" and will have particular poignancy as 2012 marks the 30th anniversary of the war.

Producers from DAM Productions said: "It's tremendously exciting to be making a feature film with so much local involvement. We're thrilled Lee and Lesley recognise this talent and are so keen to create such a great opportunity on the Isle of Man."

A percentage of profits from the film will be donated to an appropriate charity dealing with effects of post traumatic stress disorder.

On 2 April 1982, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands, a remote Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic. The move led to a brief, but bitter war.

In the fighting that followed, 655 Argentine and 255 British servicemen lost their lives, as did three Falkland Islanders. (BBC).-

Thursday, December 16th 2010 - 00:55 UTC

Spectacular flypast marks retirement of iconic Falklands' war veteran Harriers

Britain paid tribute Wednesday to a joint force of Royal Navy and RAF Harrier aircraft with a spectacular flypast to mark their retirement after 41 years of service. A formation of 16 Harriers that became famous during the Falklands' conflict, took off from RAF Cottesmore into the skies of Lincolnshire.

Brought into service in 1969 it was also involved in Iraq and Afghanistan (Photo Crown Copyright/MOD) Brought into service in 1969 it was also involved in Iraq and Afghanistan (Photo Crown Copyright/MOD)

Photo:Crown Copyright/MOD Photo:Crown Copyright/MOD

Brought into service in 1969 and based at RAF Wittering, the British aircraft was designed to take off and land both vertically and on a short runway. Well known for its role in the Falklands War, the Harrier went on to serve in many other conflicts including in Bosnia and Iraq in the 1990s.

The RAF and Royal Navy Harrier squadrons joined forces in 2000 to form Joint Force Harrier, based at RAF Cottesmore. These combined Harrier squadrons served in Sierra Leone, the second Gulf War and most recently Afghanistan.

Air Officer Commanding No. 1 Group, Air Vice Marshal Greg Bagwell, said: "The Harrier is a true icon and stands testament to the innovation and excellence of British design and engineering, and the skill and courage of our airmen.

"It has had a truly distinguished service with both the RAF and the Royal Navy, from the South Atlantic to the skies over Afghanistan. It now takes its place in history as one of aviation's greats."

Officer Commanding 800 Naval Air Squadron, Commander Dave Lindsay, said: "The Harrier leaves UK service after an illustrious career that has seen it contribute to every major conflict in the last 30 years. It has been an enormous personal privilege and honour to have been involved with this wonderful aircraft for nearly 20 years, at sea and over land, at peace and in conflict. I will forever be immensely proud to be able to say I have been a Royal Navy Harrier Squadron Commander."

Last year the aircraft celebrated its 40th anniversary as the Harrier squadrons flew home after five years in Afghanistan.

Joint Force Harrier Commander, Group Captain Gary Waterfall, said: "As the last Harrier Force Commander, it has been a real honour to ensure that the Harrier has been retired

from service with all of the respect and dignity deserved. Today has been a tribute to everybody involved with the Harrier family.”

The Harriers fell victim to the recent bout of belt-tightening by the British coalition government, which announced they would be removed from service in this autumn's defence review.

Thursday, December 16th 2010 - 16:19 UTC

“Falklands under economic and environmental attack” by Argentina

“The Falklands are under economic and ‘environmental’ attack by Argentina” and this is having a direct impact on the South Atlantic fisheries sustainability of high seas marine resources, claimed the Falkland Islands Fishing Companies Association, FIFCA.

Stuart Wallace, FIFCA Chairman Stuart Wallace, FIFCA Chairman

Unfortunately “Argentina’s refusal to engage constructively in the management of straddling and high seas marine resources is a disgrace, impossible to understand in the times we live in” said Stuart Wallace chairman (*) during FIFCA annual general meeting in Stanley.

“It has already resulted in the collapse of the southern blue whiting stock, once one of the most abundant fish in the south west Atlantic, and will make impossible the proper management of remaining high seas and straddling stocks, a truly avoidable environmental tragedy”, underlined Wallace.

But in spite of the Argentine attacks, FIFCA was positive about the industry and the sustained development of the Falklands.

