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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
WEDNESDAY 9 JUNE 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 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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The Sub-Committee had before them a letter of 7 June from the private Secretary to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to the private secretary to the Defence Secretary on press requests to visit the Falkland Islands.

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

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL said that the questions submitted by the French and Swedish Governments had been put to Lt. Cdr. Astiz under appropriate arrangements. He had declined to answer them and was now being repatriated to Argentina by air.

THE DEFENCE SECRETARY said that there would be advantage in making early arrangements for a visit to the Falkland Islands by a party of selected foreign and British journalists once the fighting round Port Stanley was over. It would facilitate control if the party could be transported by ship and accommodated on board.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that it would be better to avoid such a visit for the first week or so after the fighting stopped. The journalists should not be allowed to interview prisoners of war. Consideration might be given to whether a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister should accompany the party or possibly a small number of Members of Parliament. Further examination of the problems would be needed, but meanwhile initial planning could go ahead. Action should also be taken to refute allegations in the media that the Government had released operational information about the capture of Darwin and Goose Green which had been damaging to British forces on the ground: such allegations were totally without foundation. It would be helpful to know whether it would be consistent with international law for the United Kingdom to counter reported Argentine preparations to lay mines by air with a threat to lay mines by submarine.

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The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Defence Secretary, in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, to arrange for plans to be made for a visit by selected journalists to the Falklands, in accordance with the Prime Minister's summing up, and to make further recommendations as to the modalities.
2. Invited the Defence Secretary to prepare a note of the facts relating to the release of information about the capture of Darwin and Goose Green.
3. Invited the Attorney General, in consultation with the Defence Secretary, to consider the legality of a threat to lay mines by submarine in the circumstances outlined in the Prime Minister's summing up.

Cabinet Office

9 June 1982

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