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OD(SA)(82) 9th 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  
MONDAY 19 APRIL 1982 at 11.15 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

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

Sir Antony Acland  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Sir Michael Palliser  
Cabinet Office

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong  
Mr R L Wade-Gery  
Mr D H Colvin  
Brigadier J A C G Eyre

SUBJECT

SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

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SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

Previous Reference: OD(SA)(82) 8th Meeting

The Sub-Committee had before them a letter of 18 April to the Prime Minister's Private Secretary from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's about possible action at the United Nations if the negotiations currently being conducted by the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig, ended in failure; Foreign and Commonwealth Office telegram no Washington no. 758 of 19 April reporting the latest message from Mr Haig to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary (the reply to which was subsequently set out in FCO telegram to Washington no. 761 of the same date); and a letter of 16 April from the Defence Secretary's Private Secretary to the Prime Minister's and a minute of 17 April from the Defence Secretary to the Prime Minister about Rules of Engagement.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that Mr Haig's latest message to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary was disquieting. There seemed to be a danger that he had been persuaded by the Argentines to make concessions unacceptable to Britain, who would then be blamed if negotiations broke down. A robust reply should therefore be sent urgently pointing out that Argentina was the aggressor; that President Reagan had told her during their telephone conversation on 17 April that it would not be reasonable to ask the United Kingdom to move further; that Mr Haig had earlier undertaken to consult Britain before leaving Argentina for either London or Washington; and that he should therefore send the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary as soon as possible a full account of where things stood and in particular the text now under discussion in Buenos Aires. If Mr Haig's negotiations broke down, the Sub-Committee would need to weigh carefully the various factors which would be involved in any further recourse to the United Nations; there was pressure for such recourse from the Labour Opposition in Parliament, but the British Representative at the United Nations had advised against tabling the draft Resolution canvassed in the letter of 18 April from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's Private Secretary and it seemed possible that, after the high point represented by Security Council Resolution no. 502, any further action at the United Nations would do more harm than good to British and Western

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interests (including strategic interests vis-a-vis the Soviet Union). Meanwhile the British forces approaching South Georgia might cross into the 200 mile Argentine Defence Zone, changing their Rules of Engagement appropriately as they did so. Other British forces in the South Atlantic should now adopt the Rules of Engagement which had been agreed for the forces heading for South Georgia while they were on the high seas. The Sub-Committee would need to reconvene the following morning when a decision would be needed on whether to authorise the actual repossession of South Georgia (Operation Paraquet) and possibly a revised Rules of Engagement for high seas use. If possible a stock-taking meeting of the Cabinet would also be held the following day. Subject to time being available the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary would urgently pursue the idea of briefly visiting Brussels in order to brief his European Community colleagues on the Falklands crisis.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to reply urgently to Mr Haig's latest message on the lines indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up; and to pursue the possibility of an early visit to Brussels.
2. Agreed that British forces designated for Operation Paraquet should enter the Argentine Defence Zone of 200 nautical miles round South Georgia and should thereupon operate under the Rules of Engagement set out in Annex B to OD(SA)(82) 13; and that the British submarine already in that Zone should operate forthwith under the same.
3. Agreed that all other British forces currently or in future south of Latitude 35° South should operate under the Rules of Engagement set out in Annex A to OD(SA)(82) 13.
4. Agreed to resume their discussion at 0915 on 20 April.

Cabinet Office

19 April 1982

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