Wallace pointed out to the global reputation of the Falklands’ fishing companies and their commitment to support responsible management of the fishery.

"Our management system is based on sound scientific research, and with its property rights base of individually transferable quota underpins the management and commercial development of the fishery".

Wallace said the fishing industry in the Falklands is a tough, complex and highly risky environment "without the added risks introduced by the irresponsibility of our neighbours".

However in spite of adversity and neighbouring lack of responsibility it is encouraging to see that significant new members have joined FIFCA which means investors are prepared to risk their money, time in the development of the Falklands, "under a model of balance between local ownership and outside capital".

FIFCA also underlined the good working relation with the Falklands' government and mentioned some of the challenges for the industry such as port facilities and shipping services, and future infrastructure given the considerable increase of the fishing industry's activities which are taking place in the Falklands.

The whole text of the speech follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of our Association it is my pleasure to welcome you here this evening.

I would like to strike a balance here between reviewing the past – the past year but focusing on the future rather than the past.

For our members the past twelve months have seen major collaborations with our Government, the EDS process consumed a great deal of time, on occasions tensions ran high but in the end the industry arrived at a position all could share, and which was incorporated into the final EDS document. I would like to thank Tom Blake and others who represented the industry in the core group over the two years. Of course the existence of an Economic Development Strategy is just a basis from which to work.

The fee review study is taking longer than anticipated, it is funded jointly by Industry and Government. Realistically it will be the new year now before a final report is available. Again much work is being undertaken on behalf of our members by one or two people, in this case in particular Drew Irvine who is our lead member of the working group involved.

The Association have met with Members of the Legislative Assembly and discussed matters such as the level of scientific support and observer coverage in the fishery and we have very much welcomed the open invitation from MLAs to discuss with them issues in the future.

Our fishery is globally recognised, the Falkland Islands fishing industry supports the responsible management of the fishery and are committed to acting responsibly. Our management system is based on sound scientific research, and with its property rights base of individually transferable quota underpins the management and commercial development of the fishery.

Unfortunately although we take tough and responsible decisions to ensure the sustainability of our resources, the Falklands are under economic and 'environmental' attack by Argentina. That country's refusal to engage constructively in the management of straddling and high seas marine resources is a disgrace, impossible to understand in the times we live in. It has already resulted in the collapse of the southern blue whiting stock, once one of the most abundant fish in the south west Atlantic, and will make impossible the proper management of remaining high seas and straddling stocks. A truly avoidable environmental tragedy.

The fishing industry in the Falklands, I think even more than many other places, is a tough, complex and highly risky environment without the added risks introduced by the irresponsibility of our neighbours, it is therefore extremely encouraging that we have welcomed new significant quota owners as members, and have seen major transfers of quota during the year. Good on all concerned for being prepared to risk their money, to say nothing of committing their time, in the development of the Falklands.

I often hear how the Falklands need to encourage people to invest, this is an excellent example of people doing just that, raising the money, risking it in the Falklands and making major contributions to the public treasury in the form of tax paid by quota sellers, and at the same time demonstrating a model of balance between local ownership and welcoming outside capital.

I don't think any of us envy MLAs the responsibility of deciding on what we do about port facilities, and, declaring an interest, shipping services to meet our future demands. I need to be a bit careful here because I have a commercial interest in the existing service but consideration of what we can achieve in the future inevitably means we must look at the facilities we will need.

Companies are already consigning product to an increasing number of destinations, shipments are being sorted on the dock, inspections carried out, complex export and health documentation is being prepared, vessels are being laid up, maintenance and repair work undertaken, valuable skills are being learnt, FIPASS is a busy place. Is it adequate for the medium term even? My reply is that if anyone thinks that it is then they must explain where and how they think we are going to develop in the Falklands.

I see this morning that oil prices have reached 91 dollars a barrel, less that the 147 dollars we faced in 2008/2009 but still very worrying. Fuel costs account for anything between 30 and 40 percent of industry costs, and of course freight rates increase with every fuel increase too. Many of our products are sold into southern Europe, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain. We all know the economic position of these countries. But we produce food and our product is good. The market overall is currently holding up, some weakening is evident but there has not been a collapse in prices. But costs continue to rise and many of them not the sort we control.

