

NAT/SEA/5 # 12

FIS/7/2

**VOL :** 1

18

CLASSIFICATION. CONFIDENTIAL

GROUP FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

SUB-GROUP .....

SUBJECT SEALS

# ARCHIVE

OFFICER DEALING ..... ECTED FILES 0958C

FILE OPENED 1952

FILE CLOSED

PA.	—	
CS	17	
PA	87	5/12



APPENDIX 'C'.

Before sailing I was instructed by H.E. the Governor to investigate any stories I could in Punta Arenas, concerning the activities of fur seal poachers in Falkland Island waters. Although not altogether successful in this respect, I managed to get into conversation with two Chilean sailors in the Scandinavian Bar, one of whom claimed to have visited Bird Island on a successful sealing operation in a small schooner (golleta). He did not mention any numbers taken, but gave the impression that he remained in Falkland Island waters for some days.

These two men also claimed that a sealer had sailed for Bird Island and Beauchene Island a short time ago: it was for this reason that Beauchene Island was visited during "Philomel's" homeward passage, without however, anything being seen. I let these intentions be known to the Commanding Officer of H.M.S. "Veryan Bay" before sailing from Punta Arenas.

Subsequent to "Philomel's" departure an interesting development occurred in Punta Arenas. Mr Bundes, who was left behind by me to investigate further the possibility of his purchasing a boat in Chile, entered into conversation with the master of this latter poacher, who returned to port the day "Philomel" sailed. Making due allowance for the difficulty of any conversation between these two men (one a Falkland Islander born of German parents, the other an Italian, naturalised Chilean), this man's story was apparently that he had a very successful sealing expedition to the Falklands and had sailed with his cargo of skins to Santa Cruz in the Argentine, where he had an agent to dispose of his skins for him. He entered Santa Cruz at night, apparently claiming that he had lost his way, and disposed of some of his cargo before dawn - how much is not known. His vessel was inspected by the Argentine port authorities during the morning, and the remaining pelts discovered. This led to the Argentinians threatening to confiscate his vessel, until the master surrendered his remaining skins, numbering 1,600, as a present for the President Peron (one presumes that Evita will have a new fur coat this winter!). The cutter, which is apparently a single-masted vessel, some 45 feet long, was then allowed to proceed on its way to Punta Arenas. Skins are reputed to be worth 2000 pesos (approximately £6/10/-) in Chile and the Argentine at the present moment.

This Italian born captain is 73 years of age, and of an unlovable disposition. Local bar gossip in Punta Arenas credits him with having left members of his crew to whom he had taken exception on lonely rocks to starve (a very excellent form of punishment, that we really ought to make effective in "Philomel"! ). He has recently completed two years in gaol, supposedly for being engaged in a brawl which resulted in a death.

It is difficult to assess how much of this story to accept as true: we know from occasional sightings and the fact that there was a fire on the Jason Islands two years ago, that illegal ships are visiting these islands, presumably for seal poaching. It is too much of a coincidence that Mr Bundes and myself heard the same story from two separate sources, one before and one after the cutter's return. On the other hand I am inclined to disbelieve the 1,600 confiscated skins: that would mean that his total haul would have been in the region of 2,000 seals, which would mean a lot of work for a small cutter's crew.

This activity ought to be stopped: if an un-controlled slaughter is permitted in this manner, the fur seal will rapidly become extinct in these islands (see the history of the South Shetland Islands, 1820-30), and a small but lucrative fur sealing industry might well provide the Falklands with a badly needed outlet for private enterprise.



2

But the apprehension of the poachers will require careful organisation and may become a costly business. First we must try to obtain a contact with fore-knowledge of the sealers intentions in Punta Arenas to advise of their departure and probable destination. Then we must arrange a reception committee armed to seize their vessel by force if necessary. It must be remembered that sealers probably carry rifles, and any attempt to arrest the cutter under fire would result in unnecessary casualties to the vessel engaged. I was prepared on this last occasion to ram and sink the cutter with the "Philomel" had they offered armed resistance, but as a long-term policy we should think of something better than this. Quite apart from anything else, ramming invariably damages the vessel engaged also, and I would therefore suggest that we utilise a spare machine gun left in the Colony by the army - at any rate until the Admiralty approve the Naval Defence Service and fit "Philomel" with an oerlikon gun.

