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D/DS11/10/6

D of DP(C)
Head of DS5
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Head of DS8
DD Ops (RoW)
DI4
FCO (South American Department)(Mr Fearn)
FCO (Defence Department)(Mr Watkins)

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AUS(D Staff)
SECCOS

FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. Attached is a further, revised draft of the MOD Annex to the OD Memorandum which the FCO are preparing, together with a draft covering minute to PS/Secretary of State.

2. I hope that the latest draft will be the final version of the paper, since we have tried to take into account all the comments received on earlier drafts. There is still some uncertainty over the cost estimates, which DS11 are refining with GF1 and DS5. I would be most grateful to have comments on any other parts of the paper no later than close of business, Monday 7 September, if possible.

3. I assume that the Chiefs of Staff would wish to see these papers before they are submitted to S of S. If so, perhaps SECCOS would be prepared to circulate the paper on Tuesday, with a view to my submitting it to Ministers before the end of the week. Meanwhile, I am forwarding the draft to the FCO now for use in the preparation of their Memorandum, but on the understanding that it does not represent a finally cleared MOD text.

R. T. Jackling

4 September 1981

Encls

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Head of DS11
MB 9326 3287 MB

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FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is planning to circulate later this month an OD Memorandum on future policy towards the Falkland Islands dispute with Argentina. FCO officials have asked us to provide an Annex to this memorandum, setting out the military implications of Argentina military action against the Falkland Islands. The attached draft Annex, which should be self-explanatory, has been prepared in consultation with the central military staffs and Service Departments, and its terms have been endorsed by the Chiefs of Staff.

2. I should be grateful to know whether S of S is content for the Note now to be forwarded to FCO officials, for inclusion in Lord Carrington's memorandum. The FCO will be showing us the memorandum in draft form and I shall advise you further on this if necessary.

4 September 1981

Encl

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MB 9326 3287 MB

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DEFENCE IMPLICATIONS OF ARGENTINE ACTION AGAINST THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

(A Note by MOD officials)

Introduction

1. The recent JIC assessment (1) argued that the Argentine Government would prefer to pursue their sovereignty claim by peaceful means, but that if they concluded there was no hope of a peaceful transfer of sovereignty, military action could not be ruled out. Argentine military options were identified as:

a. Harrassment or arrest of British shipping.

b. Military occupation of one or more of the uninhabited islands.

c. Arrest of the British Antarctic Survey Team on S Georgia.

d. Small scale military operation against the Islands.

e. Full scale military invasion of the Islands.

This note considers the defence implications of seeking to deter or counter these options by military means.

Argentine Military Capability

2. Argentina, with some of the most efficient armed forces in S America, has the military capability to pursue any of the options listed above. Her navy includes an aircraft carrier, 1 cruiser, 4 submarines and 9 destroyers backed up by amphibious ships, maritime patrol aircraft and offshore patrol vessels, and with 5 Marine battalions has the capacity to mount a substantial naval or amphibious assault operation. Total air superiority would be afforded by land based combat aircraft. The Argentine Air Force inventory includes over 200 fighter aircraft and 11 Canberra bombers. Operational and logistic support are relatively close by, the Falkland Islands being about 400 miles from the nearest Argentine naval and air bases.

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(1) JIC(81)(N)34 dated 9 July 1981

Britain's military capability in the area

3. The Falkland Islands are nearly 8000 miles from the UK. They comprise two large and upwards of 100 small islands with a population of about 1800 concentrated in and around the capital, Port Stanley, on E Falkland. The two Falkland Islands dependencies, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands Group, are situated about 800 and 1300 miles respectively to the South East and are uninhabited except for the 20 scientists of the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) on S Georgia and an unauthorised Argentine base on S Thule.

4. We retain a garrison of 42 Royal Marines on E Falkland, equipped with light infantry weapons, whose primary task is to defend the seat of Government at Port Stanley. The garrison could offer small-scale resistance to a minor localised incursion, but do not have the manpower, transport or communications to deal with anything but a very minor incident on one of the outlying islands. The Falkland Islands Defence Force (approximately 100 men thinly scattered throughout the Islands) is of very limited military value.

5. The Ice patrol vessel, HMS ENDURANCE, patrols the area in the Summer months (Dec-March) but 1981/82 will be her last season. She is very lightly armed but has two Wasp helicopters embarked, equipped with anti-ship missiles. Her main value lies in maintaining a visible RN presence. She has also a secure communications link with the UK. After 1982 the only British naval presence will be infrequent visits from the RN.

