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PERMANENT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE

SIR FRANK COOPER CCB CMG

*25. 4. 82*

*Dear Sir,*

*This may be*

*of interest to you.*

*Yours ever  
Frank*

PUS/

Secretary of State

Copy to: CDS

At the Chequer's meeting tomorrow it will be important to confront your colleagues with the need for tough decisions soon on how to use the formidable military capability we have deployed to the South Atlantic. During the course of next week we shall be in a position:

- a. to impose a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) around the Falkland Islands, which would prevent the reinforcement and resupply of the Argentine garrison by either sea or air;
- b. to bomb Port Stanley airfield with either Vulcans from Ascension, or Harriers from the Task Group, and to mount any further attacks necessary to ensure that damage is not made good and the airport remains closed;
- c. to attack the Argentine fleet at sea outside our TEZ either with surface ships or submarines;
- d. to mount limited operations by special forces to gather intelligence and then to attack Argentine military personnel and facilities on the Falkland Islands;

and within two or three weeks, depending on a decision to sail the Amphibious Group from Ascension

- e. to undertake a major landing on the Falkland Islands with a marine brigade, two infantry battalions and supporting arms.
2. In considering what part military action should play in resolving the crisis Ministers will need to be clear about political objectives - both medium and long term. The political and military objectives as currently formulated are summarised at Annex B.
  3. As to the military possibilities, these seem to me to fall into four graduated phases, as follows:

- a. Establishment of a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ). Once we had announced the TEZ our forces would police it reactively. They would only attack Argentine forces which entered the zone, or which posed a direct threat to them from outside the zone.

b. Establishment of a TEZ together with attacks to neutralize Port Stanley airfield and/or harrassment operations by special forces. Enforcement of the TEZ would remain reactive, but we would mount attacks against Port Stanley airfield - including the runway, installations, and aircraft - which would be intended both to facilitate enforcement of the TEZ, and to make a dent in the Argentine military capability and morale. In addition the SAS and SBS could mount attacks against Argentine military installations and personnel which would similarly attrite capability and morale.

c. Enforce the TEZ, attack Port Stanley airfield, and authorise unrestricted operations by our SSNs against the Argentine fleet on the high seas. This would further escalate the conflict. The sinking of the Argentine aircraft carrier and two or three other major warships would be a heavy blow to Argentine military and political morale, and would improve our military position if a protracted conflict ensued.

d. In addition to a, b, and c above, sail the amphibious force from Ascension, and mount major landings on the Falkland Islands as soon as you are in a position to do so. A major landing on the Falkland Islands which looked as though it might succeed in evicting the Argentine garrison could lead to a quick political solution, or it could lead to protracted operations which might eventually lead to the surrender of the Argentine garrison. The maintenance of an effective TEZ would be essential.

In considering what military action to take in support of our diplomatic strategy, - and crucially - how to relate military to diplomatic action, Ministers will need to address a number of difficult questions. I suggest what seem to me to be some of the more pertinent at Annex A.

24th April 1982

PUS

QUESTIONS ARISING IN RELATION TO PHASES-OF  
MILITARY ACTION

- a. Establishment of a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ)
- i. Should we contemplate a long drawn out blockade during which nothing much might be happening and the capability of the Argentine garrison on the Falklands would be slowly eroded?
  - ii. Are we prepared to sink merchant ships and shoot down civil aircraft to enforce the TEZ?
- b. Establishment of a TEZ together with attacks to neutralize Port Stanley airfield and/or harrassment operations by special forces
- i. Are we prepared - and in what timescale - to mount attacks on Stanley airfield with Vulcans, Sea Harriers, naval gunfire, special operations, or a combination?
  - ii. Are we prepared to give special forces a pretty free reign to operate against Argentine forces on the Falklands?
- c. Enforce the TEZ, attack Port Stanley airfield, and authorise unrestricted operations by our SSNs against the Argentine fleet on the high seas.
- i. Are we prepared to contemplate a major sea battle involving the loss of ships on both sides?
  - ii. Would our international support hold up if we were to extend the conflict in this way?
  - iii. What would be the risk of sinking a non-belligerent submarine by accident?
  - iv. How would we react to reprisals taken against the islanders by the Argentine garrison, or reprisals against the British in Argentina?
  - v. Are we prepared to attack airfields on the Argentine mainland from which Argentine combat aircraft would threaten our surface fleet?

d. In addition to a, b, and c above, sail the amphibious force from Ascension, and mount major landings on the Falkland Islands as soon as you are in a position to do so

i. Are we prepared to take the calculated risk of sailing our amphibious force from Ascension to the Falklands and when? If we do not sail the force what is the explanation?

ii. Are we prepared to commit our ground forces to a landing and follow up operations on the Falklands? What would be the aim? Could it succeed? What happens if it fails?

iii. Are we prepared to contemplate significant casualties at sea and/or on land? Are we prepared to commit forces on a significant scale to operations in the South Atlantic which could continue for several months and at the expense of NATO commitments?

2. In addition there are a number of more general questions which deserve consideration.

a. On whose side is time?

b. Will the diplomatic, international, and economic fronts hold up - and in what circumstances?

c. Will we pursue our aims in the face of criticism, opposition, and even obstruction from the Americans and other allies?

