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ABR22 – REUNION DE GABINETE # 14 (1000 hs) (cab 148/211)

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OD(SA)(82) 14th 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
THURSDAY 22 APRIL 1982 at 10.00 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

Sir Antony Acland
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Sir Michael Palliser
Cabinet Office

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr R L Wade-Gery
Mr R R L Facer

SUBJECT

SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

Previous Reference: OD(SA)(82) 13th Meeting

Immediately before their meeting the Sub-Committee were joined by the Chief of Naval Staff, Chief of the General Staff and Chief of the Air Staff and were given an appreciation of the military situation and prospects.

THE DEFENCE SECRETARY said that the Sub-Committee would need to take a number of difficult military decisions early the following week, after the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's return from Washington. They would need to decide, inter alia, when the Amphibious Force should sail from Ascension Island; when and how to establish a total Exclusion Zone round the Falkland Islands, covering aircraft as well as ships; and whether and how to insert Special Forces. These decisions would require detailed consideration in the light of the progress of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's negotiations with the Americans. They should not therefore be addressed at the present meeting.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the Sub-Committee would aim to meet at Chequers on 25 April, when further military briefing would also be required. No decision would in the meantime be taken on the date for the Amphibious Force to leave Ascension or the other matters referred to by the Defence Secretary. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary should seek, while in Washington, to dispose of apparent American hesitations about British forces' freedom of action on the use they made of the airfield on Ascension; meanwhile Vulcan bombers should not be deployed there.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to discuss urgently with the Americans the use of Ascension Island's facilities, as indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
2. Agreed to resume their discussion at 10.30 am on 25 April.
3. Invited the Defence Secretary to arrange for the Chiefs of Staff to be available to provide further expert military briefing on that occasion.

Cabinet Office

22 April 1982