So for the future we have a fishery managed to ensure sustainability, sound science, a commitment to fishing responsibly, an excellent reputation established over more than two decades and a property rights system providing an environment in which investors with the courage to invest in our sector have confidence. Our Government is considering how best to meet the growing infrastructure needs, is open to discussion and not least we have

Government officers with whom we work on a daily basis who provide professional, friendly and helpful support to us all.

The future can't be bad. Thank you.

- Mr Stuart Wallace was re-elected Chairman of the Association. He is assisted on the Board of Directors by Vice Chairman, Tom Blake, (RBC Ltd), Mike Summers (Pioneer Seafoods Ltd), Drew Irvine (Argos Ltd) and Lewis Clifton (Byron Holdings Ltd).-

Saturday, December 18th 2010 - 19:09 UTC

Conflicting assessments of Argentina's defence policy and military capabilities

Conflicting assessments of Argentina's military capacity, defence policies and future planning were given by the brand-new Defence minister, Arturo Puricelli and a former minister from the opposition.

Half the Argentine Air Force is grounded and pilots losing their flying certificates claims Jaunarena Half the Argentine Air Force is grounded and pilots losing their flying certificates claims Jaunarena

On taking office Defence Minister Puricelli announced that "there will be continuity" in the politics applied by (former minister) Nilda Garré, and sustained that the government, "is not improvising defence plans". Nevertheless he feels 'enthusiastic' about the task ahead.

He further affirmed that, "Our aim is to give the Argentine public peace of mind, and we will achieve this through bringing continuity in our policies".

The defence measures being proposed are not those imagined by Garré or Puricelli, "they are ideas brought forward by the President (Cristina Fernandez) and those of the ex-President Néstor Kirchner," mentioned Puricelli in an interview with a Buenos Aires radio.

The brand-new minister sustained that his administration will "advance on from what we have been working on, with a very solid legal framework, and we will let ourselves, for the first time in 50 years, have a modern defence policy according to the needs of Argentina today".

"The public should have the security that their Armed Forces are trained, capable, and hold a moral and spiritual philosophy; securing their interest in national defence, as stated in the Constitution", he added.

His closing statement, aside from commenting on his "excitement" with his new role, was that "there is a lot to do, all of which is important for today's criteria for public protection, coming from all types of work in defence, as requested by the government".

Puricelli said that Argentina's defence policy is not based on "conflict hypothesis" plans but in the modern line of thinking of strategic planning according to capacities and fields of action, "where the complex universe of international relations is assessed".

This will lead to "a short, medium and long term plan with capacities and fields clearly defined and long term resources procurement and not rushing out on a shopping spree based on current circumstances or assumptions".

However former Defence minister Horacio Jaunarena was not so positive about what's going on with Argentine defence policy and military expending.

Jaunarena claimed that following the "very poor administration" of former minister Garré Argentine Armed Forces are in a "bad shape", with "pilots grounded" since they have been unable to comply with the needed certified flying hours and the Army has sufficient ammunition for a "two hour combat".

"The forces are in a bad shape: if we make a balance of Garré's performance we have the Air Force with over half of its aircraft grounded, lack of spares and maintenance, and pilots losing their flying certificates because they can't comply with the necessary minimum monthly flying hours".

He added that the Argentine Navy with a nominal fleet of 60 units "only has 16 operational and with sufficient ammunition to hold a two hours combat at the most". He added that Argentina no longer has an icebreaker (Almirante Irizar) and has leased a Russian unit at a "fantasy cost."

The Army lacks sufficient logistic support, and its equipment is "well over twenty years old and needs to be replaced".

"All this is incompetence, unreal and evidence of a committed policy to downgrade the Armed Forces. There is nothing to celebrate, on the contrary", concluded Jaunarena.-

Tuesday, December 21st 2010 - 05:19 UTC

High Court ruling favours 9.500 former conscripts Malvinas war veterans

A ruling from Argentina's Supreme Court admitted "Malvinas war veteran condition" to a petty officer who was deployed in Puerto Belgrano and Rio Grande during the 1982 conflict thus enabling him to a veteran's pension.

