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Mr Giffard

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 24 JUN 1982
 c.c. Mr Gillmore O.R.
 Mr Ure
 Mr Fearn
 Mr Hulse

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE 22 JUNE

The following points are worth recording from this afternoon's meeting of the Committee.

2. DCDSI said he no longer regarded General Menendez' over-estimate of Argentine troop levels on the Falklands as having any sinister implications. In line with the de facto ceasefire there was now widespread evidence of a relaxation in the state of readiness of the Argentine armed forces: after-action reports were being filed, naval ships were returning to home ports, communications traffic was down, there was some evidence of demobilisation and discharge of conscripts, security around some bases had been eased and combat aircraft were returning to northern Argentine airfields. In his view the Junta was in no fit state either politically or militarily to decide on a resumption of the hostilities.
3. Returning to the question of UK military action against the mainland, DCDSI repeated his earlier view that any UK pre-emptive action would be counterproductive and could not emasculate the military threat entirely. As for UK action against the mainland in response to some further Argentine aggression, the Argentines might well calculate that whilst a UK riposte was on balance likely the net advantage might well lie in their own favour in terms of international reaction, rallying solidarity at home, etc. CDS intervened to say that in his view the single most attractive way of retaliation would be for the UK to mine Argentine ports and he wished our offensive mining capability to be worked up against the need for possible use. He was supported in this by CNS, CAS and DUSP. DCDSI and I myself sounded warning notes about the risk to neutral shipping.
4. ACAS (Ops) gave a briefing about the upgrading of Port Stanley airfield. The existing runway would be back to full width by 27 June and able to take partly-loaded Hercules. With the arrival of the AM2 matting by ship around 17 July, the aim would be to expand the runway as follows: 4,100 feet by 1 August to take fully-loaded Hercules (but there might need to be a ten day period during which the airfield was closed); installation of arrester gear by 15 August to take fast jets e.g. Phantoms; 6,100 feet by 31 August to take lightly loaded Nimrods; 7,100 feet by 30 September, which would complete the upgrading of the existing runway for Hercules, fully-loaded Nimrods and full complement of fast jets. The life expectancy of the AM2 matting was about two years. This would mean that urgent consideration should be given to installation of a permanent 9,000 runway parallel to the existing upgraded airfield. Since this would take two years to construct, a start should be made this September.

5. Military appreciation and force levels.

A directive will be sent to the Commander of the Task Force asking him to produce an outline plan for the continued defence of the Falkland Islands, concurrently with the rehabilitation of the civilian population. To aid him in this the Chiefs may decide to send him the military appreciation paper (DP15/82), but this needs to be further staffed in the light of comments by CGS and DUSP (which I supported) that the nature of the residual Argentine military threat needed to be spelled out more logically and that the section on UK courses of action dwelt too heavily on retaliation against the Argentine mainland.

6. Future force levels.

CDS pronounced that the existing Defence Policy Staff Paper (on which I minuted to Mr Gillmore on 18 June) could now be regarded as overtaken by the suggestions as to force levels which had been received from the Commander of the Task Force (CTF 317's signal to MODUK 211800Z). The latter makes a sensible distinction between the situation so long as Argentine political intentions remain obscure and the stage at which Argentine non-belligerent intention clarifies. The force levels outlined by the Task Force Commander still look on the heavy side for the earlier phase. But there is an increasing realisation by CDS that the capacity of the Falklands to support the necessary infrastructure will in any case be a limiting factor on force levels and that once the airfield is upgraded the capacity to reinforce quickly (given adequate warning time) will afford greatly needed flexibility.

7. At the end of the meeting CDS recorded the decision by Ministers this morning that all equipment lost in the campaign should be replaced (though not necessarily by identical systems) and that the costs for this as well as the campaign itself and the future garrison should be met out of monies which will be additional to the 3% real increase in the UK defence budget to which HMG are committed up to 1985/86.

8. CDS noted the forthcoming closure of the FCO Emergency Unit and asked me to pass on the appreciation of the Chiefs of Staff Committee to those concerned for services rendered over the past three months, particularly the clear, timely and comprehensive Sitreps.

P J Weston
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22 June, 1982

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Thank