

ALQ 050/1		
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INDEX	PA	Action Taken

Mr Weston, Defence Department

cc: Private Secretary
PS/PUS
Sir Ian Sinclair
Mr Giffard
Mr Gillmore
Mr Fearn

CHIEFS OF STAFF MEETING: 2 MAY

1. The following main points of interest to the FCO arose at this morning's meeting of the Chiefs of Staff (which preceded the Prime Minister's meeting with the Chiefs at Chequers):

a) Intelligence Report

DCDS(I) reported on today's intelligence, but had little to add to the intelligence summary. He commented on reports of possible assistance to Argentina from Venezuela, which he described as 'ominous'. The Chief of Defence Staff asked whether this would be covered in today's JIC assessment, and I confirmed that it would. He also suggested that the Foreign Secretary might be asked to bring these reports to the attention of Mr Haig; I have mentioned this on the secure telephone to the Embassy in Washington, although the JIC assessment concludes that the reports are conflicting, and do not yet amount to a definitive indication of Venezuelan military support.

[rel. now sent to W/Gen]

DCDS(I) also referred to the presence of Soviet and Polish fishing vessels near or in the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ), although the latest intelligence on this was now some 36 hours old. I reported on the instructions which were sent to HM Embassies in Moscow and Warsaw in the early hours of this morning.

DCDS(I) also reported on the latest intelligence of the likely intentions of the Argentine Navy, including their Carrier. The Chief of Defence Staff commented that the evident intention of the Argentine forces to attack the British Task Force argued for a relaxation of the Rules of Engagement to allow the British Task Force to attack outside the TEZ (see below).

Finally DCDS(I) reported that there had been no recent maritime reconnaissance by Argentine 707s.

/(b) Own Forces

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ACDS (OPS) reported that the Hermes group was now about 100 miles east of the Falkland Islands. He had nothing else to add to MOD's situation reports (on which I have also now reported to the Embassy in Washington).

c) Public Relations

The only point of interest was Mr McDonald's reference to an article by Rosalind Higgins in today's press in which she questioned our apparent intention to allow repatriated prisoners to return to fight.

d) Naval Reinforcements

There was a brief discussion about the possible need to requisition more shipping, on which the Chiefs of Staff are likely to wish to consult Ministers shortly.

e) A British Garrison in the Falkland Islands

There was a very brief discussion of the attached paper (COS(Misc)185/742/1), but agreement that there was no hurry for this and that discussion could be held over until later next week. We are not therefore required to produce comments by 1700 tomorrow, as the cover note indicates.

f) Defence of Ascension Island

ACDS(OPS) reported that the two officers who had been sent to Ascension Island to report on defence requirements had been delayed, and had not yet reported. He undertook to circulate a note as soon as their report is received.

g) Special Forces

There was some discussion of a Top Secret paper (which I have not yet seen) discussing a request from SINCFLLEET for an additional Air Troop to deploy in HMS Fearless. After some discussion, the recommendation of the paper (that the Air Troop should for the moment be held back in the UK) was accepted. The Chiefs of Staff will reconsider this question on 5 May, in the light of refuelling trials on Hercules aircraft at present being undertaken by the RAF. Mention was made of the possibility of seeking American assistance for 'Buddry-Buddy' refuelling operations (we shall need to consider whether this would not fall under the category of combat assistance, which Mr Haig explicitly excluded in his statement.)

/h) Military Options

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There was brief discussion of the latest version of the Military Options paper (a copy of which I had already sent to the PUS at Chequers). There was some disposition on the part of the Chiefs of Staff to exclude from the list those options which they presently found unattractive, but the Chief of Defence Staff, supported by Sir Frank Cooper, resisted this successfully. In connection with Option 6 ('Unrestricted Attacks against Argentine Naval Units at Sea') the Chief of Defence Staff again referred to his intention to seek approval from the Prime Minister for a relaxation of ROEs to cover attacks against Argentine warships and Naval auxiliaries, (as defined at present) wherever they might be found outside the 12 nm limit. I have already alerted the PUS to the likelihood that this will be raised at Chequers today, and have also reported it by telephone to Washington for the Secretary of State's information. The Chiefs are likely to argue that our knowledge of Argentine intentions makes current restrictions untenable. I pointed out that attacks on Argentine shipping far outside the TEZ could cause us difficulties in terms of international criticism, although I thoroughly understood the reasons for requesting a relaxation. Perhaps the main point of concern is how we can ensure accidental attacks against third party shipping.

i) Argentine Carrier

In the light of intelligence reports about the deployment of the Argentine Carrier, I was asked for clarification of our current view on the draft warning enclosed with the Secretary of State's Minute of 1 May. I was also asked about the reference to the wording of the last line of para. 2 of that minute. On the second point, I told the meeting that 'South' had been a misprint for 'North'. On the substance of the minute, I said that I understood that the Attorney-General had discussed the matter with the Prime Minister and had concluded that another attack against the Argentine Carrier in current circumstances was unlikely to happen in circumstances which would leave us exposed to legal or military reproach. If the situation changed, and the Argentine Carrier were to move a significant distance from the Task Force, the political and presentational arguments could well recur. This point has already been reported to the Private Secretary by Mr Gillmore.