One point in our favour is the fact that the best season for fur-sealing can be judged fairly accurately, and this coincides with the slack season on the farms. I feel sure that these sealers must shelter in lonely coves around the Falklands from time to time, in which case the farms might be approached with a view to a watch being kept on these points after we have obtained information indicating that a vessel is on its way to the Falklands. Aerial reconnaissance would also be of assistance, although the extended nature of the grounds to be covered renders this somewhat dangerous without a rescue ship being available in the area.

The most satisfactory solution proposed by the Acting Governor, which appeals to me considerably, is to establish a small marine garrison with adequate supplies at the fur seal rookeries to await the poachers arrival. I can see no possible objection to this course, which is precisely the sort of operation the marines are ideally suited for, although I can well believe that the marines themselves will not view this plan with the same burning enthusiasm!

*Y.H.*

*P. 142*

*You wished to call a meeting to discuss.*

*I attach files dealing with the subject in the past.*

*29/7*

*AO. informed 2/10*

- C.S. 2 will like to see A.O. + C/Constable in my office at 3 PM on Friday Aug 1<sup>st</sup>.*
- 2) Prior to the meeting C/Constable shall take down a comprehensive statement from Bundes.*
  - 3) This file shd be temporarily confidential*

*A.C.S. to arrange.*

*29/7*

*29/7*



3

MS.

Arranged accy. ph.

20/7

G.H. P.2.

A.O. v. C.C. informed

Files returned

20/7

in detail for the ...

about the ...

17/7



Robert John Christian Bundes states:-

4

When I went over to Punta Arenas in the M.V. Philomel, I went ashore and took up residence at the Hotel Savoy. When there I met a Mrs. Kenneth Conroy and her husband, and when having a meal, during a general conversation, she asked me about my new boat etc. Mr. Conroy then said "The other day a cutter (about 40 feet long) fetched up at Santa Cruz in the Argentine. The Argentinian authorities boarded the cutter and asked the skipper his reason for calling. The skipper told them that he was lost. The ship was searched and they found a total of some 1600 fur-seal skins. They were going to confiscate the ship and it's cargo. The skipper then said "O.K. I'll present the skins to President Peron" and the cutter was released right away. The cutter then sailed around to Punta Arenas. One day Mr. and Mrs. Conroy were in a coffee shop in Punta Arenas, when that skipper entered and spoke to them. He told them about his trip to Santa Cruz and that he had been over to the Islas Malvinas (Falkland Islands) for skins. He did not however tell them exactly where. This skipper had by the time that I left Punta Arenas lost his crew. He has had trouble with his crews all his life and is alleged to have served terms of imprisonment for poaching etc. This skipper is an Italian, about 73 years of age. I do not know the name of the skipper or his ship. I would have been able to find out but had to leave in a hurry. When I left he was looking for a crew to take a load of wood up channel. As far as I was able to gather over there, the skipper has a sleeping partner somewhere in Chile, who was able to get rid of a considerable amount of fur-seal skins prior to the ship being searched. This skipper has been doing this poaching all his life and is a very dangerous character. He has been known to dump members of his crew on isolated islands and is one of those who directs his crew with the muzzle of a revolver once he gets to sea. Had I not been called away so quickly I would have been able to find out a lot more about him, as it had been arranged for me to meet him personally. He would not have known that I was a Falkland Islander, only that I was a friend of the Conroy family. I am very interested in this matter as I am desirous of applying for a licence myself in the near future to catch fur seal, and do not see why these skins should go to the Argentine without any benefit to the Falkland Islands. If he has not left when I go over to Punta Arenas to fetch my new boat, I think that I could get him by getting somebody into my confidence to let me know when he sails again for the seal rookeries and where he is making for. If however a licence was issued to me, I would be at the rookeries during the whole of the season, and if this skipper came there I would naturally catch him. I would suggest that a detachment of marines or sailors be stationed on the Jason's and the Beauchene's to keep a 24 hour watch. The seal come ashore to a rookery on a rock about one mile away from Jason Island, and if I were granted a licence would be there all the time, to fetch the marines if I saw the Italian. On the Beauchene's the rookery is on the island itself and the marines would only have to traverse a distance of about 50/100 yards from where they erected their quarters. In my opinion the only way to catch the poachers is to have a licensed sealer there at all times during the season and a detachment of marines or sailors, which runs from about the 1st. of June to the middle of July. If I am granted a licence for fur-seal skins, I am prepared to co-operate with the Government to my utmost capacity with a view to putting a stop to the poaching, even if not, I am still prepared to help to put a stop to this nefarious practise. I expect to fetch my new boat next month and to have the motor installed by December next, so that I shall be able to help during the next sealing season. If any further information comes to my knowledge when I am over at Punta Arenas during my next visit, I will disclose same to the authorities concerned. I think that I will be able to arrange for a confidential contact who will be prepared to let me know when this skipper has sailed for the Falkland Islands and where he is making for. As far as I can gather he is not the only one who is fur-seal poaching and will make further enquiries during my next trip to Punta Arenas. That is all I can say at this stage, but I still maintain that the only way to stop it, is to have a boat stationed at the rookeries permanently to intercept him.

