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OD(SA)(82) 30th Meeting

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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  
MONDAY 10 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  
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 QL 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 G Eyre

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1. MILITARY ISSUES

The Sub-Committee had before them a note by the Secretaries (OD(SA)(82) 45) covering a note by the Ministry of Defence on Rules of Engagement relating to Argentine non-combat aircraft.

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

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that British forces were entitled to treat as hostile any Argentine aircraft which was identified by at least its radar characteristics and flight path as being engaged in surveillance of British units. If British air cover was not available for interception the Royal Navy would have no choice but to seek to destroy each aircraft without warning, eg by missile. The professional advice was that there was no real danger of such action being taken, by mistake, against aircraft which were not Argentine or not engaged in surveillance. Thought should be given urgently to the line to be taken in public if British forces did destroy an Argentine surveillance aircraft. More generally, relations with the media were giving rise to concern. Correspondents with the Task Force were complaining of censorship and lack of information; on the other hand, disclosures or even speculation in the media could assist Argentina's military efforts and thus endanger British lives. These problems should be urgently addressed by the Permanent Under Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, at one of his regular meetings with Editors; he might appropriately be accompanied, for this purpose, by the Chief of the Defence Staff. Members of the Sub-Committee would need to be carefully briefed later in the week on plans and prospects for a British landing in force on the Falkland Islands if that should prove necessary.

The Sub-Committee -

- against Surveillance aircraft*
1. Invited the Defence Secretary to authorise Rules of Engagement ~~for the air defence of Ascension Island~~, on the basis proposed in paragraph 10 of the note attached to OD(SA)(82) 45.
  2. Invited the Defence Secretary to arrange for an early approach to media Editors to be made as suggested by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
  3. Invited the Defence Secretary to arrange for them to be briefed at 1700 on 13 May, in the Cabinet Office Briefing Room, on plans and prospects for a landing in force.

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2. DIPLOMATIC ISSUES

The Sub-Committee had before them telegrams nos. 691-2 and 694-5 from the United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations in New York.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the British Representative at the United Nations, Sir Antony Parsons, had correctly identified what were likely to be the points of greatest difficulty in the current negotiations in New York. He did not need further instructions immediately. But the evolving situation would need to be carefully assessed the following day.

The Sub-Committee

Agreed to resume their discussion at 0930 on 11 May.

Cabinet Office

10 May 1982

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OF-SECRET 233 8378

14th May 1982

Ref: B06495

*Dear David,*

OD(SA)(82) 30th Meeting, Item 1, Conclusion 1,  
which correctly recorded approval of paragraph 10 of  
OD(SA)(82) 45, mistakenly referred to the air defence of  
Ascension Island (which was dealt with by Conclusion 2 of  
OD(SA)(82) 29th Meeting), The Conclusion should read -

"1. Invited the Defence Secretary to authorise  
Rules of Engagement against surveillance aircraft  
on the basis proposed in paragraph 10 of the note  
attached to OD(SA)(82) 45."

*Yours ever*

*R L Wade-Gery*

R L WADE-GERY

D B Omand Esq.  
Ministry of Defence.

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