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OD(SA)(82) 63rd Meeting

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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
THURSDAY 1 JULY 1982 at 9.30 am

PRESENT

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister

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
Chancellor of the Duchy of
Lancaster and Paymaster General

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon Sir Michael Havers QC MP
Attorney General

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

Sir Antony Acland
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr A D S Goodall
Mr R L L Facer

SUBJECT

SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

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SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

THE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF said that Argentine ships and aircraft were continuing to return to peace time stations and there were no indications of Argentine hostile intent. Rules of Engagement for British forces had been modified in accordance with the note by officials (OD(SA)(82) 68). The Brazilian authorities had promised to release next week the Shrike missile which they had retained from the Vulcan aircraft which had been diverted to Rio de Janeiro. The Commander British Forces in the Falklands was now ready to accept small groups of foreign journalists, but none had so far arrived: Chile was still not allowing flights from Punta Arenas. It would improve the carrying capacity of the Royal Air Force Hercules flights if facilities could be made available at Punta Arenas and Montevideo, if only as diversion airfields. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions The Parachute Regiment were due to arrive in the United Kingdom between 3 and 7 July and the 3rd Commando Brigade would arrive on 11 July. It was the intention that all servicemen who had seen action should be back in the United Kingdom by the end of September. Because of the shortage of accommodation and other facilities in the Islands, consideration was being given to limiting the garrison to one battalion, with a large number of Royal Engineers. Rear Admiral Woodward would be relieved as Task Force Commander by Rear Admiral Reffell on 2 July and Major General Moore would be relieved as Commander Land Forces by Major General Thorne later in the month. The remaining Argentine prisoners of war were still to be embarked and the earliest sailing date from the Falklands was 4 July. It was the intention that the South Atlantic Fund should be administered by the charitable organisations of the three Services, the Army and Royal Air Force Benevolent Funds and the King George's Fund for Sailors.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that rehabilitation work in the Islands was proceeding well. There was an urgent need for prefabricated housing for civilian use. Plans were being prepared for a programme to improve relations with the countries of Latin America. He was reasonably optimistic about the prospects.

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THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that approaches should be made to the Chilean and Uruguayan authorities to enable RAF transport aircraft to divert if necessary to airfields in those countries. Consideration should be given to arrangements to enable children of servicemen killed or seriously wounded in the South Atlantic to have the same educational opportunities as they would have had if their fathers had survived. Arrangements for distributing the proceeds of the South Atlantic Fund should be made with a view to avoiding criticism of the kind which had occurred over the Penlee lifeboat disaster. It would not be acceptable for the proposed Service in St Paul's Cathedral on 26 July to contain elements designed to appeal to Argentine opinion: it should be a Thanksgiving Service for the liberation of the Falkland Islands, which would naturally include remembrance of all who had fallen in the conflict. As soon as the new Argentine Government was effectively in being, it should be informed through the Swiss and Brazilian authorities, that the United Kingdom was ready to proceed with an exchange of prisoners on the assumption that active hostilities were over, as provided for by the Geneva Convention, and would like confirmation that Argentina was also ready to exchange prisoners on this basis. If the Argentines agreed, it could be assumed that they had accepted that hostilities were at an end. Argentine allegations about ill-treatment of prisoners should be firmly rebutted: it might be possible to publish reports by the representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross who had been with the prisoners. In any case, the facts should be broadcast on the External Services of the British Broadcasting Corporation. Consideration would need to be given at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee to the question of maintaining the Total Exclusion Zone and 12 mile restriction in the light of the Argentine response to the approach on prisoners. Rehabilitation work on the Falklands should proceed without delay: allocation of costs could be settled later.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in consultation with the Defence Secretary, to arrange for foreign journalists to visit the Falkland Islands.
2. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in consultation with the Defence Secretary, to seek local arrangements to enable British aircraft to divert to Chilean and Uruguayan airfields if necessary.

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3. Invited the Defence Secretary to consider arrangements for the educational provision for children of servicemen killed or seriously wounded in the South Atlantic.
4. Invited the Defence Secretary to approach the ecclesiastical authorities with a view to ensuring that the service at St Paul's was on acceptable lines.
5. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to arrange for a further message to be sent to the Argentine Government on the lines indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
6. Invited the Defence Secretary to arrange for the remaining Argentine prisoners of war to be kept on board ships in the Falkland Islands for the time being; until further information about Argentine acceptance of an end to hostilities was forthcoming.
7. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in consultation with the Defence Secretary, to arrange for Argentine propaganda alleging ill-treatment of their prisoners of war to be refuted, and for the facts to be carried on the British Broadcasting Corporation's External Services.
8. Invited the Attorney General, in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, to advise on the legal position as to the maintenance of the Total Exclusion Zone and 12 mile restriction following a de facto cessation of hostilities.

Cabinet Office

1 July 1982

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