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OD(SA)(82) 18th Meeting

COPY NO **16**

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
TUESDAY 27 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 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

Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Beetham
Chief of the Air Staff

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) 17th Meeting Item 2

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up a brief discussion, said that the British proposal agreed by the Sub-Committee the previous day had been rejected by the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig. With British agreement, therefore, Mr Haig was now putting to the Argentine Government his own proposals as set out in OD(SA)(82) 25. He was insisting on a clear yes or no answer by midnight Buenos Aires time on 27/28 April; no amendments would be accepted; and unless rejected by Argentina the proposals would not be published without consultation with London. If the Argentines failed to respond positively to this approach it would be important to establish that he accepted that his proposals had definitely been turned down; this would be crucial to the difficult military decisions with which the Sub-Committee would be faced on 28th April.

The Sub-Committee -

Took note.

2. MILITARY ISSUES

Previous Reference: OD(SA)(82) 17th Meeting Item 1

The Sub-Committee were briefed by the Chief of the Air Staff on the possibility of using Vulcan aircraft to bomb Port Stanley airfield.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that Hercules support for the Vulcans could be deployed to Ascension Island that day. Vulcan deployment to Ascension could take place on the evening of 28 April unless countermanded by the Sub-Committee at their meeting that morning. No decision had yet been taken on whether the operational use of Vulcans could be authorised. The Rules of Engagement for British submarines in the Maritime Exclusion Zone should immediately be amended so that they had authority to attack any conventional submarine they detected, whether or not it was itself inside the Zone. No immediate announcement should be made about the Argentine sailor who had been killed in South Georgia. No action should be taken, in advance of the Sub-Committee's meeting on 28 April, to inform Mr Haig of the

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the probable announcement of a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) later that day. On 28 April the Sub-Committee would need to address decisions on

- (a) whether and at what time a TEZ round the Falkland Islands should be announced on 28 April and enforced on 29 April;
- (b) whether Port Stanley airfield should be destroyed;
- (c) whether the military commanders should be given discretion to use Vulcan aircraft in the context of (b);
- (d) whether Special Forces should now be inserted into the Falkland Islands;
- (e) whether the Amphibious Group now at Ascension should sail southwards on 29 April.

Consideration might also be given to Rules of Engagement for responding to a threat from the Argentine aircraft carrier (or other ships of the Argentine Navy) on the high seas; and to the possibility of formally warning the Argentines not to overstep certain geographical limits. The Cabinet were meeting on 28 April and should be informed if announcement of a TEZ was imminent.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Defence Secretary to authorise Vulcan-support and Vulcan deployment to Ascension on the basis indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
2. Invited the Defence Secretary to put into immediate effect revised Rules of Engagement for British submarines operating in the Maritime Exclusion Zone, as indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
3. Agreed to resume their discussion at 0900 on 28 April.

Cabinet Office

27 April 1982

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