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OD(SA)(82) 60th 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 21 June 1982 at 10.15 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 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

Sir Michael Palliser
Cabinet Office

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr A D S Goodall
Mr R L L Facer
Brigadier J A C G Eyre

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MILITARY ISSUES

THE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF said that living conditions in Port Stanley were difficult and that the number of military personnel who could be accommodated on the islands in the short to medium term had probably been overestimated. By the end of today all but the 900 or so special Argentine prisoners would have been repatriated or be on their way home. Southern Thule had been repossessed without a shot being fired. There were indications that an Argentine military stand-down was in progress except for the military airfield at Rio Grande. Instructions had been issued to British forces to open fire only in self-defence, except against Argentine warships entering the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) without due warning: but these instructions were not being made public. Sixty foreign journalists, including four Argentines, were waiting in Tierra del Fuego to fly to Port Stanley.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, noted that the despatch of urgently needed supplies for the British garrison was being delayed by slow work at Southampton docks: the Commander Land Force might be prompted to send a message of thanks to the dockers for their co-operation during the fighting and stressing that airfield matting and tents were urgently needed. No Argentine journalists should be admitted to the Falklands for the time being: the maintenance of tight security at Rio Grande airfield put a question mark over Argentine intentions as regards a de facto cessation of hostilities. Steps should be taken to ensure that possible Argentine allegations about the disappearance of numbers of their prisoners could be rebutted. Urgent consideration should be given to meeting the wishes of next of kin who wanted the bodies of servicemen killed in the Falklands to be brought home for burial: the problem of the final disposal of Argentine dead also needed to be addressed. The question what to do with the Argentine special prisoners should be kept under review: if no unequivocal Argentine confirmation that hostilities had ceased was forthcoming within the next few days it might be necessary to sail the prisoners in the direction of Ascension Island. Meanwhile, renewed efforts should be made to secure the release of Flight Lieutenant Glover from Argentine captivity.

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The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Defence Secretary to consider arrange for a message to be sent from the Commander Land Force to the Southampton dockers as suggested by the Prime Minister in her summing up.
2. Invited the Defence Secretary
 - i. to consider further the modalities of bringing the bodies of British servicemen back to the United Kingdom for burial, in cases where this was the wish of the next of kin;
 - ii. to seek advice from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission about arrangements for the final burial of servicemen on the Falkland Islands and about the appropriate procedures in the case of Argentine dead.
3. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in consultation with the Defence Secretary, to arrange for a message to be conveyed to the Argentine authorities proposing the exchange of Flight Lieutenant Glover for one of the Argentine special prisoners.

POLITICAL ISSUES

The Sub-Committee had before them telegrams nos. 1031 and 1032 from the United Kingdom Permanent Representative at the United Nations, Sir Anthony Parsons, reporting and commenting on an Argentine note proclaiming Argentina's readiness to implement Security Council Resolutions 502 and 505.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, noted that there was still no unequivocal Argentine acceptance that active hostilities had ceased; meanwhile the Argentine Junta was breaking up and Argentina was without an effective central government. It would be important to judge the right moment for making a further approach to the Argentine authorities with a view to obtaining formal confirmation that hostilities were at an end. Since the member states of the European Community had chosen to lift economic sanctions against Argentina (although the arms embargo would be maintained) other friendly states could be expected to follow suit. A fresh approach should be made to the Brazilian Government to obtain the release of the Shrike missile which they had impounded.

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The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to arrange for those non-European Community governments who had imposed economic sanctions on Argentina to be notified that British economic sanctions were being maintained; to draw their attention to the fact that the European Community countries were maintaining the arms embargo, and were prepared to reimpose economic sanctions if Argentina re-opened hostilities; and to seek to ensure that ~~no~~ non-European Community governments concerned did no less.

2. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in consultation with the Defence Secretary, to arrange for an approach to the Brazilian authorities to secure the release of the impounded Shrike missile.

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21 June 1982

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