Tents in Plaza de Mayo waiting for their claims to be recognized Tents in Plaza de Mayo waiting for their claims to be recognized

The administrative description of a Malvinas war veteran and thus entitled to the pension is that the combatant effectively was at the battle theatre meaning by this the Falklands/Malvinas, and was specifically not extensive to personnel who even having actively participated were stationed in Patagonia's military bases.

The ruling is considered a lead case for the 9.500 former Argentine conscripts that during the 1982 conflict were deployed along the Argentine continental coast south of parallel 42, from Trelew to Ushuaia. Furthermore it could influence the demands of veterans that are camped in Buenos Aires Plaza de Mayo next to Casa Rosada (Government House) since 2008 claiming their pensions.

According to La Nacion the three Argentine forces are elaborating lists of personnel deployed along south Patagonia as part of the war effort in 1982. According to Argentine Armed Forces sources the condition of war veteran has been determined by law and refers to all those involved in the South Atlantic Operations Theatre, TOAS, which includes the Islands, continental platform and air and submarine spaces.

"The pilots who took off from Patagonia bases penetrated several times the theatre of operations, while the mechanics and support crews for fuel and bombs remained in the continent and never entered the theatre of operations".

However the Legislative council from the City of Buenos Aires last October ordered the creation of a roll call of all former conscripts from the city's district who participated in the continental deployment. This was based on instructions from then R/Admiral Juan Jose Lombardo, head of TOAS, who in April 1982 stated that "all enemy action deployed along the South Atlantic coastline belonging to the jurisdiction of the war theatre is responsibility of this command".

The 9,500 former conscripts to which must be added the officers and petty officers that did not actually participate in the theatre of operations, were exposed to the same risk situation as that of Carmelo Antonio Gerez who appealed and managed the favourable ruling from Argentina's Supreme Court, 28 years after the war ended.

The High court ruled that even when Corporal Gerez was not ordered to the Malvinas or to TOAS, stationed in the Patagonia coast he was exposed to "risk situations" thus overruling the geographic element.

The Malvinas war veteran pension for life is equivalent to the minimum full pension of the Argentine system, equivalent to 265 US dollars, which means if the benefit is confirmed and extended to the former conscripts, now officially war veterans, this would represent an additional 30 million US dollars per annum to the Treasury.

During the 1982 conflict with Britain 17 Argentine combatants were killed at Patagonian coast bases and proclaimed as "national heroes".-

Monday, December 20th 2010 - 18:36 UTC

Falklands' Rockhopper plans two new wells and is discussing a "Discovery Area"

The Falklands Rockhopper Exploration (AIM: RKH) exploration company ratified Monday its full commitment to oil exploration in the Islands waters on announcing an agreement to increase the number of drilling options, further 3D seismic surveying and discussions with the Falklands' government for the declaration of a Discovery Area where it struck oil earlier this year.

Plenty of work for the Ocean Guardian rig during 2011 Plenty of work for the Ocean Guardian rig during 2011

Rockhopper said it had entered into an agreement to take up two optional drilling slots (beginning January 2011) under the original rig contract between Desire Petroleum plc and Diamond Offshore Drilling, owners of the Ocean Guardian drilling rig. The company is also in discussions to take up further well slots on the Ocean Guardian.

"We are delighted to have secured the use of the Ocean Guardian for a further two wells and we are in discussions to secure further drilling slots. We expect to undertake a significant drilling programme during 2011, including a number of appraisal and exploration wells designed to refine our understanding of our northern licences" said Sam Moody, Chief Executive of Rockhopper.

Furthermore "Rockhopper is in discussions with the Falkland Islands Government regarding the declaration of a Discovery Area which is likely to encompass the southern lobe of the Sea Lion fan where the Sea Lion discovery well, 14/10-2 was drilled earlier during 2010", said the official release.

Outside the proposed Discovery Area, on the northern lobe of the Sea Lion fan system and eight kilometres from the Sea Lion discovery well, Rockhopper said that next January it will spud a new exploration well (14/10-3).

