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COS 25TH MEETING/82

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

CONFIDENTIAL ANNEX
TO
COS 25TH MEETING/82 HELD ON
TUESDAY 20 APRIL 1982 AT 10.00 am

OPERATION CORPORATEITEM 1. INTELLIGENCE MATTERS

1. SIR TERENCE LEWIN invited the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Intelligence) to update them on current intelligence.
2. LIEUTENANT GENERAL GLOVER (Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Intelligence)) reviewed the intelligence outlined in the latest signalled summary (1). He said he would circulate later that day a report from the debriefing of the Royal Marines who had just returned from the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. He had issued (2) an assessment of how much intelligence about the Task Force the Soviets might be passing to the Argentines. He would issue an assessment of the Argentine capability to fly helicopters direct from the mainland to the Falkland Islands.

Note by the Secretary

Note on helicopters issued as DCDS(I) 26 dated 20 April 1982.

ITEM 2. OWN FORCES

3. The situation was set out in the Force Tote Sitrep (3). At future briefings they should be shown a map of enemy forces' positions in relation to our own.

ALQ 050/1			
RECEIVED IN REGISTRY			
25 APR 1982			
DESK OFFICER		REGISTRAR	
INDEX	PA	Action Taken	

Notes:

1. INTSUM No 32 200600Z April 1982.
2. DCDS(I) 26 dated 19 April 1982.
3. Force Tote Sitrep (Issue 26).

ITEM 3. PUBLIC RELATIONS

4. MR McDONALD (Deputy Chief of Public Relations) reviewed the major articles in the daily newspapers. He said a defensive brief had been prepared for Operation PARQUET.

ITEM 4. ACTION AND DECISIONS REQUIRED

5. The Committee noted the summary of action in hand (4); a revised summary is at Annex A. They also noted the forecast (5) of decision deadlines.

ITEM 5. OPERATION SUTTON - OUTLINE PLAN

6. The Committee had before them the outline plan (6) for Operation SUTTON prepared by the Commander-in-Chief Fleet.

7. SIR HENRY LEACH said the authors were to be congratulated on producing such a good outline plan in so short a time. It would be vital to deny Port Stanley airfield to the Argentines as soon as possible, and certainly before the Carrier Battle Group arrived; only the Vulcans could do this and in any case the Sea Harriers should be conserved to support the landing. They would need to know when Vulcan operations could start and what sortie rate could be maintained; political factors would weigh heavily in any decision whether and when to start such operations. Turning to reconnaissance, he said that it should be relatively easy to insert ground reconnaissance parties but it would be more difficult to extract them if necessary; full consideration should therefore be given to making maximum use of other resources. Finally, he would wish to be assured that planning had taken full account of the mining threat, which was not explicitly addressed in the plan.

8. SIR MICHAEL BEETHAM said he was concerned that the plan concentrated on the establishment of a bridgehead and took little account of the follow-up operations which would be necessary to repossess the islands; the need to sustain operations should be borne in mind from the outset. A key feature was the assumption that an effective sea/air exclusion zone had been established; he did not believe that this could be guaranteed if the Argentine Navy remained

Notes:

4. Annex A to COS 24th Meeting/82.
5. COS S20(2) dated 19 April 1982.
6. Attachment to COS(Misc) 137/742/1 dated 19 April 1982.

Part I to COS 25th Meeting/82
20 April 1982

intact, nor was it clear when this assumption could be realised. He also considered there could be advantage in delaying a landing until the imposition of an effective sea and air blockade had had time to demoralise the enemy. He went on to say that the plan paid scant attention to the possibilities for air reconnaissance and offensive air support. The Sea Harrier had an excellent low-level reconnaissance and offensive support capability; he considered the aircraft would be wasted if they were used solely for air defence. The need for air defence cover could be minimised if the Task Force operated to the East of the Falkland Islands, beyond the range of mainland-based attack aircraft and if Port Stanley airfield was put out of action. Winter weather was unlikely to prohibit low-level reconnaissance, and he also considered that a greater intensity of flying operations than that envisaged in the plan should be possible. He considered that the Sea Harriers would be the most effective means of putting Port Stanley airfield out of action; the Vulcans would also be effective, but carry a higher risk of causing civilian casualties. He was having an assessment made of the capability of the Vulcan force in this role, including their accuracy and sortie rate; he would inform them of the results of this assessment on Friday 23 April 1982.

9. SIR THOMAS MORONEY (representing the Chief of the General Staff) said this would be a difficult operation, and he considered the landing date should be as soon as possible; he saw no military advantage in delaying it. He was disappointed that the plan gave no indication of what operations might be necessary once a landing had been effected; at the least, a concept for further operations was required, since this could influence the decision where a landing should be made. He also considered that, in order to minimise civilian casualties, the option of attacking Port Stanley airfield by parachute-landed Special Forces should be considered; such an operation could be mounted by Hercules aircraft from Ascension.