27th August, 1952.

Ref: CSO 0958/C/8.  
CONFIDENTIAL

Sir,

*no copy*  
I am directed to refer to your letter of 12th August 1951 on the subject of fur seal poaching and to request that you will discuss this matter with His Honour the Officer Administering the Government when you are next in Stanley.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,



Acting Colonial Secretary.

P.R.H. Tilbury, Esq.,  
South Atlantic Sealing Co.,  
ALBERMARLE.



Ref: CSO 0958/C/5.  
SECRET

27th August, 1952.

Dear *Jones,*

Fur Seal Poaching.

As you are probably aware the Fur Seal has been strictly protected in the Falkland Islands for a number of years as its extinction, as a result of earlier uncontrolled exploitation, was feared.

2. The control measures have been successful and it seems probable that we may shortly be able to issue licences to selected persons to take a limited number annually.

3. I am, however, convinced that during all the period of protection there has been steady poaching of the Fur Seal, most probably from Punta Arenas.

The Fur Seal are found mostly in uninhabited and rather inaccessible islands and we have never succeeded in catching any poachers - though we have been trying for over 30 years!

4. The Falkland Islands Fur Seal is, I believe, easily recognisable to 'the trade' and quite a number are reported to have reached the London and U.S.A. markets in recent years.

5. When the "Philomel" was over in Punta Arenas recently certain information was brought back and I enclose extracts from two of the reports.

6. They should be taken with a fairly large pinch of salt, but I would be very grateful if you could get any confirmation or further details about the alleged operations which might enable us to take preventative action.

7. I am also making investigations this end and the possibility of local Falkland Island co-operators and 'fellow travellers' should by no means be excluded!

*Signed Colin Campbell.*

*Reply at 9.*

T.P. Jones, Esq.,  
British Consulate,  
PUNTA ARENAS.

" I managed to get into conversation with two Chilean sailors in the Scandinavian Bar, one of whom claimed to have visited Bird Island on a successful sealing operation in a small schooner (golleta). He did not mention any numbers taken, but gave the impression that he remained in Falkland Island waters for some days.

These two men also claimed that a sealer had sailed for Bird Island and Beauchene Island a short time ago; it was for this reason that Beauchene Island was visited during "Philomel's" homeward passage, without however, anything being seen. I let these intentions be known to the Commanding Officer of HMS Vervan Bay before sailing from Punta Arenas.

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.....



Confidential

9

British Consulate,  
Punta Arenas.



November 15th 1952.