THE FALKLAND ISLANDS  
POLITICAL AND MILITARY OBJECTIVES

POLITICAL

1. Our political objectives have been consistent since the invasion and the Prime Ministers initial commitment to Parliament (Hansard 3rd April; Col 633) "It is the Governments objective to see that the islands are freed from occupation and are returned to British Administration at the earliest possible moment". This formulation has remained the principle feature also of private deliberation; "... essential elements in the Governments stance should continue to be that Argentine troops must be withdrawn before negotiations could take place and that thereafter the wishes of the Islanders must remain paramount." (OD(SA) 4th Mtg 11th April). The latter point being the most important: "Most vital issue of all was the need, in relation to the longer term, to sustain the principle that the wishes of the Islanders were paramount." (OD(SA) 10th Mtg 19th April).
2. In public, sovereignty has been given greater prominence than in private. "Our mission is to restore British sovereignty to the islands and to give the people what they want" (The Prime Minister, Hansard 6th April, Col 824). Although other public words have been more cautious; "We are going to restore British administration to the Falkland Islands - that was the Prime Ministers commitment and we mean to stick to it .." (Mr Nott on "Weekend World" 4th April). "The restoration of British administration of the islands is still Her Majesty's Governments intention" (FCS, Hansard 21 April, Col 274). Within OD(SA) there has been an apparent move from sovereignty, for example

in discussion of the first Haig formulation "it would probably be necessary also to make clear that the Government were continuing to seek the restoration of British administration" (OD(SA) 6th Mtg, 13th April). But the tone later becomes more robust.

3. There was a reference in OD(SA) 7th Meeting (15th April) that "the dependencies should not necessarily be treated in the same way in any longer term settlement, since they had an importance of their own in relation to Antarctic claims". Otherwise it is only recently that the separate constitutional basis of the dependencies has been brought out in public.

#### MILITARY

4. Military objectives have, whilst based on the strategic longer term aim of removing Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands, tended to concentrate on more limited tactical objectives. The public presentation has concentrated on unspecified threat rather than execution (".. diplomacy may continue to prove insufficient to deal with Argentine aggression" Lord Carrington 3rd April Col 1581 Hansard; "Our Naval task force gives us the strength from which to urge a settlement." Lord Belstead 7th April Hansard Col 258 ".. [The task force will be] fully adequate for any action that may be required in exercise of our undoubted right of self-defence"). But in private some guidelines have been articulated: "in reality there was no intention of attacking the Argentine mainland" (OD(SA) 8th Mtg 16th April), "the political needs would best be served by a quick clean operation with maximum prisoners and minimum dead. If the two requirements (of speed v casualties) conflict, speed should be secondary." (OD(SA) 11th Mtg 19th April).

5. Formally the missions of operations have been stated as follows:

a. OPERATION CORPORATE: "The overall aim of HMG in the current situation is to bring about the withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands and dependencies and the reestablishment of British administration there as quickly as possible. Military deployments and operations are directed to the support of this aim".

b. OPERATION PARAQUET: Mission - "To repossess South Georgia as soon as possible".

CINCFLEET OORDER 2/82  
Endorsed by CDS 2038/1/1 of 14 April 1982  
Authorised by OD(SA) 19 April 1982 (Second Meeting)

c. OPERATION SUTTON: Aim - "To land a force in the Falkland Islands with a view to repossessing the islands" (ie identical to COS directive in COS 9/82).

CINCFLEET OORDER C3 dated 19 April 1982  
Taken 'note' of by COS (CDS 2038/1/2 dated 21 April 1982  
Subject of presentation to OD(SA) 22 April 1982



11A

OPERATION SUTTON - DECISIONS (AS AT SUN 25 APR)

1. Vulcans. Vulcan bombers are ready in UK for deployment to Ascension Island. They will be available for tasking in the South Atlantic 2 days after the decision is taken to deploy them to Ascension Island. If that decision is taken on Sun 25 Apr, they could be on task on Tue 27 Apr.
2. Amphibious Group. The Amphibious Group is assembled at Ascension Island. It can arrive off the Falklands 14 days after sailing, assuming a speed of advance of 10 knots.

*Paragraph deleted and retained under  
Section 3(4)*

*AWayland  
8 May 2012*

4. Total Exclusion Zone. The expansion of the Maritime Exclusion Zone into a TEZ should be promulgated at least 24 hours before the earliest date of a VULCAN attack on Port Stanley Airfield (27 Apr.) and 48 hours before the Carrier Battle Group arrives on 29 Apr, whichever is the sooner. This decision should therefore be taken by OD(SA) on Sunday 25 Apr for promulgation on 26 April.
5. Rules of Engagement. Rules of Engagement for the Carrier Battle Group will be submitted for OD(SA) approval on Mon 26 Apr.
6. Special Forces with Task Group. SBS and SAS can be inserted for intelligence gathering and offensive operations after the Carrier Battle Group arrive in the TEZ. This decision should be taken on 26 Apr if insertion is to be made at the first opportunity.