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SAPU(82) 16

SOUTH ATLANTIC PRESENTATION UNIT (SAPU)

The attached paper issued at 1800 hours on Thursday 6 May 1982 contains suggested lines to take on -

1. International Support for Britain
2. A Change in Military Strategy?

Cabinet Office

6 May 1982

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1. International Support for Britain

- To judge from recent press reports one might assume that international support for Britain had evaporated. This is far from the case. Many countries have expressed concern about the loss of life in the recent engagements. This is entirely natural and accords exactly with sentiments expressed by British ministers. It is quite clear that there remains very considerable support for Britain on the fundamental issues. The following examples are drawn from statements made this week.

a. Today (Thursday 6 May), Ministers of NATO's "Eurogroup" (current members Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Turkey and the United Kingdom) issued a communiqué which contained the following: "Ministers condemned Argentina's armed invasion of the Falkland Islands and the dependencies as well as the failure to comply with Security Council Resolution 502. Ministers noted the importance of maintaining the principle that aggression or occupation of territory by force should not be allowed to succeed and urged the need to seek a negotiated solution acceptable to all parties concerned on the basis of the implementation of Security Council Resolution 502 in all its parts."

b. The Commonwealth. Last night the Commonwealth Secretary General, Mr Ramphal, speaking after Commonwealth High Commissioners in London had held talks with Mr Pym, reiterated Commonwealth support for what Britain is doing. Several Commonwealth leaders have made recent public statements. For example the Foreign Minister for Canada said on Tuesday: "We deplore the Argentinian attack on the Falkland Islands and request the removal of Argentinian troops at the moment the British are engaged in actions of self defence."

c. United States. The House of Representatives adopted on Tuesday a resolution that "Argentina should withdraw its forces from the Falkland Islands, and if the efforts to resolve the conflict through means fail, the US should provide full diplomatic support to Great Britain in efforts to uphold the rule of law."

d. Sweden. On Sunday the Swedish Foreign Minister, interviewed on radio and television, said "the Swedish Government supports, as it has done all along, the UN Security Council Resolution, which calls for Argentina to withdraw its troops from the Falklands and a political solution to the dispute Sweden supports Britain as long as they stick to the UN Resolution and so far as I can judge that is what they are doing. The Falklands are British territory now. If you are to alter the status of these Islands then it must be done after consulting the wishes of the population and before that the Argentine troops must be withdrawn. That is our attitude which the British still take."

e. The co-ordinating bureau of the non-aligned movement in New York (convened at Argentine request) issued a communiqué yesterday. This, predictably, confirmed non-aligned support for Argentina's claims of sovereignty over the Islands but, significantly reiterated an appeal for a peaceful solution to be found in accordance with Security Council Resolution 502 "in its entirety" (ie including the mandatory demand for Argentine withdrawal.)

2. Change in Military Strategy?

- Some press reports suggest that following the loss of the Sheffield there may be a change in our strategy.. "Fleet may pull back to avoid missile attacks" (Guardian). "Nott hints at pause in action" (Times).

Important to realise that despite the loss of the Sheffield we are . . . successfully continuing our strategy of isolating the Argentine occupation forces on the Falklands by enforcing the Total Exclusion Zone. Since the Zone came into operation almost a week ago we have prevented both air and sea resupply of the Falklands. All our military action during the past week has been taken either to enforce the Zone or to protect our Task Force. Thus, as Mr Nott said in the Commons, "If in the next few days they do not challenge our ships and they cease coming into the Total Exclusion Zone no casualties need arise."