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OD(SA)(82) 19th Meeting

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CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

MINUTES of a Meeting held at
10 Downing Street on
WEDNESDAY 28 APRIL 1982 at 9.00 am

PRESENT

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw MP
Secretary of State for the
Home Department

The Rt Hon Francis Pym MP
Secretary of State for Foreign
and Commonwealth Affairs

The Rt Hon John Nott MP
Secretary of State for Defence

The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
and Paymaster General

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

Admiral of the Fleet
Sir Terence Lewin
Chief of the Defence Staff

Admiral Sir Henry Leach
Chief of Naval Staff
(Item 2)

Sir Antony Acland
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Sir Michael Palliser
Cabinet Office

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr R L Wade-Gery
Mr R L L Facer
Brigadier J A C G Eyre

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1. DIPLOMATIC ISSUES

Previous Reference: OD(SA)(82) 18th Meeting, Minute 1

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig, had put his proposals to the Argentine Government the previous day, as planned, with a deadline for acceptance (without amendment) or rejection by midnight Buenos Aires time on 27/28 April. That deadline had now passed and no reply had been received. The proposals had also been formally communicated to the British Government.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the text of Mr Haig's proposals should be circulated to all members of the Cabinet that afternoon, in the strictest secrecy, so that they could consider it at their meeting on 29 April if by then the Argentines had accepted. If the Argentines rejected the proposals, Mr Haig was likely to publish them without delay and no Cabinet discussion would be needed. Meanwhile she would arrange for the press to be told only that the Government had now been formally notified of the United States proposals, which were being carefully considered. The Sub-Committee might need to meet again later that day, when the Argentine reply was known; it might well not be the clear yes or no which Mr Haig had demanded.

The Sub-Committee -

Instructed the Secretary of the Cabinet to circulate the United States proposals to all members of the Cabinet on a strictly personal basis.

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2. MILITARY ISSUES

Previous Reference OD(SA)(82) 18th Meeting Minute 2

The Sub-Committee had before them a note by the Secretaries (OD(SA)(82) 30) on the treatment of Argentine merchant vessels on the high seas; and a note by the Secretaries (OD)(SA)(82) 29) circulating proposals by the Ministry of Defence on the use of Special Forces.

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF said that owing to adverse weather the British Task Force was not now likely to reach the area of the Falkland Islands before 30 April.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that an announcement on the establishment of a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) around the Falkland Islands should be made at noon London time that day, in the terms agreed by the Sub-Committee at their meeting on 26 April; this announcement should make clear that the TEZ would be established 48 hours ^{ie on 30 April} later. The Rules of Engagement for the enforcement of the TEZ should be as agreed by the Sub-Committee at the same meeting, subject to the suspension for the time being of authority to attack aircraft on the ground, runways, airfield defences and other airport installations in the Falkland Islands. Vulcan aircraft might be deployed to Ascension Island on the evening of 28 April; but no decision on their operational use would be taken before the Sub-Committee met on 29 April. Special Forces might be inserted into the Falkland Islands for intelligence gathering at the Force Commander's discretion after the announcement of the TEZ; their use for offensive operations against military targets in the Islands was not yet authorised and would be considered further on 29 or 30 April. The Amphibious Group should sail from Ascension on 29 April unless she gave instructions to the contrary, in the light of the diplomatic situation, not later than midnight London time on 28/29 April; but that deadline might be extended by some hours if the Chief of the Defence Staff advised that this could be done without prejudice to the Group's plans. After an appropriate warning had been given to the Argentines, through the Swiss Government, the Rules of Engagement for British forces in the South Atlantic should be amended to

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enable them to warn off Argentine merchant ships apparently engaged in surveillance, and, if such warning were ignored, to take such further action against them as might be necessary, in accordance with the successive stages described by the Chief of the Defence Staff at the Sub-Committee's meeting on 16 April (OD(SA)(82) 8th Meeting).

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Defence Secretary to arrange for a Total Exclusion Zone round the Falkland Islands to be announced and established as indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
2. Invited the Defence Secretary, in authorising the Rules of Engagement for the enforcement of the Total Exclusion Zone, to suspend for the time being suffix SIERRA and suffix TANGO in Annex A to OD(SA)(82) 24.
3. Invited the Defence Secretary to confirm the provisional authority already given for the deployment of Vulcan aircraft to Ascension Island
4. Invited the Defence Secretary to authorise the insertion of Special Forces as proposed in paragraph 6a of OD(SA)(82) 29.
5. Invited the Defence Secretary to authorise the sailing of the Amphibious Group from Ascension Island on 29 April, subject to the possibility of this being countermanded on the Prime Minister's instructions not later than midnight on 28/29 April or than any subsequent deadline recommended by the Chief of the Defence Staff.
6. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to arrange for a warning to be given to the Argentine Government about surveillance by merchant ships, as proposed in OD(SA)(82) 30; and invited the Defence Secretary thereafter to amend the Rules of Engagement for British forces as indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.

Cabinet Office

28 April 1982

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