

Ref: B06478

13

PRIME MINISTER

c Sir Robert Armstrong

Falklands: OD(SA) on 27th April

Your meeting at 0900 tomorrow, in the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's absence, should cover the following points.

- (a) Latest diplomatic situation. Sir Antony Acland can report on the OAS meeting and any news from Mr Haig (on the Mexicans).
- (b) Latest military situation. The Chief of the Defence Staff can report any developments.
- (c) The Vulcan option. The Chief of the Air Staff will be ready to brief the Sub-Committee on whether the Vulcan option against Stanley airfield is technically feasible; and if so
- what it would actually involve (including subsidiary roles for the Harriers, see below);
  - how it would compare with the all-Harrier option in terms of risk to our aircraft and to Stanley town; and in terms of effectiveness;
  - how often it would have to be repeated.
- (d) Airfield timing. The Chief of the Defence Staff should comment on an interesting new possibility. Instead of being ordered to destroy the airfield as soon as possible after the TEZ is in force, ie on Thursday night, the Force Commander might be given discretion to do so if - but only if - the Argentines go on using it (for military or resupply purposes) after the TEZ is established. If they do, we should only have lost a day or so. But there is a real possibility that, in the light of the proposed Announcement, fear will keep them from using the airfield at all. In that case we should have avoided upsetting the Islanders (and perhaps domestic and world opinion); risking our aircraft on repeated bombing attacks; and destroying a valuable asset for the future.



(e) Vulcan deployment. The Defence Secretary should say whether he wants the Vulcans sent to Ascension tomorrow. This is the only military point on which the Sub-Committee will need to take a firm decision before Wednesday.

(f) Special Forces. The Chief of the Defence Staff wishes to raise this orally. No firm decisions will be possible until Wednesday, when the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary will be back. But the Ministry of Defence need general guidance, so that the Force Commander can make provisional plans.

2. Sir Antony Acland may wish to revert to the idea of warning Mr Haig that we may well be announcing the TEZ on Wednesday (for enforcement on Thursday). This would have to be done tomorrow if at all. It would not involve warning him about the airfield attack plan. Today's message told him only that "the next phase of operations will have to start very soon".

3. The Sub-Committee will need to be very clear what the so-called Vulcan option will involve. The Chief of the Air Staff's concept appears to be that Harriers should also be used against the airfield, both ahead of the Vulcans in order to take out the radars and after them in order to destroy helicopters, aircraft, stores and equipment. For these attacks the Harriers would use rockets; only the Vulcans would use bombs. Rocket attack by Harrier would of course remain an option even if the runway itself did not have to be bombed at all, ie if the tactic at (d) above were adopted and worked.

4. The next meeting after tomorrow's is already fixed: 0900 on Wednesday, 28th April.

26th April 1982

R L WADE-GERY