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ABR25 – REUNION DE GABINETE # 16 (1445 hs) (cab 148/211)

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OD(SA)(82) 16th Meeting

COPY NO

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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
 Chequers on
 SUNDAY 25 APRIL 1982 at 2.45 pm

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
 (Item 1)

Admiral Sir Henry Leach
 Chief of the Naval Staff
 (Item 1)

General Sir Edwin Bramall
 Chief of the General Staff
 (Item 1)

Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Beetham
 Chief of the A r Staff
 (Item 1)

Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse
 Commander-in-Chief, Fleet
 (Item 1)

Lieutenant-General Sir James Glover
 Ministry of Defence
 (Item 1)

Major-General J Moore
 Fleet Headquarters
 (Item 1)

Sir Antony Acland
 Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Sir Ian Sinclair
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Mr P R H Wright
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Sir Frank Cooper
Ministry of Defence
(Item 1)

Sir Michael Palliser
Cabinet Office

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Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr R L Wade-Gery
Mr R L L Facer
Brigadier J A C G Eyre (Item 1)

CONTENTS

Item 10

1	MILITARY ISSUES	1
2	DIPLOMATIC ISSUES	2

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1. MILITARY ISSUES

The Sub-Committee were briefed on the military situation and prospects.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the following addition to existing Rules of Engagement (ROE) was agreed -

On the high seas, any positively identified Argentine military aircraft, or positively identified Argentine civil aircraft apparently engaged in surveillance, coming within 40 miles of British forces and not responding to harassment, may be shot down.

Apart from this no change in existing ROE had been suggested in present circumstances. But during the coming week decisions were likely to be required on a number of major issues. These would include the call-up of certain reservists; the announcement and enforcement of a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ), including the implications for Stanley airfield; the possible use of Special Forces; and the movements of the British Amphibious Group currently at Ascension Island. Further consideration would need to be given to the circumstances in which it might be necessary to attack the Argentine Navy outside the TEZ, to the ROE which would be needed and to the possibility of warning it not to move beyond certain geographical limits. A special political effort would need to be made to ensure that the necessity and justifiability of British actions were fully understood by public opinion.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Defence Secretary to arrange for British forces to apply immediately the additional ROE indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
2. Invited the Defence Secretary to report further on the appropriate ROE if it became necessary to attack the Argentine Navy outside the TEZ, and on the possibility of warning it to limit its movements, as indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
3. Invited the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to undertake Ministerial supervision of the South Atlantic Presentation Unit.
4. Agreed to resume their discussion at 11.15 am on 26 April.

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2. POLITICAL ISSUES

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that she had received a satisfactory reply from the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig, to the message she had sent him the previous evening. He would now be putting his latest ideas urgently to the Argentine Government. Meanwhile further thought would need to be given to the position of the Falkland Islanders and the possible need to make appropriate arrangements for the evacuation, perhaps by sea, of those who wished to leave temporarily. Depopulating the Islands might be a dangerous course; but children and the old would be particularly strong candidates for voluntary evacuation. Regular daily broadcasts to the Islands should also be considered.

The Sub-Committee -

Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to report further on possible measures which might be appropriate to sustain the morale of the Islanders, as indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.

Cabinet Office

26 April 1982

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