“The well will also target deeper sands, including S2, which the Company has mapped following the Sea Lion oil discovery earlier this year. S2 has a newly-identified reservoir feeder system and a total area currently mapped of 42 square kilometres” added the release pointing out that the well is located down-dip to the main part of the S2 fan and should “provide valuable reservoir information”.

The S2 fan is mapped on the existing Rockhopper 3D seismic and sits entirely within 100% held Rockhopper acreage.

However the second well, 14/10-4, is currently planned as an appraisal well, within the proposed Sea Lion Discovery Area on the southern Lobe of the Sea Lion fan system, “the timing of which is subject to the order of drilling slots as yet to be determined”.

Rockhopper says it has identified a number of other potential drilling locations which are a combination of appraisal and exploration wells.

Finally Rockhopper announced that the vessel MV Polarcus Nadia (“Nadia”) has commenced operations on a new 3D seismic program to cover licence PL024 (100% Rockhopper) and adjacent areas, which were not previously defined by 3D seismic, as well as participating with Desire Petroleum plc on areas of licences PL003 and PL004, in which Rockhopper has a 7.5% interest. Nadia is expected to complete its survey by the end of April 2011.

Over the years Rockhopper, a company started in 2004 with a strategy to invest in and carry out an offshore oil exploration program to the north of the Falkland Islands has carried out an extensive work program in its licences. This has included 2D and 3D Seismic and Controlled Source Electromagnetic Mapping (CSEM).

In February 2010, the Ocean Guardian drilling rig arrived in Falklands’ waters to carry out a multi-well drilling campaign. Rockhopper drilled an exploration well on its Sea Lion prospect during April and May 2010, the result of which was the first oil discovery and Contingent Oil Resource in the North Falkland Basin.

The Sea Lion discovery was successfully tested during September 2010 and was the first oil to flow to surface in Falkland Islands waters. Suggested Stories.-

Friday, December 24th 2010 - 07:02 UTC

UK ratifies full support for Falklands' sovereignty, economic development and defence

Prime Minister David Cameron ratified full and resolute British commitment to the Falkland Islands sovereignty and to the development of its economy and defence. However he also admitted that "it is in all our interests that we maintain a constructive working relationship with Argentina".

PM David Cameron fist Christmas message to the Falklands PM David Cameron fist Christmas message to the Falklands

In his first Christmas message as PM to the Falklands Cameron said that "we have no doubts whatsoever about the United Kingdom's sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. And there can and will be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Islands unless you, the Falkland Islanders, want them".

Further on he emphasized "that we will continue to support efforts to diversify your economy" which this year "has seen the start of the current round of hydrocarbons exploration in the waters around your Islands".

And on defence he underlined that "the security of the Falkland Islands has been in no way diminished" because the Commander of the British Forces in the South Atlantic "will have the right range of potent assets to defend the Islands – and reinforce quickly if necessary".

Follows the full text of UK Prime Minister David Cameron:

"I am delighted to be sending my first Christmas message to the Falkland Islands. The Falklands is one of our most important overseas communities and I very much hope that I will have the chance to visit during my time as Prime Minister. I was delighted that one of my first visitors to Downing Street was Lady Thatcher who did so much to uphold your liberty.

"I am sure you will have followed events back in Britain closely over the past year. The first Coalition government for 65 years has seen two parties – the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats – put aside party difference to work together in the national interest. We have had to make some tough decisions – not least to get to grips with the biggest budget deficit since the Second World War and a £38 billion black hole in the future defence plans. But as we look to the New Year, I hope we can do so with a growing sense of optimism that we are getting Britain's finances back on a sound footing.

"Like everyone else, you will want to know what the decisions we have made will mean for you. In particular, what they mean for your economy; and how your security will be affected. Let me briefly try to answer these questions.

"The first thing to say is that we will continue to support efforts to diversify your economy. This year has seen the start of the current round of hydrocarbons exploration in the waters around your Islands. It has been an exciting time. The news has sometimes been encouraging, and yet also sometimes disappointing. While there is no guarantee of commercially viable finds, many of you must already be thinking about the impact that exploitation would have on your way of life. I want to make sure that you control how any such change happens, and ensure that your community reaps the benefits from it.