Your Ref. CSO 0958/c/5.

Dear Campbell,

Fur Seal Poaching.

6.  
7-8

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 27th August received here four days ago, together with the two interesting reports made by Mr. Huckle and Mr. Bundes on this subject of Seal poaching.

As soon as I received your letter I caused enquiries to be made and as a result have come to the conclusion that it is extremely doubtful if any poaching takes place from here in waters over which you have jurisdiction.

The man referred to in the above mentioned reports is a well-known character by the name of Pascual Rispoli more popularly known as Pascualini. He is 73 years of age, 5'2" tall and is a great boaster and little reliance can be placed upon what he says.

He was the owner of the cutter named San Antonio and this was the vessel about which there was the trouble in the Argentine port of Santa Cruz. The San Antonio was sunk and became a total loss about a month ago during a storm in the local channels.

Reports of the <sup>ta</sup>San Cruz incident to which you refer differ somewhat but the truth seems to be that when he called at Santa Cruz he came from Staten Island and not the Falkland Islands. Pascual Rispoli never claimed to have been in the Falkland Islands on that trip and I am informed that had he done so he is the sort of man who would certainly have boasted about it.

From what I gather I don't think Mr. Bundes information can be right when he says in his report that a sleeping partner managed to get rid of many skins before the vessel was searched.



Coming from Staten Island, Rispoli had engine trouble and meeting with bad weather he was forced into Santa Cruz. The story is that he put some of the Seal skins which he had, overboard and the remainder he handed to the Argentine authorities after two days detention when the cutter was on the point of being confiscated. The story about the present for Peron may well have been true. He would never, of course, have told the Argentine authorities that the skins originated from Staten Island as otherwise he would have been liable to prosecution for poaching in Argentine waters.

About a fortnight ago Rispoli proceeded to Navarin Island in the Beagle Channel to join a ship as Master. The ship I believe is called the Philomela (?) of 10 tons and belongs to a Mr. Follador. Follador I'm told is in Navarin Island to escape his creditors in Punta Arenas. The Philomela is to be engaged in the forthcoming fishing season, catching shell fish for the Argentine port of Ushuaia.

Dealers in the skins from these Fur Seals tell me that the total catch during a Season does not exceed 600 Skins but the catch of the Baby Seal skins may be higher. Local dealers pay \$400 to \$500 Chilean currency per Seal skin.

After all this I must now inform you that both in Chile and the Argentine the catching of these Seals is now prohibited until 1954/1955 and I should imagine it will be very difficult for anyone to conduct a clandestine business in these skins.

Dealers here tell me that the best place in the World for curing these Skins is in London and practically all coming to Punta Arenas were sent there and many were returned to Punta Arenas for sale after being treated.

Although I know nothing about the trade I should imagine that the Fur Seals caught around the almost inaccessible islands and channels which abound in southern Tierra del Fuego must be very similar if not identical to the Falkland Islands variety and that it could well be thought that the Skins coming from Punta Arenas caught in Chilean waters were of the Falkland Islands species.

I hope this information will be of use to you and the fact that the trade is now prohibited will help you in the work of protecting these Seals.



With kindest regards to you and Mrs. Campbell,

I am,

Yours very sincerely,

*Tom P. Jones*

Tom P. Jones.

*file  
C.S. Shus to A.O. 1  
of Constable - J.H.  
25/11*

Colin Campbell, Esq.,  
Government House,  
Port Stanley,  
Falkland Islands.

*A.O. H.C.S. Seen Thank you John P. Blair 26/11/52  
Ch. Constable A.O.*

*To see 9-11*

*27.11*

P.T.O.



11  
A. C. S.

Notes. Thank you.

As the Argentine claims the Falklands  
would not the Argentine Authorities have prosecuted  
Rispoli for poaching in Argentine waters, as  
would have been the case with Staten Island!

