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SOUTH ATLANTIC PRESENTATION UNIT (SAPU)

The attached paper issued at 1700 hours on 3 May 1982 contains information and suggested lines to take on the following -

1. Military Action from 1 May
2. Move of 5 Infantry Brigade
3. False Argentine Military Claims
4. Mr Pym's Visit to Washington

Cabinet Office

3 May 1982

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Line to Take

1. Military action from 1 May.

1 May (am) Air Raids on Port Stanley and Goose Green Airstrips

- Before dawn Vulcan aircraft attacked Port Stanley airfield to enforce TEZ and deny use of the airstrip. Subsequently there was a follow-up attack by Sea Harriers. The result was severe damage to the runway and surrounding military installations. The local airstrip at Goose Green was also damaged in a raid by Sea Harriers together with a number of Argentine military aircraft parked nearby. All our aircraft and crews returned safely.

1 May (pm) Bombardment of Port Stanley Airfield

- Bombardment carried out by ships of the Task Force to reinforce effects of bombing and deter repair work. During the bombardment the ships were attacked by Argentine fighters and bombers. One Mirage was shot down by a Sea Harrier and another Mirage is believed to have been shot down by Argentine gunfire.

1 May (evening) Attack on Task Force by Argentine aircraft.

- During evening a bombing raid was mounted on the Task Force. One Argentine Canberra was shot down and the raid was ineffective. One British ship suffered superficial damage and one seaman was injured.

2 May (pm) Argentine cruiser torpedoed.

- Argentine cruiser General Belgrano torpedoed by British submarine from outside the TEZ to the south of the Falklands. On 23 April we had announced a defensive zone around the task force and the cruiser, accompanied by two escort vessels, posed a significant threat to our ships. With modern weapons, particularly missiles, we cannot afford to wait until actually fired on and so the cruiser was attacked in accordance with our warning. It was hit by two torpedoes and severely damaged although according to latest reports it has not sunk.

2/3 May (Night) Argentine patrol vessel sunk.

- During a surveillance mission during the night a Sea King helicopter was attacked inside the TEZ by two Argentine armoured patrol craft. These craft were subsequently attacked by Lynx helicopters; one was sunk and the other damaged. Shortly after the attack life saving equipment was dropped by helicopter close to the damaged vessel. All our helicopters have returned safely.

2. Move of the 5th Infantry Brigade

5 Infantry Brigade is being brought to short notice to move to the South Atlantic. The Brigade is stationed in the United Kingdom and is already earmarked for out of area (ie non-NATO) duties. We are requisitioning shipping (including QE2) to transport the Brigade and work to prepare the ships for this role is being put in hand.

Why extra troops?

- Only prudent when contemplating operations - of whatever kind - to have reserves available nearer the theatre.

Why QE2?

- Speed, size, facilitate make her uniquely suited to carry substantial number of troops who must be kept fit and ready for operations, should they be required.

Other ships?

- Two roll-on-roll-off ferries and a container ship to transport equipment and helicopters.

3. False Argentine military claims

The Argentines have been quick to put out false reports of various military encounters, greatly exaggerating the performance of their forces. In order to make sure that our own statements are fully authenticated and as complete as possible we have to check and re-check before giving details (although some details may have to be held back for operational reasons). This takes time when the Task Force is over 8,000 miles away and is engaged in operations. It is worth waiting for the truth. In a Parliamentary democracy it is

is incumbent upon Government spokesmen to produce the truth. In a military dictatorship, and particularly one whose domestic position is so insecure, the position is quite different. The fact that the Argentines are now jamming BBC World Service bulletins in Spanish is clear evidence that they are determined to suppress accurate and well substantiated reporting.

Examples of false Argentine military reports include -

- i. HMS Exeter According to Argentines several days ago HMS Exeter had been "bombed", "mined" and "sunk". In fact, as Ministry of Defence confirmed HMS Exeter had not been involved in any military operation.
- ii. Aircraft losses During Saturday and Sunday, Argentines made a number of wild and varying claims about the number of British aircraft shot down, claiming up to eleven Harriers and a helicopter. In fact, no British aircraft were shot down - one aircraft suffered minimal damage which has already been repaired - and there were no casualties among the air crew. Confirmed by correspondents with the fleet who counted the same number of aircraft flying off and returning.
- iii. Port Stanley airfield Argentina claim only minimal damage during raids - "a small fire caused by an exploding oil barrel". In fact, the runway and surrounding military installations were severely damaged - correspondents have seen the photographs and confirmed that the runway is severely cratered. The local airstrip at Goose Green was also damaged together with a number of Argentine military aircraft parked nearby.
- iv. Damage to Task Force Argentines have claimed to have destroyed 2 helicopters and severely damaged up to four frigates, one aircraft carrier and a destroyer during air raids on the Task Force. One report claims that damage to Hermes is so serious that the Task Force can only count on Invincible. In fact, the only damage sustained by the Task Force is superficial splinter damage to the superstructure of one frigate.

v. British casualties. Argentines have claimed that there are serious British casualties (and one report claims that a shot down pilot has been picked up). In fact, there have been no casualties or losses among British aircrew and the only casualty in the Task Force is one seaman wounded by shrapnel splinters who is 'safe and comfortable'.

4. Mr Pym's visit to Washington

Attached for information is a transcript of his press conference in Washington on Sunday night.