"Of course, hydrocarbons exploration has also meant that relationships in the region have been all the more difficult. There have been attempts to disrupt shipping to the Islands: we have made it clear that we do not believe these attempts comply with international law.

"It is in all our interests that we maintain a constructive working relationship with Argentina. And we will continue to do so. At the G20 and on tackling climate change, there

is common ground to be found. But let me reassure you, we will stand resolutely beside you on any question of sovereignty. We have no doubts whatsoever about the United Kingdom's sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. And there can and will be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Islands unless you, the Falkland Islanders, want them.

"As a result of the Strategic Defence and Security Review, there has been no change to the forces at the disposal of the Commander of the British Forces in the South Atlantic Islands. He will have the right range of potent assets to defend the Islands – and reinforce quickly if necessary. So let me say clearly, the security of the Falkland Islands has been in no way diminished.

"The UK's commitment to your Islands is without question. Our interest in your prosperity, our determination to ensure your security and our resolve to stand beside you on any question of sovereignty remain as strong as ever.

"I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous and successful 2011".

Saturday, December 25th 2010 - 08:50 UTC

Flyglobespan MOD charter to Falklands faces £ 4 million redundancies claim

Flyglobespan, the airline that had a contract with the UK Ministry of Defence to cover the twice weekly shuttle to the Falkland Islands and collapsed a year ago, is facing a £4 million claim from former staff over its failure to consult on redundancies.

According to the British press the Edinburgh-based budget airline went into administration just before Christmas last year, leaving thousands of passengers - and its own cabin crew - stranded abroad.

Around 650 people lost their jobs as the company collapsed, and now 500 cabin crew staff have launched an employment tribunal case, claiming they are all due 90 days' pay as they were not given proper notice of their redundancy.

They say staff was axed just a week before Christmas without any pay or notice, with many finding out they had lost their jobs from news reports.

“Dozens of cabin crew staff had to make their own way back from far-flung destinations, such as the Falkland Islands and Saudi Arabia”.

They have now taken action, with legal help from the Unite Union, and a preliminary hearing is scheduled to be heard in the Capital in February.

Fiona Farmer, Unite's regional officer responsible for Flyglobespan, said: “The majority of the claims are from Unite members. It has taken a long time to get through.

“They had (proceeds from] the sale of the aircraft and property that was owned by Globespan. We are still fighting on behalf of the cabin crew and these are claims that are to be lodged and hopefully the money they are due will be secured.

“Many of them were kicked out of hotels they were staying in and relied on the goodwill of other airlines to get home and had to rely on their own credit cards”.

In March, it emerged that some 40,000 Flyglobespan creditors - mostly passengers who paid for flights that never left the ground - had made claims against the company totalling around £40m.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), who is handling the administration of Flyglobespan, said in a progress report that the latest claims against the company and its subsidiaries resulted from it “failing to consult prior to announcing redundancies” on December 17, 2009. It also highlighted the potential cost of the claim, but added there was a “valid defence” for the action.

It said: “If successful it will result in an unsecured claim of £3.9 million against the estates. The company and its subsidiaries are of the opinion that there is a valid defence to these claims; as a result its legal agent has been instructed to lodge defence with the employment tribunal.”

The cause of Flyglobespan's collapse was a cash-flow crisis in its final six months caused by delays in receiving payments from the online firm E-Clear, and PwC admitted the £34m still owed by E-Clear was now the company's biggest asset.

It was unclear what return they can expect, however, with administrators for E-Clear still trying to sort out the company's finances, with creditor claims totalling more than £80m.-

Monday, December 27th 2010 - 08:20 UTC

Chilean Senate drafts bill to combat illegal fishing in Antarctic convergence area

The Chilean Senate Committee on Fisheries approved the project that modifies the Fisheries Law and severe establishes penalties for illegal catches in the Antarctic convergence area. The next step is a vote on the floor that seems secured given the committee's outcome.

Toothfish is one of several species threatened Toothfish is one of several species threatened

The bill seeks to align Chilean legislation to the standards established by the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, (CCAMLR).

Senator Antonio Horvath, president of the Committee on Fisheries, stressed that "the illegal harvesting of fisheries resources is the main factor which threatens the sustainability of the activity."