A. C. S. 1. 19/11/52.

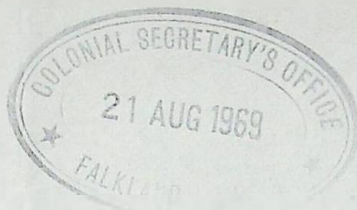
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8. 12. 3  
2. 8. 69

(for temporary file)

RECEIVED  
GOVERNMENT  
OFFICE  
10.6.64





Carcass Island,  
West Falkland.

20th August, 1969.

The Colonial Secretary,  
Stanley.

Dear Sir,

During a recent visit to the South Jason I went to the West end of the island where there is a breeding rookery of fur seal.

At a point just above high water line I found a dead fur seal. The skeleton was intact, but the skull was beaten in. From the facts that the meat had recently been picked clean from the bones, but the brain was still visible in the skull, I estimate that it had been dead less than a week.

The skeleton was virtually undamaged, including the delicate flipper bones. Apart from the injuries on the skull, the only obvious injury was a fracture on one rib.

As this is one of the main months for fur sealing, I thought I should report this, as I understand that clubbing is a common way to kill seal.

I am sending the skull to you by separate post for your consideration. However, if Government would return it I would be grateful, as Mr. David Galloway is anxious to take it to the U.K. for inspection by the British Museum, and eventual placement in the Oxford University Museum,

Yours faithfully,

Riley Short.

Note

Skull returned to Mr. Short  
air freight - delivered F.A.A.S.  
26-8-69

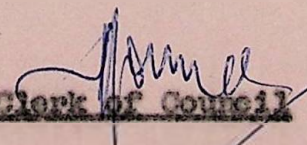


EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 11/69 OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HELD  
ON 2ND & 3RD SEPTEMBER, 1969.

0958/C 34.

SEAL POACHING

Council noted a report from Mr. Riley Short of Carcass Island which suggested that seals were being taken from South Jason Island.

  
Clerk of Council

Ra



J.C.

13

Re. see Mr. Short's letter of 20<sup>th</sup> August.

It certainly seems as though there have been visitors at the Lasons but the remote position of the islands prevents an effective watch being maintained. Presumably a vessel could operate around the islands for several weeks without being observed & I am wondering if, on occasions when an aircraft are operating in the region of Carcass & West Point Islands, you could arrange for an aerial reconnaissance of the Southern Lason group to be carried out. It would be a long shot but might prove something. I gather the season extends through most of the winter months, i.e., June, July, Aug.

Perhaps you could let me have yr. comments.

J. 21.8.69

Aq. C.L.

14

This is the second report by Mr Short, of irregular happenings at S. Jason Is. On the last occasion an air recy. was carried out, nothing untoward could be observed from the Gc and it is most unlikely <sup>that</sup> anything would be observed this time.

Bearing in mind the nature of the island, to send an op out there would in my opinion be a waste of time, effort and fuel.

J.  
D.E.H. 22/8/69.



15

D.C.A.

There are suspicious reports of illegal activity. They may be without foundation, but we need to do all we can, within our limitations, to satisfy ourselves that they are, in fact, groundless.

The only course that seems to have any hope of success is occasional air survey.  
Can you tell me

1. On average, how often do you go as far west as Roy Cove / Hill Cove, or beyond?
2. What loss of time would be involved in extending a flight to say, Roy Cove, to a point where a clear view of the water around Jason can be obtained?
3. What fuel consumption would this involve?
4. What effect, if any, would an extension to the Jason have on other visits on the same flight, i.e. in what manner would a <sup>normal</sup> flight have to be modified if a Jason were included?

L.E.

28/8/69



H. E. S.

16

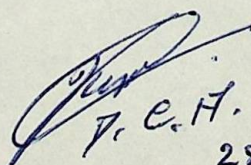
During 1967, 56 visits were made to ROY COVE and 64 to HILL COVE, WEST POINT Is. had 36 and CARCASS Is. 31. this does not include visits for the purpose of dropping mail.

If by JASON you mean SOUTH JASON, the o/c would have to proceed beyond the Island, return time from WEST Pt. Is. being approx.  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour.

The fuel consumption is approx. 20 gals/hr.

