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ABR29 – MoD MEMO – ENFORCEMENT OF THE TOTAL EXCLUSION ZONE (cab 148/212)

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29th April 1982

CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

Sub Committee on the South Atlantic and the
Falkland Islands

ENFORCEMENT OF THE TOTAL EXCLUSION ZONE

Memorandum by the Secretary of State
for DefenceOBJECTIVES

The main elements of the Task Force were expected to be in position to enforce the Total Exclusion Zone when it comes into effect at noon British Summer Time on Friday, 30 April but have been delayed by weather. They are now expected to arrive on Sunday 2 May. Their objective will be to achieve complete air and sea control of the area, thereby isolating the Argentine garrison and reducing its will and capacity to resist a determined amphibious assault. This should progressively increase pressures on the Junta. Hence, the successful enforcement of the Exclusion Zone could in itself have a significant impact on the outcome of the crisis; in any case it is a necessary precursor to further military options.

2. It is impossible to predict when successful enforcement of the Exclusion Zone might begin to affect the garrison, but the garrison's will to resist could begin to crumble from mid-May onwards. However, further decisions need to be taken if the Task Force is to have the best possible chance of achieving this objective. The neutralisation of Port Stanley airfield would prevent air landed resupply and deny Argentine Air Forces a forward base from which to sustain operations within the Exclusion Zone.

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3. Port Stanley airfield is most vulnerable to air attack. HARRIERS embarked on INVINCIBLE and HERMES are likely to be fully committed initially to Air Defence of the Task Force and the enforcement of the Exclusion Zone. The airfield could be attacked by VULCANS operating from Ascension Island. There is a high probability that a single aircraft raid would cause significant damage to the runway and the airport installations without damage to Port Stanley town or its outskirts.

RECOMMENDATION

4. Against this background, OD(SA) is recommended to:
- a. authorise the immediate use of suffixes SIERRA and TANGO to ROE 123, thereby enabling attacks on the airfield and its installations to commence without delay, including immediate use of a VULCAN;
 - b. allow the Task Force commander discretion to achieve the objective of neutralising Port Stanley airfield and its installations, and destroying any aircraft or helicopters which are based there, using all the means at his disposal.

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Ministry of Defence

29 April 1982

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