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OD(SA)(82)21st 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  
FRIDAY 30 April 1982 at 9.45 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

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1. POLITICAL ISSUES

Previous Reference: OD(SA)(82) 20th Meeting Item 1

The Sub-Committee had before them a memorandum by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary (OD(SA)(82) 35) on diplomatic action following the failure of the proposals by the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig; telegrams no. 1524-1527 from Her Majesty's Ambassador in Washington reporting the latest American position; and President Reagan's reply (since circulated as OD(SA)(82) 37) to the Prime Minister's message of 29 April (OD(SA)(82) 34).

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that the reply messages now received from President Reagan and Mr Haig were satisfactory. Mr Haig would be announcing at 1700 hours London time that day the new United States position following Argentina's rejection of his proposals. The Americans' present intention was to describe those proposals in broad terms but not to publish them.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that strict secrecy should be observed until Mr Haig's statement had been made. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary would be giving a press conference afterwards. He would announce his intention to visit the United States the following day, for talks both with Mr Haig and with the United Nations Secretary General Senor Perez de Cuellar. Meanwhile he would seek to clarify the precise position which the Argentine reply to Mr Haig had taken on sovereignty and on the administration of the Islands; and he would consider whether Mr Haig could be persuaded to rephrase the references in his statement to the British attitude towards his proposals and to the American attitude towards the use of force in a dispute. In talking both to Mr Haig and to Senor Perez de Cuellar he would be guided by the broad proposals in his memorandum on future diplomatic action, ie paragraphs 3-5 of OD(SA)(82) 35; but care should be taken over any reference to future bilateral negotiations, and for this reason the proposal in his paragraph 4b might be preferable to that in paragraph 4a. He would also, of course, need to discuss with Mr Haig how to concert economic and other pressures on Argentina. Meanwhile further consideration should be given urgently to two humanitarian points: whether arrangements could be made for the International Committee of the Red Cross to establish a presence on the Falkland Islands, perhaps using sea transport from Uruguay; and whether

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anything more could be done to help the British journalists who were in detention in southern Argentina. She herself would that evening indicate to the parliamentary leaders of the Labour Party, the Social Democrat Party and the Liberal Party that she would be willing to brief them on the situation, on Privy Counsellor terms, when Parliament reconvened on 4 May.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to proceed as indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
2. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to give further urgent consideration to the possibility of an International Red Cross presence in the Falkland Islands and to the position of British journalists detained in Argentina.
3. Took note of the invitation which the Prime Minister would be extending to leaders of the national opposition parties in Parliament.

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2. MILITARY ISSUES

Previous Reference: OD(SA)(82) 20th Meeting Item 2

The Sub-Committee had before them memoranda by the Defence Secretary (OD(SA)(82) 32 and 33) on the enforcement of the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) and on direct action operations by Special Forces.

THE MPRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the TEZ should now be enforced as proposed. This would involve lifting the restriction on attacking Port Stanley airfield and giving the Force Commander discretion to use Vulcan aircraft for that purpose as well as Harriers. The Force Commander should also be given discretion to mount Special Force operations against military installations in the Falkland Islands; it was accepted that this, like other measures authorised, might involve Argentine casualties. Further consideration would need to be given to the problem of the Argentine aircraft carrier and to the sailing of the major Amphibious Group ships from Ascension Island.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Approved the recommendation in paragraph 4 of OD(SA)(82) 32.
2. Approved the recommendation in paragraph 3 of OD(SA)(82) 33.
3. Agreed to resume their discussion at 1430 that day.

Cabinet Office

30 April 1982