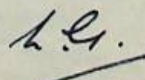
None on the visits before the extension, possible complete abandonment after diversion if the pilot so desires.

It is most unlikely that a ship would remain in the vicinity of the Islands during daylight hours, or a person or persons remain visible from the air on hearing the approach of an aircraft.

  
J. E. H.  
28/8/69.

J. E.,

17  
Please see correspondence to date. I am not convinced that air rescue would serve any real purpose, but can think of no alternative.

  
L. G.  
29/8/69



C.S.

I suggest you bring the matter up for mention at the  
forthcoming Exco. Meeting. Some practicable suggestions could be made.

M. J. 19/18



FIS/7/2

3 July 1985

15A

Director of Civil Aviation

Mr Ian Strange is our Conservation Adviser. He is concerned to investigate the apparent disappearance of fur seals from the Jason Chain of Islands.

When you have an Islander operating in that area will you please give Mr Strange the opportunity to travel in it and for the pilot to be instructed to take him out over the Chain on this reconnaissance.

Mr Strange is not to be charged for this flight.

B E Pauncefort  
Government Secretary

cc: Ian Strange Esq

rs



It is requested that this number and date should be quoted in your reply.

# MEMORANDUM

(6)

Date ...5th...July...1985.....

From: DIRECTOR CIVIL AVIATION

To GOVERNMENT SECRETARY

Subject:- RECONNAISSANCE OF JASON ISLANDS BY MR. I. STRANGE

Please refer to your memorandum dated 3 July on the above subject.

Whilst we would be more than happy to fly Mr. Strange around the Jason Islands, the nearest scheduled landing we can make to the Jasons would be at Carcass Island, and to fly out to, and around the Jasons from there and return would take at least one hour, and quite likely an hour and a half. At our present charter rates this would cost some three hundred to four hundred and fifty pounds and this of course does not include the journey cost from Stanley to Carcass Island and return.

I know that you would not expect F.I.G.A.S. to undertake this quite expensive task gratis, and I think the fairest and indeed the most inexpensive charge for it would be at our new rates as follows:-

BOARDING CHARGE

£13

MILEAGE

34p per mile x 280 miles = £95.20

Total = £108.20

I would be grateful therefore if you would indicate under which head and sub-head Mr. Strange's journey should be charged and I will confirm the booking.

*Robert.*

G.W. CHEEK,

DIRECTOR CIVIL AVIATION.

Sec. Head  
601-501



8th July 1985

CLERK OF COUNCILS

DIRECTOR OF CIVIL AVIATION

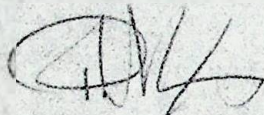
RECONNAISSANCE OF JASON ISLANDS

by Mr I J Strange

Please refer to your memorandum FIA/58/2 of 5th July 1985.

The Government Secretary has authorised the charges for Mr Strange's flight around the Jason Islands, to check on the Fur Seal Colonies, to be debited to the Secretariat Head 601-501 Local Airfares.

It is noted that the cost of this flight will be £108.20.



CLERK OF COUNCILS



(17)

The Dolphins  
Stanley  
Falkland Islands.

4 December 1985.

G. Cheek Esq  
Director  
Falkland Islands Government  
Air Service.  
Stanley.

*Handwritten: 5/12*

*Handwritten: I have been told*

I refer to the Fur Seal Survey which was planned some time ago and given the official backing of the Falkland Islands Government.

It is understood that there are plans for lifting a group from Steeple Jason on or about the 11 December 85. This flight presents an excellent opportunity to carry out the survey investigations.

I have spoken with Major Bob Drake about this possibility who has indicated that there should be no problems in utilizing this flight. Would you therefore be good enough to make a booking for me please, to a destination, probably Elephant Jason, with pick up on the aircrafts return from Steeple Jason same day.

Yours sincerely,

*Handwritten signature*  
I.J.Strange.

c.c. Chief Secretary ✓  
Major Bob Drake