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MO 5/21

discussed in OD (SA)
today.

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k.a.

PRIME MINISTEROPERATION CORPORATE

At the end of last week I asked my officials to do some further contingency planning, consulting the FCO Legal Adviser, against the possibility that the Haig mission to Buenos Aires might fail. In my view we need to be ready to move fast in such a case and based on our discussion the other day I think you would wish to call another meeting very urgently in those circumstances.

2. I agree with the views of my officials as set out in the enclosed minute that we must put ourselves in the best possible position before British Forces engage Argentine Forces either in one of the zones announced (but not formerly promulgated) by the Argentine Government or on the high seas.
3. In the circumstances I have described I believe we should:
 - a. Instruct our submarines at once to revert to Rule of Engagement 4 within the 200 mile MEZ: "All vessels positively identified as Argentine warships, submarines and naval auxiliaries may be attacked".
 - b. Issue an immediate announcement making clear that any attempt on the part of Argentine warships, including submarines, naval auxiliaries or military aircraft to interfere with the mission of British Forces in the South Atlantic will encounter the appropriate response.
 - c. That the warning in b. above should be backed up by



amending the Rules of Engagement for our Forces operating outside the 200m MEZ.

4. I am copying this minute to the Home Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Doj
(Private Secretary
(Approved by the
Defence Secretary
and initialed
in his absence))

Ministry of Defence
17th April 1982