That is why it constitutes a serious threat to the conservation of fish stocks, "with many negative consequences for people living legally off of fisheries and the marine environment," he added.

The senator explained CCAMLR is an international pact in the framework of the Antarctic Treaty System, which holds the purpose of defending the conservation of Antarctic species in the area.

The text of the treaty was adopted in Canberra on 20 May 1980 and entered into force on 7 April 1982. Chile is one of the 34 State Members to sign the Antarctic Treaty, and participated in the negotiation of the Convention.

The territorial scope of this treaty is the area of the Antarctic convergence, ie, where the waters of the Southern Ocean meet the warmer waters from the sub-Antarctic.

This area has a high biological productivity, because their fisheries are characterized by their longevity and late age of sexual maturity and therefore are particularly vulnerable to overexploitation.

For the CCAMLR Convention, the main aim is the management of such resources in its area of jurisdiction. CCAMLR is responsible for implementing those measures necessary to conserve marine life of the Southern Ocean surrounding Antarctica, in particular, fishery resources.

The Commission regards all illegal extractive activities that are carried out in the Convention area without the authorization to do so, to be in violation of the conditions set forth therein.

They also consider it illegitimate to not register or declare catches from the Convention area, to make false statements, fishing in closed seasons or in closed areas, using prohibited fishing gear in contravention of relevant conservation measures.

As a State Member of the Convention, Chile must adopt the legal tools to punish those that conduct acts that the Commission has banned. (FIS).-

Wednesday, December 29th 2010 - 20:34 UTC

Falklands: New Governor hopes to help things happen

The recently arrived new Governor in the Falkland Islands, Mr Nigel Haywood, took time recently to talk about his role in the Islands' weekly newspaper, the Penguin News.

Gov. Nigel Haywood: "The Economic Development Strategy is key" Gov. Nigel Haywood: "The Economic Development Strategy is key"

Having recorded his pleasure at the landscape in which he finds himself and his delight at the view of Stanley harbour from his office window, which, he says influences his outlook in a positive direction, Governor Haywood, who is a career diplomat with recent experience in some of the world's trouble spots, said that he wants to take whatever steps he can to demystify his job and what goes on in Government House.

Recalling that an article in the Times written in 1976 described one of his predecessors as "a lonely man, rarely seen outside Government House" Mr Haywood stated that it was his intention to meet as many people as possible. While it would be perfectly easy to confine himself to the necessary formal meetings, his ambition was to form easy working relations with a wide range of people in order to achieve an overview of what goes on in the Islands.

"I see the Governor has having an enabling role" wrote Mr Haywood, "He can spot problems, make connections and get advice from HMG, the diplomatic network, and UK and international institutions. Of course he has to ensure the Constitution is complied with, but the focus of the job should be helping the elected representatives achieve their vision for the future of the Islands rather than telling them what they can't do."

The next three years: the length of his appointment, and also the term of the present Legislative Assembly, will be critical says the Governor. By then it should be known whether an oil industry is commercially viable and if it is there will be important decisions to be made about how it should be integrated into Island life both economically and socially.

"The Economic Development Strategy is key," wrote the Governor, "and it will be important to translate political will into a concrete, properly-funded implementation strategy."

"This country has a great future, but we must work together to make it happen."

Wednesday, December 29th 2010 - 20:25 UTC

Britain should leave the United Nations Security Council suggests Argentine Ambassador

In his response to the British Prime Minister's Christmas address to the Falkland Islanders, Argentina's Ambassador at the United Nations, Jorge Arguello, makes the strong suggestion that Britain should lose its place on the UN's Security Council.

Ambassador Jorge Arguello Ambassador Jorge Arguello

The United nation's Security Council is the responsible organ for all matters relating to international peace and security and its members, according to Ambassador Arguello, should be expected to behave in an exemplary manner, rather than giving rein to abuses.

David Cameron's assurance to Islanders that the sovereignty of the South Atlantic archipelago would not come up for discussion is, according to Ambassador Arguello, an abuse of Britain's position on the Security Council as it signifies that Britain has no intention of complying with the resolutions of the General Assembly on this subject.