10. SIR FRANK COOPER (Permanent Under Secretary) said a vital factor in determining the sequence of operations would be the possible consequences of any of those operations on world opinion, since this could influence Ministers' scope for action. For example, the bombing of Port Stanley airfield might create such a backlash that Ministers might feel unable subsequently to authorise a landing. He considered the worst outcome would be for Ministers to have to stop the operation after it had started but before it was completed. It was therefore essential that before any plan was finalised, a proper assessment should be made of the possible political and diplomatic consequences of each step in the operation.

11. In discussion the following points were made:
- a. Although it was outside the scope of the plan under consideration, the timely establishment and subsequent maintenance of an effective sea/air exclusion zone was vital. With suitable Rules of Engagement the achievement of sea control, including merchant shipping, should not be too difficult. Air control would be a greater problem, particularly for supply aircraft, and would probably depend on Port Stanley airfield being put out of action. It was unlikely that heavy lift helicopters flying direct from the mainland would have sufficient payload to be a threat.
 - b. It would be essential to neutralise the airfield early and keep it neutralised. This could only be done by air attack. Special Forces and possibly naval gunfire support could be used against installations and parked aircraft, and they could inhibit free use of the airfield but they would not be able to close the runway.
 - c. Careful consideration should be given to the inter-relationship and timing of phases of the operation, such as initial reconnaissance, the establishment of the exclusion zones, first attacks on Port Stanley airfield, initial landing and follow-up operations.
 - d. It was for the Task Force Commander to decide how to use his Sea Harriers. The air defence requirement would be determined by the threat at the time, in which Port Stanley airfield was a vital factor. Reconnaissance and ground attack carried a risk of attrition from enemy shore-based air defences.
 - e. It was assessed that, while there was a threat of sea mining, there was a low probability of the Argentines being able to conduct successful mining operations. Some intelligence indicated that land mines had been laid in the Port Stanley area, but there was no intelligence on the mining of any beaches.
 - f. Ideally the landing place should be near Port Stanley since this would inevitably be the final objective. However, selection of the landing place would depend on good intelligence, which would argue for deferring a decision until nearer the date of landing.

g. Similarly, the development of a concept of operations after the initial landing would also depend on good intelligence. This reinforced the need to obtain intelligence as early as possible by any means which would not prejudice the security of the operation.

h. It was noted that the Task Force would be self-sustaining until mid-July 1982, and to this extent the logistic assumptions made in the plan were satisfactory. The longer term logistic implications were already under examination (7).

12. Summing up, SIR TERENCE LEWIN said they would wish to take note of the outline plan so that the Commander of the Task Force (CTF) could carry out further detailed planning. They would wish to invite the CTF in the development of his plans to take account of the need to obtain early tactical intelligence; the potential of his Sea Harriers for reconnaissance and offensive support as well as air defence; the probable availability of Vulcans to bomb the airfield at Port Stanley; and the need to develop a concept for follow-up operations after the initial landing. They would wish to note that Ministers would need an assessment of the options and timing factors for the whole operation, to give them a comprehensive picture before making decisions to mount the operation. This should include the establishment of a sea/air exclusion zone, the gathering of tactical intelligence, and the landing and follow-up operations. To this end, they would wish to instruct the Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Operations) to prepare for their consideration at their meeting the next day a timetable setting out the relevant dates. Finally, they would wish to invite the Air Force Department to present for their consideration at their meeting on Friday 23 April 1982 an assessment of the capability of the Vulcans.

Annex:

A. Operation CORPORATE - Actions in Hand (1 page).

Note:

7. VCDS(P&L) 127/3/3 dated 19 April 1982.

OPERATION CORPORATE - ACTIONS IN HAND

ITEM	ARISING FROM COS MEETING	DECISION OR ACTION REQUIRED	SPONSOR	ACTION/ DECISION BY	CONTINUED	CURRENT STATE
0023	6/82 Item 1	Op CORPORATE - Military Appreciation	COS	DS 11	7/82 Item 5 12/82 Item 6	To be revised -
0059	23/82 Item 6	Prisoners of War	ACDS(P&L)	ACDS(P&L)		For clearance O/C by 210900 Apr
0061	23/82 Item 7	Battle Casualty Replacements	ACDS(P&L)	ACDS(P&L)		
0063	25/82 Item 5	Timetable of Military Options	ACDS(Ops)	ACDS(Ops)		For COS 21 Apr 82
0064	25/82 Item 5	Assessment of Vulcan Capability	AFD	AFD		For COS 23 Apr 82

One page only