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OD(SA)(82) 1st Meeting

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CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND
THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

MINUTES of a Meeting held at
10 Downing Street on
WEDNESDAY 7 APRIL 1982 at 9.00 am

PRESENT

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister (In the Chair)

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw MP
Secretary of State for the
Home Department

The Rt Hon Francis Pym MP
Secretary of State for
Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

The Rt Hon John Nott MP
Secretary of State for Defence

The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP
Paymaster General

ALSO PRESENT

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Terence Lewin
Chief of the Defence Staff

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr R L Wade-Gery
Mr D H Colvin

SUBJECT

SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

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SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

The Sub-Committee had before them memoranda by the Secretary of State for Defence (OD(SA)(82) 3) and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (OD(SA)(82) 2) and a minute of 6 April to the Prime Minister from the Secretary of the Cabinet (A08060).

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig, wished to visit London that day. It should be explained to him that Ministerial preoccupation with the Parliamentary debate made this impossible but that he would be very welcome the following day, on the basis that he would not come as a potential mediator but as a friend and ally of the United Kingdom. The Sub-Committee would meet in the course of the evening to decide whether in his winding up speech in Parliament the Defence Secretary should announce that a 200-mile Exclusion Zone would be established round the Falkland Islands with effect from midnight on 11/12 April; if so, the terms of the announcement would need careful consideration, as would the possibility of informing Mr Haig in advance.

The Government were likely to be asked during the Parliamentary debate whether the task force was carrying nuclear weapons. The reply should be that, in accordance with precedent, nothing could be said in public about the whereabouts of British nuclear weapons in any circumstances; but that there was no possibility in the present context of any kind of nuclear weapons being used. Further consideration would need to be given to the Rules of Engagement to be observed by British forces involved in the crisis, and in particular to the possibility of authorising any attack on Argentine naval vessels outside the proposed Exclusion Zone. Meanwhile the Royal Navy's nuclear submarines and the Task Force should remain on course for the Falkland Islands. Planning could proceed for a possible operation to recapture South Georgia; and further consideration would be given to the possibility of arranging for the Governor of the Falkland Islands to join the Task Force on its way south.

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The Sub-Committee

1. Invited the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to inform the United States Secretary of State that he would be very welcome to visit London the following day, on the basis indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
2. Instructed the Secretary of the Cabinet to arrange for the drafting of a possible form of words for announcing the establishment of an Exclusive Zone round the Falkland Islands.
3. Invited the Secretary of State for Defence to handle any questions about nuclear weapons on the lines suggested by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
4. Agreed to resume their discussion at 7 pm that evening.

Cabinet Office

7 April 1982

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