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DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

Sub Committee on the South Atlantic and the
Falkland Islands

FALKLAND ISLANDS LANDING OPERATIONS - PUBLIC PRESENTATION

Memorandum by Secretary of State for Defence

1. There would be military and political advantages to be gained if we were able initially to disguise the scale of landing operations. We could do this without affecting the operation itself.
2. Militarily we should aim at creating the maximum uncertainty in the minds of the Argentine command. The potential benefits would be the holding back of a concerted Argentine air attack (the major threat in the landing phase) to await 'the main invasion'; the holding back of Argentine reserves on the Falkland Islands from all out commitment; and general confusion. The Argentine Aircraft Carrier and other naval forces might continue as now, withdrawn and irresolute.
3. Politically, we should encourage uncertainty in the minds of the Argentine Junta. Their recourse to the Security Council could be delayed. The handling of world opinion generally might be made less difficult.

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4. I believe, therefore, that our landing operations should be presented initially as a further development of earlier raiding operations; and one more turn of the screw to encourage the Argentines to withdraw. Subsequently when some ships have withdrawn, presence on the Islands could be admitted as a way of bringing yet more pressure to bear on the Argentine garrison. We could indicate that other landings might follow.

5. If we adopt this course it would be necessary to "manage" for a limited period reporting of military events in the South Atlantic. This would require the co-operation of correspondents with the Task Force and the press here. We should need to avoid a Public Relations vacuum. There is a reasonable prospect of this coming off and even a few hours of time gained would be valuable.

6. This is a matter of presentation and we are working out now how best to handle it. Actual fighting operations in and around the Falklands would be unaffected. Nothing would be lost, since we have the option at any time of announcing that we are carrying out full scale landing operations aimed at repossession of the Islands.

7. If colleagues are content I will work up the detailed presentation.

J N

Ministry of Defence
18th May 1982

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