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OD(SA)(82)54th 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
FRIDAY 11 JUNE 1982 at 10.00 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

The Rt Hon Sir Michael Havers QC 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 A D S Goodall
Mr R L L Facer
Brigadier J A C G Eyre

SUBJECT

MILITARY ISSUES

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OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

MILITARY ISSUES

and a letter of 10 June from the private secretary to the Defence Secretary to the private secretary to the Prime Minister on the supply of French Super Etendard aircraft to Peru.

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

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL said that he had been asked to advise on the legal implications of intercepting Argentine cargo aircraft believed to be carrying arms from Libya. An aircraft flying direct from Tripoli to Recife in Brazil without refuelling could not be intercepted and forced to divert to Ascension because it would have insufficient fuel. But a warning could be given to Argentina that future flights were liable to be intercepted and if necessary attacked. An aircraft which had refuelled en route could be asked to divert: if it refused, it could be given an immediate warning and, if it again refused, attacked.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said urgent enquiries should be made of the French Government about the report of arrangements being made to supply Super Etendard aircraft to Peru which were believed to be destined for Argentina. For operational reasons the total number of casualties incurred through the Argentine air attacks on ships off Bluff Cove and Fitzroy should not at present be revealed. The Ministry of Defence would announce the following day that all next-of-kin had been informed. President Reagan and Mr Haig had indicated that the United States would be ready to help with the repatriation of Argentine prisoners of war likely to be captured in the taking of Port Stanley. It was for later decision whether some or all of them should be retained until the end of hostilities with Argentina. Now that the Brazilian Government had agreed to permit the return of the RAF Vulcan from Rio de Janeiro the supply of spare parts for the Brazilian Lynx helicopters could be resumed: no publicity should, however, be given.

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She would consider asking Prince Saud whether the Saudis would be willing to intervene with Iraq to prevent the supply of Iraqi Exocet missiles to Argentina and with the King of Morocco to prevent over-flights of Argentine aircraft carrying military supplies from Libya.

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The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of the Cabinet, to make urgent representations to the French Government to prevent the supply of Super Etendard aircraft to Peru.
2. Invited the Defence Secretary to arrange for the supply of spare parts for the Brazilian Lynx helicopters to be resumed.
- 3.

Cabinet Office

11 June 1982

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