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OD(SA)(82) 16th 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  
Chequers on  
SUNDAY 25 APRIL 1982 at 2.45 pm

—  
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  
(Item 1)

Admiral Sir Henry Leach  
Chief of the Naval Staff  
(Item 1)

General Sir Edwin Bramall  
Chief of the General Staff  
(Item 1)

Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Beetham  
Chief of the A r Staff  
(Item 1)

Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse  
Commander-in-Chief, Fleet  
(Item 1)

Lieutenant-General Sir James Glover  
Ministry of Defence  
(Item 1)

Major-General J Moore  
Fleet Headquarters  
(Item 1)

Sir Antony Acland  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Sir Ian Sinclair  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Mr P R H Wright  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Sir Frank Cooper  
Ministry of Defence  
(Item 1)

Sir Michael Palliser  
Cabinet Office

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Sir Robert Armstrong  
Mr R L Wade-Gery  
Mr R L L Facer  
Brigadier J A C G Eyre (Item 1)

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1. MILITARY ISSUES

The Sub-Committee were briefed on the military situation and prospects.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the following addition to existing Rules of Engagement (ROE) was agreed -

On the high seas, any positively identified Argentine military aircraft, or positively identified Argentine civil aircraft apparently engaged in surveillance, coming within 40 miles of British forces and not responding to harassment, may be shot down.

Apart from this no change in existing ROE had been suggested in present circumstances. But during the coming week decisions were likely to be required on a number of major issues. These would include the call-up of certain reservists; the announcement and enforcement of a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ), including the implications for Stanley airfield; the possible use of Special Forces; and the movements of the British Amphibious Group currently at Ascension Island. Further consideration would need to be given to the circumstances in which it might be necessary to attack the Argentine Navy outside the TEZ, to the ROE which would be needed and to the possibility of warning it not to move beyond certain geographical limits. A special political effort would need to be made to ensure that the necessity and justifiability of British actions were fully understood by public opinion.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Defence Secretary to arrange for British forces to apply immediately the additional ROE indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
2. Invited the Defence Secretary to report further on the appropriate ROE if it became necessary to attack the Argentine Navy outside the TEZ, and on the possibility of warning it to limit its movements, as indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
3. Invited the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to undertake Ministerial supervision of the South Atlantic Presentation Unit.
4. Agreed to resume their discussion at 11.15 am on 26 April.

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2. POLITICAL ISSUES

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that she had received a satisfactory reply from the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig, to the message she had sent him the previous evening. He would now be putting his latest ideas urgently to the Argentine Government. Meanwhile further thought would need to be given to the position of the Falkland Islanders and the possible need to make appropriate arrangements for the evacuation, perhaps by sea, of those who wished to leave temporarily. Depopulating the Islands might be a dangerous course; but children and the old would be particularly strong candidates for voluntary evacuation. Regular daily broadcasts to the Islands should also be considered.

The Sub-Committee -

Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to report further on possible measures which might be appropriate to sustain the morale of the Islanders, as indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.

Cabinet Office

26 April 1982

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