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OD(SA)(82) 57th 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
WEDNESDAY 16 JUNE 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

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

Sir Michael Palliser
Cabinet 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 CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF reported that the Argentine surrender on West as well as East Falkland had been completed. Arrangements were in hand to secure the surrender of the small group of Argentine servicemen on South Thule. As an interim measure until it was known whether Argentina had accepted a complete cessation of hostilities, the Rules of Engagement had been modified to ensure that no Argentine warship would be attacked unless she entered the 200 mile Total Exclusion Zone without warning. This modification was not being made public. It would be up to three days before Canberra, carrying the first batch of 4,000 Argentine prisoners of war, could reach a mainland port. Meanwhile no response had yet been received from the Argentine Government to yesterday's message from the British Government calling on them to agree to a complete cessation of hostilities and accept the repatriation of their prisoners of war.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that it would be important to pre-empt attempts by Argentina to mislead her own and international opinion about the terms on which Argentine forces had surrendered and the handling of Argentine prisoners of war. The facts surrounding the surrender needed to be clearly established and the text of the surrender document should be obtained urgently. If the Argentine Government was prepared to agree to a complete cessation of hostilities, Argentine aircraft could be permitted to participate in the repatriation of prisoners from Port Stanley, although given the numbers involved British ships would have to be used too. The United States were willing in principle to help, and United States aircraft might also be used; so might Brazilian. If there was no Argentine response to the British message, a sizeable proportion of prisoners might have to be held; but for practical and humanitarian reasons it would still be necessary to find ways of returning the majority to Argentina as quickly as possible. Repatriation via Chile was a promising possibility. Another alternative might be to notify the Argentine authorities in advance and then send Canberra into Comodoro Rivadaria: but this would carry evident risks for the safety of Canberra and her crew. Any arrangements for recovering

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the one or two British prisoners of war held by Argentina should include the three British journalists imprisoned there. At home, consideration should now be given to appropriate ways of celebrating the successful conclusion of the Falklands operation, notably a thanksgiving service in St Paul's Cathedral, and arrangements for striking a South Atlantic campaign medal should be expedited. The Queen's wishes would need to be ascertained, both about the service and the proposed medal. Steps should be taken to assess the feasibility of bringing back to the United Kingdom for burial the bodies of those British servicemen killed there whose next of kin desired it.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Defence Secretary to obtain and circulate as soon as possible the text of the surrender document signed by Major General Menendez, and to arrange for appropriate publicity use to be made of it.
2. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to arrange
 - i. for pressure to be put on the Argentine Government, through the Swiss authorities, to respond to yesterday's message from the British Government;
 - ii. for an approach to be made to the Chilean Government, on a contingency basis, to agree to the repatriation of Argentine prisoners of war through Chile;
 - iii. for requests to be made to the United States and Brazilian Governments, also on a contingency basis, for help with the transportation of Argentine prisoners by air.
3. Invited the Defence Secretary, after ascertaining The Queen's wishes
 - i. to expedite arrangements for the striking and award of a campaign medal for participants in the Falklands operation, to be known as the South Atlantic Medal;
 - ii. to make proposals as to the form and timing of the ceremony or ceremonies with which the successful outcome of the Falklands operation should be celebrated in London.
4. Invited the Defence Secretary to make arrangements to establish the feasibility of bringing back the bodies of servicemen killed in the Falklands for burial in the United Kingdom, where this was the wish of the next of kin, and to report further.

Cabinet Office

16 June 1982

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