General Constraints on Reinforcement of the Falkland Islands

6. Apart from South American airfields, which would be denied us, the nearest airfield is at Ascension Island, nearly 3500 miles away. The only RAF aircraft which could cover this distance and operate

from the 4,100 ft Port Stanley runway is the Hercules. Its payload over this route is no more than 30 men, lightly equipped. Round trip fuel could not be carried and fuel supplies on the Falklands are very limited. Moreover, the lack of diversion airfields, limited airfield facilities and the adverse and unpredictable weather conditions, all militate strongly against using Port Stanley airfield for military operations.

7. A British military response to Argentine provocation would therefore have to be primarily a naval one. Reinforcement would probably have to come from the UK, since there is unlikely to be a suitable ship closer. Because sailing time is about 20 days and additional time would be required for planning and preparation, it could take a month or more for naval reinforcements to arrive. Depending on the scale of the naval (and any other) reinforcement required, there could be significant penalties for our other military commitments.

Possible Responses to Argentine Action

8. a. Harrassment or Arrest of British Shipping. While the amount of British shipping currently in the area is relatively small, it offers an easy target for Argentine harrassment. We could decide to deploy a frigate on a semi-permanent, deterrent basis. To maintain one frigate always on station would require the deployment of two, to allow for maintenance and unserviceability. In the absence of local South American facilities, two RFA's would be required in support. This would add up to a considerable commitment, the extra cost of which would be ~~about~~ over £ 20 million on an annual basis. Such a RN presence might be effective in deterring harrassment, but the initiative would remain with the Argentines, once the force departed. Prevention of an attempted arrest of British shipping could require the use of force.

b. Military occupation of one or more of the uninhabited islands. A realistic force to evict a small military force from an uninhabited island would be a Royal Marines Company Group (around 150 men) with amphibious assault craft and helicopter support. The extra cost of this deployment would be around £1M. In addition, a naval protection force (on similar lines to 8a) would be required. Were the force to remain for more than a few weeks, additional logistic support and resupply would be needed.

c. Arrest of the BAS team on S Georgia. To pre-empt a possible arrest, an additional detachment of Marines could be deployed to the Falklands to be stationed on S Georgia. They would need accommodation and, in the absence of a RN presence, would have to rely on a BAS ship for deployment and subsequent resupply. An additional RM detachment might cost about £0.2M for a ye

d. Small scale military operation against the islands. Permanent or semi-permanent reinforcement of the garrison to deter a small-scale invasion of say E Falkland would require a larger force. This could comprise a Royal Marines Commando Group of 850 men including an air defence capability of Blowpipe or Rapier as well as support from amphibious assault craft, helicopters, engineers and RN ships. Air support would be desirable, but only the Harrier could operate from Port Stanley airfield and its deployment would pose formidable operational and logistic problems. An Invincible class carrier could provide air cover and support helicopters, but its deployment would be costly. Fuel alone would cost about £5M, while the ~~The cost of this deployment, excluding~~ cost of maintaining the force on station would be over £2M ~~accommodation, would be about £ ~~ with additional costs thereafter of £~~ a month.

e. Full scale military invasion of the Islands. In order to deter a full-scale invasion, a large balanced force would be required, comprising an Invincible class carrier with 4 destroyers/frigates, plus possibly a SSN, supply ships in attendance and additional manpower, up to brigade strength, to reinforce the garrison. Such a deployment would be very expensive (fuel costs alone amounting to about £10m) and would engage ~~£[illegible], representing~~ a significant portion of our naval resources. Moreover, its despatch could well precipitate the very action it was intended to deter. If then faced with Argentine occupation of the Falkland Islands on arrival, there could be no certainty that such a force could retake the Dependency. Argentine national pride would probably demand a maximal response. Their geographical advantage and the relative sophistication of their armed forces would put our own task group at a serious disadvantage, relying as it would on extended lines of communication.

After the withdrawal of our specialist amphibious shipping in 1984, RN surface ships, RFA's or landing ships logistic (their own future now under review) would be required to transport troops to the Islands, and/or commercial shipping would have to be chartered. Some commercial chartering would be essential if a brigade had to be deployed, since the RN would not have sufficient resources.

Conclusions

9. Military measures to deter or counter Argentine military action against the Falkland Islands would require the despatch to the area of additional forces, primarily naval, and possibly on a substantial scale. Any such deployment would be costly and pose considerable logistic difficulties. To deter or repel even a small scale invasion would require a significant commitment of naval resources, at the expense of commitments elsewhere, for a period of uncertain duration.

To deal with a full scale invasion would require naval and land forces with organic air support on a very substantial scale, and the logistic problems of such an operation would be formidable.