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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

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

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

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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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