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Mr. Fearn

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CHIEFS OF STAFF MEETING: 5 APRIL

The following main points of concern to us emerged from this morning's meeting of the Chiefs of Staff at which Mr. Nott was again in the chair.

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(b) Refuelling and other facilities. I also reported to the meeting on the latest reactions which we have had from Dakar and other posts about the provision of refuelling facilities. The Chief of Defence Staff said that we would need to consider, on a country by country basis, to what extent the readiness of third countries to offer us such facilities would change once military action had been started. I undertook to put this in hand (Defence Department for action please), but commented that such facilities as we had already been given must have been provided in the knowledge that military action was at least an option. Nevertheless, there was no doubt that any waverers would become much more nervous once action had started. I do not know whether we are likely to be able to improve significantly on this as a judgement in advance.

(c) Rules of engagement. The Chief of Naval Staff reported that the first SSN, HMS Spartan, could arrive within the vicinity of Argentine Navy movements by 11.20 GMT on Sunday 11 April at the earliest, and would need clear rules of engagement or other

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noon Friday

instructions 48 hours beforehand. If HMS Spartan were to be given clearance to sink merchant shipping, in furtherance of a blockade, this would need an announcement not later than 7 April of an Exclusive Zone, to take effect at noon on 10 April. The Captain of HMS Spartan has recommended that an Exclusive Zone should be declared at 200 miles radius from Cape Pembroke lighthouse at Port Stanley. The Chief of General Staff questioned whether the timing was in fact that urgent; could not HMS Spartan simply be told to wait for further instructions? The Chief of Naval Staff said that the Argentine Navy were clearly engaged in a rapid resupply operation, and his fear was that, unless prompt action was taken, the Argentine Navy might complete their resupply operation and then return to home ports. This led to further discussion on

(d) Military options. Mr. Nott said that, in the light of the timing to which the Chief of Naval Staff had referred, he thought there would be a need for a Ministerial Group meeting to be held, either tonight or very early tomorrow, to consider a military options paper in advance of tomorrow's Cabinet. Ministers would have to take decisions, either in Cabinet or at a restricted Ministerial meeting on Wednesday. The Chiefs of Staff reported that their options paper (which has been reduced from 75 to 9 pages) was almost ready for circulation and would be discussed at a further meeting of the Chiefs of Staff at 2 p.m. today, to which I have been invited. The MOD have promised to let us have a copy of the draft as soon as possible. Mr. Nott asked whether it would be impossible to communicate with HMS Spartan between 7 and 10 April. The Chief of Naval Staff said that communications would exist, but on an infrequent basis, since any break of radio silence would disrupt Spartan's freedom of action (since, apart from the risk of interception, she needs to come to periscope depth). The norm for operational conditions was one contact every 12 hours.

(e) South Georgia. Mr. Nott said that he hoped that the military options paper would include the possibility of the recapture of South Georgia, as a lesser option, to the recapture of the whole of the Falkland Islands and their dependencies. If we were not able to reach the wholly satisfactory solution, he thought it would be very important politically to have re-asserted full control over South Georgia.

(f) Defence White Paper. Mr. Nott said that he had been considering whether the current crisis called for any amendment to the Defence White Paper, which is now with the printers. He had concluded that the only passage which needed amendment was the reference to savings in our Out of Area commitments. These amounted to about £3 m., roughly equivalent to the cost of hiring SS Canberra. He hoped therefore that it would not be necessary to achieve those savings, and that an appropriate amendment could be made to that section, and that section only, of the Defence White Paper.

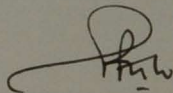
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(g) Ghurkas. Following a meeting chaired by Sir A. Acland this morning, I told the Chiefs of Staff that there was, in our view, no legal impediment to the use of Ghurkas in the Falkland Islands crisis, but that presentational and public relations considerations, particularly with the Third World, made it preferable that the use of Ghurkas should be avoided if possible (thus concurring with the initial reservations expressed by Mr. Nott yesterday). The Chief of the General Staff reacted strongly and said that he regarded it as quite unacceptable that any limitation should be set on the use of Ghurkas, who were a full part of the British Army. He was convinced that their use would not produce problems with the Nepalese. I said that we entirely agreed on the Nepalese point but repeated my view that on presentational grounds, it would be better to avoid their use. The Chiefs of Staff were clearly unconvinced and intend that the Ghurkas should remain on 7-day call for possible embarkation next week.

(h) Gibraltar. I reported to the Chiefs of Staff on the action which we have taken, in consultation with the Ministry of Defence, to reply to the Prime Minister's enquiry about the implications of the Falkland Islands crisis for Gibraltar. The Chief of Defence Staff asked whether we expected the re-opening of the frontier to go ahead on time. I said that I knew of no reason why it should not.



(P.R.H. Wright)
5 April, 1982.

cc Private Secretary
PS/LPS
PS/Mr. Luce
PS/FUS
Sir A. Acland
Sir I. Sinclair
Mr. Giffard
Mr. Gillmore
Mr. Ure
Mr. Weston, Defence Dept.
Mr. Williams, UN Dept.
Mr. Wilson, SED
Mr. Fenn, News Dept.
Mr. Hulse

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