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MAY21 – REUNION DE GABINETE # 40 (1030 hs) (cab 148/211)

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OD(SA)(82) 40th Meeting

COPY NO 15

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 FRIDAY 21 MAY 1982 at 10.30 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 (Item 2)
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 R L Wade-Gery
Mr R L L Facer
Brigadier J A C G Eyre

SUBJECT

1. DIPLOMATIC ISSUES
2. MILITARY ISSUES

SECRET

1. MILITARY ISSUES

The Sub-Committee had before them a letter of 20 May from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's Private Secretary to the Prime Minister's, about the case of Lieutenant Commander Astiz.

THE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF briefed the Sub-Committee on the latest military situation.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that Lt. Cdr. Astiz should not be released for the time being. It would be convenient if he could be moved by sea from Ascension Island to the United Kingdom and it was understood that a suitable ship would in any case be making that voyage between 25 May and approximately 5 June. The possibility of repatriating him could be further considered thereafter. Before repatriation the International Committee of the Red Cross should be allowed access to him and he should be asked whether he would be willing to be questioned by or on behalf of the French and Swedish authorities; these two actions might be taken together, perhaps most conveniently after his arrival in Britain. The public presentation of current military operations should so far as possible follow the pattern proposed by the Defence Secretary in his memorandum of 18 May (OD(SA)(82) 55). No statement need be made to Parliament about the casualties which had unfortunately resulted from a recent Sea-King helicopter crash. A more general statement about the military situation would almost certainly need to be made to Parliament by the Defence Secretary on 24 May.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Defence Secretary, in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, to arrange for Lieutenant Commander Astiz to be dealt with as indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
2. Invited the Defence Secretary to handle the public and Parliamentary presentation of current military developments on the lines indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.

SECRET

2. POLITICAL ISSUES

The Sub-Committee had before them a memorandum by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary (OD(SA)(82) 44) on the administration of government in the Falklands and the Dependencies; telegrams nos. 795, 801, 803, and 809-810 from the British Representative at the United Nations, Sir Antony Parsons, about the concluding stages of the New York negotiations with the United Nations Secretary General, Senor Perez de Cuellar; and telegrams reporting the attitude of the United States, Peruvian and other Governments.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that he would be sending the Secretary General, who had now formally conceded that his negotiations had failed, a message of thanks for all his efforts. There was no prospect of the latest Peruvian initiative succeeding; it would certainly not be acceptable to Argentina. No other diplomatic initiative was in sight. Steps were continuing to be taken to bring home to world opinion the reasonableness of the final proposals which Britain had put forward before the New York negotiations collapsed.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that, as suggested in the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's memorandum, the Financial Secretary of the Falklands, Mr Rowlands, should be sworn in as Officer Administering the Government as soon as British rule was restored.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Approved OD(SA)(82) 44.
2. Warmly congratulated the Prime Minister and Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on the successful outcome of the debate in Parliament on 20 May.

Cabinet Office

21 May 1982