

Ref: B06481



PRIME MINISTER

c Sir Robert Armstrong

Falklands: OD(SA) on 29th April

Military issues

1. Most of the outstanding military decisions can wait until 30th April, when the diplomatic situation may be clearer. But your meeting at 0900 tomorrow will need to consider the following.

(a) Amphibious Group. The deadline for stopping it sailing from Ascension has been extended (without detriment to the planned sailing time) to 1000 tomorrow. Is the Sub-Committee content not to stop it? With the Defence Secretary's agreement, some small slower ships have sailed today. The eye-catching decision concerns Canberra and Norland. They are fast, and could probably catch up if they were held a day or two longer. But it would be safer militarily to let them go tomorrow.

(b) Force levels. The Defence Secretary and Chief of the Defence Staff will want to mention this new problem orally tomorrow and to put in a paper for 30th April. The Force Commander will probably need another Brigade (over 2,000 men) if he is to be sure of avoiding military stalemate after the landing. A suitable Brigade is available, and would not need to arrive until two weeks after D-Day. But shipping for it would need requisitioning soon; this might, but need not, involve QE 2. The Sub-Committee need only give this preliminary consideration tomorrow.

2. The military decisions for 30th April will probably be: freedom to attack the airfield; freedom to use Vulcans; offensive operations by Special Forces; force levels (see above); ~~████████████████████~~, and possibly the problem of the Argentine aircraft carrier.

Diplomatic Issues

3. If the Argentines have accepted the Haig Plan, the Sub-Committee will need to consider what recommendation it will make to the Cabinet. The United States military guarantee will be a crucial issue. Mr Haig has spoken reassuringly about this to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary today. But what, physically, will it involve? And will it require Congressional approval?

4. If the Argentines have rejected the Haig Plan, the immediate issues will be

- When will the Plan be published? The timing may be important vis-a-vis the Debate in Parliament.
- How and where do we consult with Mr Haig on the next steps? When will the Americans come down off the fence, on our side, and what will this involve? (If American economic sanctions are likely you will need to warn the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor of the Bank of England, because of the effect on the international system if Argentina defaults). What other forms of diplomacy, if any, would we want to see filling the gap left by Mr Haig? Or would Mr Haig himself, in a Mark II guise, be the least evil alternative to Haig Mark I?

5. If the Argentines have equivocated, or are still not answering, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's advice will be needed on the implications. Mr Haig has already asked us to be giving preliminary thought to what should be done if the Argentine reply is to ask where the British Government stands on the proposals.

Next Meeting

6. Already fixed for 0945 on Friday, 30th April.

R.L.G.

28th April 1982

R L WADE-GERY