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19MAY82 - CIA National Intelligence Daily Cable

"Military and Political Situation" [*declassified 04AUG2007*]

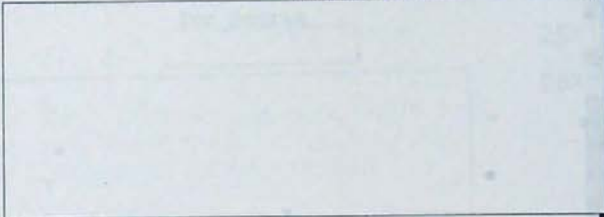
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Director of
Central
Intelligence

Top Secret



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National Intelligence Daily

Wednesday
19 May 1982

The task force leadership reportedly reported an
attack on the Falkland Islands, believing that Argentine forces
of that island were already out and subordinate to main
force the main units. The leadership believes that they
must be able to utilize value as such as attack.

The British Ministry of Defense announced that the
Falkland Islands were under attack on Monday and
Argentina said that British warships sailed the islands
yesterday. London also announced that another war ship
followed the loss of the Falkland Islands because of
technical problems, and that all British ships in the South
Atlantic have been placed on active service status.

Coverage of the UK has decided to attack that Falk
land Islands, it will be really a high risk. In their
naval operations the British command have shown the re-
sult for Argentine capabilities, a factor which has been
contributed to the loss of the destroyer Sheffield.

The British may have a similar small appreciation
for the combat ability of the Argentine guerrillas, which
dominate the landing force by about 2 to 1. Moreover,
the guerrillas will be defending from fixed positions.

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19 May 1982

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The British will probably land in lightly defended areas to establish the initial beachhead before attempting to move on the main Argentine forces in the Port Stanley area.

British Force Disposition

British amphibious forces with 6,000 troops and a minimum of about 40 Harriers are in the Falklands area and preparing for an invasion. Speculation is growing that there will be an attack against East Falkland--where the bulk of Argentine forces are--and that the attack will be preceded by at least one diversionary landing intended to pull part of the Argentine garrison out of its defensive positions.

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1-11

The task force leadership reportedly rejected an attack against West Falkland, judging that Argentine forces on that island were already cut off and unable to reinforce the main units. The leadership believes that there would be little political value to such an attack.

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The British Ministry of Defense announced that Sea Harriers bombed the Port Stanley area again on Monday, and Argentina said that British warships shelled the islands yesterday. London also announced that another Sea King helicopter was lost off the Falklands Tuesday because of technical problems, and that all British ships in the South Atlantic have been placed on active service status.

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Comment: If the UK has decided to attack East Falkland first, it will be taking a high risk. In their naval operations the British seemingly have shown low regard for Argentine capabilities, a factor which may have contributed to the loss of the destroyer Sheffield.

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The British may have a similar small appreciation for the combat ability of the Argentine garrison, which outnumbers the invading force by about 2 to 1. Moreover, the Argentines will be defending from fixed positions.

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19 May 1982

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[Redacted]

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The British will probably land in lightly defended areas to establish the initial beachhead before attempting to confront the main Argentine forces in the Port Stanley area. [Redacted]

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During the next two days the weather in the Falklands will deteriorate, making a landing somewhat more difficult, but it also will give an advantage to the all-weather Harriers over most Argentine aircraft. [Redacted]

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The Sea Harrier attacks, the shelling, and the declaration of active service status are consistent with preparations for an invasion of the Falklands. [Redacted]

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Argentine Military Posture

[Large redacted block]

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Comment: The Argentines intend to counter the invasion by using aircraft from the mainland, as well as forces on the island. If the Argentines manage to sink British ships during the invasion, there is a strong possibility that British submarines will attack Argentine naval forces even if the ships are within 12 miles of the coast. The carrier probably would be the principal target. [Redacted]

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[Large redacted block]

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[Redacted]

19 May 1982

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[Redacted]

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Developments in London

The British cabinet reportedly reviewed tactics for an invasion yesterday, concentrating on weather and force deployments. Prime Minister Thatcher also announced that Parliament would hold its sixth emergency session tomorrow, in response to Labor Party leader Foot's request to allow the House of Commons to debate the UK's next moves. Thatcher, however, again refused Foot's demand that Parliament be consulted before the UK abandons UN mediation and invades. [Redacted]

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Comment: Although the government will not seek parliamentary approval for military action, Thatcher probably will renew her offer to keep all party leaders closely informed. [Redacted]

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The EC and NATO

Foreign Secretary Pym reported to the cabinet yesterday on the EC decision on renewing sanctions against Argentina. Senior ministers were angered further yesterday when EC agricultural ministers approved new farm price supports without British consent. [Redacted]

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NATO foreign ministers yesterday reaffirmed their complete support for the UK. Secretary General Luns said the ministers condemned Argentina as the aggressor and called for a solution based on UN Security Council Resolution 502. He also said that the UK apparently does not need military aid from its partners and the issue was not discussed. [Redacted]

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Comment: The EC's actions almost certainly will plunge the UK's relations with the Community to their lowest point since the UK joined nearly a decade ago. Thatcher cannot afford to endanger the high level of domestic support she enjoys for her policy on the Falklands by appearing to bow even slightly to Common Market pressure. [Redacted]

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