"The time is coming when the international community may ask itself whether having won a war sixty years ago is sufficient to ensure a place on the Security Council in the Twenty-First Century," Ambassador Arguello states.

Cameron's suggestion that the only circumstance in which the Falkland Islands' sovereignty might be discussed would be with the consent of the Islanders themselves also attracts a critical and negative response from the Ambassador.

"So, very well, who are the Islanders? Are they a people needing to be liberated from colonial oppression? No, we are talking about a population that was implanted after the Argentine population that lived there was removed by military force. It is made up of British citizens whose primary purpose is to use its parliament to block any attempt by the international community to reopen negotiations between its country and Argentina.

"Cameron knows that the 'Islanders' include a substantial proportion of soldiers who are there, not so much for the colony's defence as to sustain the illegal exploration of resources in the South Atlantic and to safeguard the military strategic interests of the British Crown."

The Argentine Government's permanent representative at the United Nations concludes his statement by saying that at a time when that body is advancing with greater legitimacy and representation in all its organisations, Cameron's message about the Falklands, coupled with his expressed desire to enjoy "a constructive working relationship with Argentina" lays bare one of the most obvious and risky contradictions in the British attitude.

"His affirmations and denials can be seen as self-destroying by all the international community, while the Argentine claims over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands need no such apparent contradictions to be seen as just and legitimate from now on until their inevitable conclusion." (Telam).-

Tuesday, December 28th 2010 - 11:59 UTC

Argentina rejects Cameron's refusal to negotiate over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands

The Argentine Government yesterday rejected recent declarations of the British Prime Minister David Cameron who said that he would not negotiate over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands despite insistent claims from the South American country.

"Argentina will reiterate its call to the United Kingdom to respond to the urgings of the international community and agree to comply with its obligations to resolve the

sovereignty controversy in a peaceful manner,” the Argentine Foreign Ministry stated in a communiqué

“By the same token, the Argentine Government repeats its energetic repudiation of the exploration and exploitation of the renewable and non-renewable natural resources being carried out by the United Kingdom on the Argentine continental shelf,” the statement adds.

It is pointed out that these activities are “in open contradiction to what was set out in Resolution 31/49 of the United Nations General Assembly, which called upon both parties to abstain from taking unilateral decisions in the disputed area.

With regard to Cameron’s reference to the supposed existence of interference with shipping going to and from the Falkland Islands, the Foreign Ministry indicated that the measures adopted by Argentina. “conform in every way with the powers conferred for such ends by national and international law.”

“What strictly speaking is contrary to international law is the maintenance of an anachronistic colonial enclave in the middle of the Twenty-first Century, which includes the pillaging of the region’s natural resources and carrying out military exercises which put at risk the safety of shipping in the South Atlantic,” the statement added.

In his Christmas message to the Islands’ inhabitants, David Cameron said that he had no doubts about the United Kingdom’s sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and assured them that there would be no negotiation on this subject, “unless the Islanders wished it.”

Both countries confronted each other in 1982 in a war over the sovereignty of this South Atlantic archipelago which left dead 255 British military dead and more than 650 Argentines.

Since then, before the United Nations and other international organisations, Argentina has not ceased .to claim sovereignty over these islands situated some 400 nautical miles from her coast, which the British invaded and occupied in 1833.

Wednesday, December 29th 2010 - 07:48 UTC

Falklands: Desire Petroleum plc - Operation Update

Desire Petroleum plc (AIM:DES) the oil and gas company wholly focussed on the North Falkland Basin, advises that the 25/5-1 well on the Dawn/Jacinta prospect has reached a depth of 1,313metres.

Drilling and wireline logging data shows that no hydrocarbons have been found in the Jacinta Prospect. The well will now be drilled to the planned total depth around 1,670 metres to evaluate the deeper Dawn Prospect.

Subsurface support is provided to Desire Petroleum by Senergy (GB) Ltd and the results reported today are based on the work of the Senergy operations team.

This statement has been approved by Dr Ian Duncan of Desire Petroleum plc, who is a Fellow of the Geological Society, Chartered Geologist, and a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists with over 35 years experience in petroleum exploration and management.