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OD(SA)(82)21st 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
FRIDAY 30 April 1982 at 9.45 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

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

CONTENTS

Item No	Subject	Page No
1	POLITICAL ISSUES	1
2	MILITARY ISSUES	3

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

1. POLITICAL ISSUES

Previous Reference: OD(SA)(82) 20th Meeting Item 1

The Sub-Committee had before them a memorandum by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary (OD(SA)(82) 35) on diplomatic action following the failure of the proposals by the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig; telegrams no. 1524-1527 from Her Majesty's Ambassador in Washington reporting the latest American position; and President Reagan's reply (since circulated as OD(SA)(82) 37) to the Prime Minister's message of 29 April (OD(SA)(82) 34).

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the reply messages now received from President Reagan and Mr Haig were satisfactory. Mr Haig would be announcing at 1700 hours London time that day the new United States position following Argentina's rejection of his proposals. The Americans' present intention was to describe those proposals in broad terms but not to publish them.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that strict secrecy should be observed until Mr Haig's statement had been made. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary would be giving a press conference afterwards. He would announce his intention to visit the United States the following day, for talks both with Mr Haig and with the United Nations Secretary General Senor Perez de Cuellar. Meanwhile he would seek to clarify the precise position which the Argentine reply to Mr Haig had taken on sovereignty and on the administration of the Islands; and he would consider whether Mr Haig could be persuaded to rephrase the references in his statement to the British attitude towards his proposals and to the American attitude towards the use of force in a dispute. In talking both to Mr Haig and to Senor Perez de Cuellar he would be guided by the broad proposals in his memorandum on future diplomatic action, ie paragraphs 3-5 of OD(SA)(82) 35; but care should be taken over any reference to future bilateral negotiations, and for this reason the proposal in his paragraph 4b might be preferable to that in paragraph 4a. He would also, of course, need to discuss with Mr Haig how to concert economic and other pressures on Argentina. Meanwhile further consideration should be given urgently to two humanitarian points: whether arrangements could be made for the International Committee of the Red Cross to establish a presence on the Falkland Islands, perhaps using sea transport from Uruguay; and whether

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

anything more could be done to help the British journalists who were in detention in southern Argentina. She herself would that evening indicate to the parliamentary leaders of the Labour Party, the Social Democrat Party and the Liberal Party that she would be willing to brief them on the situation, on Privy Counsellor terms, when Parliament reconvened on 4 May.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to proceed as indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
2. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to give further urgent consideration to the possibility of an International Red Cross presence in the Falkland Islands and to the position of British journalists detained in Argentina.
3. Took note of the invitation which the Prime Minister would be extending to leaders of the national opposition parties in Parliament.

TOP SECRET

2. MILITARY ISSUES

Previous Reference: OD(SA)(82) 20th Meeting Item 2

The Sub-Committee had before them memoranda by the Defence Secretary (OD(SA)(82) 32 and 33) on the enforcement of the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) and on direct action operations by Special Forces.

THE MPRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the TEZ should now be enforced as proposed. This would involve lifting the restriction on attacking Port Stanley airfield and giving the Force Commander discretion to use Vulcan aircraft for that purpose as well as Harriers. The Force Commander should also be given discretion to mount Special Force operations against military installations in the Falkland Islands; it was accepted that this, like other measures authorised, might involve Argentine casualties. Further consideration would need to be given to the problem of the Argentine aircraft carrier and to the sailing of the major Amphibious Group ships from Ascension Island.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Approved the recommendation in paragraph 4 of OD(SA)(82) 32.
2. Approved the recommendation in paragraph 3 of OD(SA)(82) 33.
3. Agreed to resume their discussion at 1430 that day.

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30 April 1982

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OD(SA)(82) 22nd Meeting

COPY NO **16**

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DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND
FALKLAND ISLANDS

—

MINUTES of a Meeting held at
10 Downing Street on
FRIDAY 30 APRIL 1982 at 2.30 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

Sir Antony Acland
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Mr J R Freeland
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

SUBJECT

SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

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SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

The Sub-Committee had before them a note by the Secretaries (OD(SA)(82) 36) covering a note by the Ministry of Defence on the Argentine aircraft carrier.

MR FREELAND said that while acting on the basis of the inherent right of self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter Britain was legally entitled to use force against Argentine naval units posing an actual threat to British forces or territory. The actuality of such a threat could be readily demonstrated if for example the Argentine aircraft carrier were near enough to any British unit to be able to attack it with her aircraft. But it would be difficult to construct any legal justification for the use of force where the actuality of the threat could not be demonstrated.

THE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF said that the warning conveyed to the Argentine Government through the Swiss on 23 April had made clear that any approach on the part of Argentine warships which could amount to a threat to interfere with the mission of British forces in the South Atlantic would be regarded as hostile and was liable to be dealt with accordingly. Militarily the Argentine aircraft carrier could amount to such a threat from virtually any position on the high seas; it would not always be known where she was, she was capable of covering 500 miles in a day, she could carry aircraft with an operating radius of a further 500 miles and the supply line for British forces was vulnerably strung out between Ascension Island and the Falklands. Militarily, therefore, option (a) in the Ministry of Defence note was to be preferred.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that after the most careful consideration of the legal, military and political issues involved the Sub-Committee were unanimously of the view that, subject to one limitation, British forces should be authorised to attack the Argentine aircraft carrier as soon as possible wherever she was on the high seas. No further warning need be given. The limitation was that she should not be attacked if she was both north of latitude 35° South and west of longitude 48 West; on the high seas was to be taken

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to mean outside internationally recognised territorial waters of 12 nautical miles breadth. There should be no difficulty about demonstrating that an attack within this limitation was justifiable in terms of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, given the military threat which the aircraft carrier posed to British forces in the South Atlantic. The remaining ships of the Amphibious Group were authorised to sail from Ascension at the discretion of the Force Commander. If Port Stanley airfield was attacked, as already authorised, a short public statement in general terms should be made as soon as it was known that this had been done; a fuller statement could be made later when the results achieved were clearer, but this should not be specific about the precise method of attack. Further consideration would need to be given to the likelihood that a reinforcement Brigade would need to be added to the British forces in the South Atlantic; and to the possibility that the ss Queen Elizabeth II might need to be requisitioned in that context.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Endorsed the option in paragraph 5a of OD(SA)(82) 36, subject to the modifications specified by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
2. Invited the Defence Secretary to arrange for the Force Commander to be given discretion to sail the remaining ships of the Amphibious Group from Ascension.
3. Invited the Defence Secretary to be guided by the Prime Minister's summing up in authorising public statements following an attack on Port Stanley airfield.
4. Agreed to resume their discussion on the afternoon of 2 May.

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30 April 1982

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