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OD(SA)(82) 17th 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
MONDAY 26 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

Admiral Sir Henry Leach
Chief of the Naval Staff

Sir Antony Acland
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Sir Michael Palliser
Cabinet Office

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr R L Wade-Gery
Mr R L L Facer
Brigadier J A C G Eyre

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1. DIPLOMATIC ISSUES

Previous Reference OD(SA)(82) 16th Meeting Item 2

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that she had received an indirect but possibly helpful approach from President Lopez Portillo of Mexico. The events of the past 24 hours suggested that it might now be possible to launch a fresh diplomatic initiative, provided it could be done with sufficient speed and simplicity. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary should therefore send a message to the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig, on the following lines.

"Our repossession of South Georgia has radically changed the situation. In particular, it enables us to deal with the Falkland Islands in isolation. Equally it should bring home to Argentina her interest in negotiating seriously for a settlement. But time is desperately short. Our task force is approaching the Maritime Exclusion Zone round the Falkland Islands, and the next phase of operations will have to start very soon.

We might now be able to turn the OAS meeting this afternoon to our advantage. But this requires a simpler approach. There is now no time to negotiate in detail.

What we have in mind is as follows. If the Argentinians withdraw their forces from the Falkland Islands, we will stop our Task Force, and turn it back once Argentinian withdrawal is complete, provided that from that time onwards the United States will militarily guarantee the security of the Falkland Islands. This would secure the withdrawal of Argentine forces in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 502, and clear the way for immediate negotiations in a conference to resolve the dispute. In the meantime the traditional administration would be restored to the Falkland Islands, but for the time being we should be prepared not to send back the Governor, and to appoint instead an officer to administer the government. We should be ready during that time to have an Argentinian Resident at Port Stanley to look after the interest of the Argentinians living on the Falkland Islands.

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If this proposal commends itself to you, we need to decide how it should be launched. It would of course need your own whole-hearted agreement and backing, but it might be advantageous to get someone else to take the initiative. We have had some indications that President Lopez Portillo would like to be helpful. Thus the Mexicans could be invited to put the proposal, with your and our agreement, to the meeting of the OAS later today. The Mexicans might even be prepared to provide the venue for the conference."

The Sub-Committee -

Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to send an urgent message to Mr Haig as indicated by the Prime Minister in her summing up.

2. MILITARY ISSUES

Previous Reference OD(SA)(82) 16th Meeting Item 1

The Sub-Committee had before them a memorandum by the Defence Secretary (OD)SA(82) 22) on the selective call-out of reservists; and a note by the Secretaries (OD(SA)(82) 24) circulating a paper on Rules of Engagement (ROE) for a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ). They were also briefed on the current military situation.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that as the Defence Secretary had proposed, the Argentines captured in South Georgia, who included 70 military reinforcements on board the submarine Sante Fe, should be taken to Ascension Island for onward return to Argentina. The Defence Secretary would be considering further what should be done with other Argentines who might be captured in future operations; one possibility was that a neutral country, such as Uruguay, might be asked to arrange for their return to Argentina. Meanwhile the proposed call-out of certain naval reservists should be announced by Written Answer in Parliament. For the proposed TEZ, ROE were approved as set out in OD(SA)(82) 24 subject to the following amendments -

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Annex A, paragraph 3

202: amended to read "Authority is delegated to attempt to warn off all Merchant Ships within Exclusion Zone and commercial aircraft within Exclusion Zone which constitute a threat".

206: line 2 for 'enemy' read '(enemy)'.

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Four: add 'Caveat - applicable to targets within TEZ only'.

A public announcement on the TEZ was also approved in the following terms -

"From [] GMT on [] 1982, a Total Exclusion Zone will be established round the Falkland Islands. The outer limit of this Zone is the same as for the Maritime Exclusion Zone established on Monday 12 April 1982, namely a circle of 200 nautical miles radius from latitude 51 degrees 40 minutes South, 59 degrees 30 minutes West. From the time indicated, the Exclusion Zone will apply not only to Argentine warships and Argentine naval auxiliaries but also to any other ship, whether naval or merchant vessel, which is operating in support of the illegal occupation of the Falkland Islands by Argentine forces. The Exclusion Zone will also apply to any aircraft, whether military or civil, which is operating in support of the illegal occupation. Any ship and any aircraft whether military or civil which is found within this Zone without due authority from the MOD in London will therefore be regarded as hostile and liable to be attacked by British Forces.

Also from the time indicated, Port Stanley airport will be closed; and any aircraft on the ground in the Falkland Islands will be regarded as present in support of the illegal occupation and accordingly is liable to attack.

These measures are without prejudice to the right of the UK to take whatever additional measures may be needed in exercise of its right of self-defence, under Article 51 of the UN Charter."

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But no decision had been taken on whether or when to announce and implement a TEZ. Further consideration would be given to these and other issues when the Sub-Committee met early on 28 April. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, who would be abroad when the Sub-Committee met on 27 April to decide whether Vulcan bombers should be deployed to Ascension, was content that this decision should be taken in his absence; it would not imply any decision on their operational use. The Defence Secretary should further consider how any such deployment might be kept secret and what public explanation should be given if it nevertheless became known. The Americans should not be given at this stage any specific indication of British military plans, beyond the general warning about the imminence of the next phase of operations which was contained in the message to Mr Haig already agreed.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Defence Secretary to announce the selective call-out of reservists as proposed in OD(SA)(82) 22.
2. Approved the Rules of Engagement for a Total Exclusion Zone set out in Annex A to OD(SA)(82) 24, as amended in the Prime Minister's summing up.
3. Approved the terms of an announcement about a Total Exclusion Zone, as indicated in the Prime Minister's summing up.
4. Agreed to resume consideration at their meeting on 28 April of whether and when a Total Exclusion Zone should be announced and introduced.
5. Agreed to consider further at their meeting on 27 April whether Vulcan aircraft should be deployed to Ascension.

Cabinet Office

26 April 1982

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