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OD(SA)(82) 24th Meeting

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## CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND  
THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

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MINUTES of a Meeting held at  
10 Downing Street on  
TUESDAY 4 MAY 1982 at 9.00 am

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## 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

## SUBJECT

SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

**SECRET**

## SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

The Sub-Committee were informed of the latest military situation.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that in the light of his talks in Washington with the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig, and in New York with the United Nations Secretary General, Senor Perez de Cueller, he believed that there was both a need and an opportunity for Britain to act to fill the current diplomatic vacuum. Both Mr Haig and Senor Perez de Cueller were privately canvassing possible bases for a ceasefire, which in Mr Haig's case had been adapted from proposals put forward by Peru. Neither were satisfactory as they stood. But some variant of Mr Haig's ideas might be acceptable. Britain's immediate interest was that Argentine should withdraw from the Falkland Islands without making preconditions about sovereignty.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that action was clearly needed to fill the diplomatic vacuum. But any initiative would require careful scrutiny, to avoid compromising the fundamental principles which informed British policy in the present crisis. Meanwhile the Government would need to explain robustly the reasons why it had been impossible to avoid sinking Argentine ships in pursuance of the inherent right of self-defence. No change was currently required in British forces' Rules of Engagement.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to bring before them considered proposals for a new diplomatic initiative.
2. Agreed to resume their discussion at 1800 that evening.

Cabinet Office

4 May 1982

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OD(SA)(82) 25th 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 in the  
Prime Minister's Room,  
House of Commons, on  
TUESDAY 4 MAY 1982 at 6.30 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  
(Item 1)

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 (Item 1)

Admiral Sir Henry Leach  
Chief of Naval Staff and  
First Sea Lord (Item 1)

Sir Antony Acland  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Mr J R Freeland  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
(Item 1)

Sir Michael Palliser  
Cabinet Office

SECRETARIAT

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

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## 1. MILITARY ISSUES

The Sub-Committee were informed of the latest military situation.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that it was very unwelcome news that a Harrier aircraft had been lost in action over the Falklands and that HMS Sheffield had been hit by an air-launched Exocet missile and set on fire. A difficult problem was posed by the possibility that the Argentine aircraft carrier had been located by a British submarine in a vulnerable position off the coast of Argentina, since it might be situated outside what Britain would recognise as territorial waters but in a bay which the Argentines claimed was inside the territorial waters baseline. She would arrange for this problem to be considered by the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee later that evening, when the Attorney General had had time to consider the legal position more fully.

The Sub-Committee -  
Took note.

## 2. DIPLOMATIC ISSUES

The Sub-Committee had before them a letter of 4 May to the Prime Minister's Private Secretary from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's on ideas for a new diplomatic move.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that he wished to send to the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig, the message and draft agreement suggested in his Private Secretary's letter. This was necessary in order to fill the diplomatic vacuum identified by the Sub-Committee at their previous meeting. The draft agreement was an adaptation of the United States/Peruvian proposals he had then mentioned.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the terms of the proposed approach to Mr Haig were approved subject to one change. Paragraph 5 of the draft agreement should be amended to read:

The two Governments agree that the views of the Islanders must be determined, and that their interests and wishes must be respected in the definitive settlement of the status of the Islands.

**TOP SECRET**

Paragraph 2b of the draft agreement could be omitted if that were suggested at a later stage.

The Sub-Committee -

Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to communicate with Mr Haig in the terms he had proposed, subject to the amendment indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.

Cabinet Office

5 May 1982

**TOP SECRET**