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JUL08 – REUNION DE GABINETE # 65 (0930 hs) (cab 148/211)

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OD(SA)(82)65th Meeting

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CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND
THE FAIKLAND ISLANDS

MINUTES of a Meeting held at
10 Downing Street on
THURSDAY 8 JULY 1982 at 9.30 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 FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon Sir Michael Havers QC MP
Attorney General

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

Sir Antony Acland
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr A D S Goodall
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 memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence (OD(SA))(82) 69) on the burial of casualties.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that there had been no direct Argentine response to the message conveyed through the Swiss on 3 July, but in a speech on 5 July the new Argentine Foreign Minister had spoken of a de facto cessation of hostilities and on 6 July had telephoned the United Nations Secretary General, Senor Perez de Cuellar, to say that his Government had decided to release the one British prisoner of war in their hands, Flight Lieutenant Glover. Flight Lieutenant Glover was expected to arrive at Montevideo today. This decision should be used to further the process of de-escalation of hostilities. He proposed that a message should now be sent to the Argentine Government to say that the British Government noted that no further hostilities had occurred since 14 June, had also noted the statement by the Argentine Foreign Minister on 5 July, and had been encouraged by the decision to release Flight Lieutenant Glover. It had therefore concluded that the Argentine Government had now accepted that active hostilities had ended, and on that basis, in accordance with Article 118 of the 3rd Geneva Convention, intended to return all Argentine prisoners of war and invited the Argentine authorities to agree immediate arrangements for their return.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that all the remaining Argentine prisoners should now be returned, including the 35 engineers who had volunteered to help with mine clearance: if it was essential to keep these, they should be invited individually, and in the presence of witnesses, to declare in writing their willingness to remain and help with mine clearing operations; and the International Committee of the Red Cross should be apprised of these arrangements. A message should be sent immediately to the Argentine Government on the lines proposed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. The Governments of the United States and New Zealand should be informed of this action so that they did not retain sanctions against Argentina for longer than was necessary. A step-by-step approach to the remaining measures should be taken. The Chancellor of the Exchequer should be consulted about

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the question of releasing Argentine financial assets in the United Kingdom, provided that Argentina was willing to lift its own measures against British assets. The maintenance of the 12 mile limit and the Total Exclusion Zone should be kept under constant review. No compensation or reparations for damage caused in the war should be sought from Argentina since British interests in Latin American generally could be affected and the Argentines were in any case unlikely to pay. It was unfortunate that Cunard were seeking a replacement for the Atlantic Conveyor from Korean and Japanese shipyards, but this was a commercial decision: the basis of compensation payable by the Government for the ship's loss was its current, not its replacement, value. The recommendations on burial in OD(SA)(82) 69 were agreed, and consideration should be given to allowing either the children or the parents of the fallen to visit their graves in the Falkland Islands at public expense.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to send a message to the Argentine Government in the terms proposed, and to inform the Governments of the United States and New Zealand.
2. Invited the Defence Secretary, in the light of the Argentine response, to arrange for the repatriation of the remaining Argentine prisoners.
3. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in consultation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to consider arrangements for the release of frozen Argentine assets.
4. Invited the Defence Secretary, in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Attorney General, to keep the maintenance in force of the 12 mile restriction and the Total Exclusion Zone under constant review.
5. Invited the Defence Secretary to make arrangements for the burial of casualties in accordance with the recommendations in OD(SA)(82) 69.

Cabinet Office

8 July 1982

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