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CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEAS POLICY (OFFICIAL) COMMITTEE
SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO THE ARGENTINE INVASION
OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Note by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

1. As of midday on 10 June the situation was as follows. The Falkland crisis has been overshadowed by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. On 4 June Britain vetoed a United Nations Security Council ceasefire resolution submitted by Panama and Spain. The voting overall was 9-2 (US/UK) with 4 abstentions (France, Guyana, Jordan, Togo). The resolution only secured the requisite 9 votes because of a last minute switch by Japan. Countries voting for the resolution were China, Ireland, Japan, Panama, Poland, Soviet Union, Spain, Uganda and Zaire, Mrs Kirkpatrick, the American UN representative, announced after the vote that the US would have abstained if instructions had reached her in time. The American decision reflects continuing US concern about the prospects for a long-term settlement. However, President Reagan speaking in Parliament on 8 June expressed strong support for our resistance to armed aggression. His statements have counteracted to some extent the impression of weakening US support conveyed by US behaviour in the Security Council. At the Versailles Economic Summit, President Mitterrand as chairman said that the countries represented wanted to affirm their solidarity with Britain who had been the victim of aggression. But their public support is tempered by growing concern at the longer term implications of the crisis.

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2. The American and French positions on the Falklands are similar. The voting in the Security Council came when President Reagan and Mr Haig were in Paris. The French maintain that we have the right to re-establish our former position but they have not taken a position on sovereignty and believe that there is a need for positive UK moves towards a negotiated settlement. This view has twice been expressed by President Mitterrand in the last week. He said on 9 June that 'this war must not turn into a war of revenge. There are limits to this conflict which I fully intend to make known at the right time, which will not be long'. Mr Cheysson is reported to have told American journalists that he was sorry not to have heard the word 'negotiation in British mouths in recent days'. Argentina is withdrawing its Ambassador from Paris in retaliation for French support for us. The Argentines have not, however, asked the French to recall their Ambassador in Buenos Aires. Attention on the Falklands in Germany has been overshadowed by events in the Middle East and by state elections. Chancellor Schmidt, in an interview with a German newspaper, has said that he believes the war in the Falklands will strengthen Soviet influence in Latin America. The Italian Foreign Minister, Signor Colombo, who is worried about the future of Europe - Latin America relations has expressed to President Reagan his concern that a solution should offer some sort of guarantee to both sides. The Spanish Government's active role in the UN is partly to be explained by its need to retain links with Latin America and its need to placate internal criticism of its entry into NATO. The Government, which supports Argentina's claim to sovereignty, is in a weak position after losing an important regional election and the tensions surrounding the sentencing of the military coup leaders.

3. The Brazilians, after first agreeing to release a British Vulcan bomber which landed in Rio de Janeiro on 3 June for technical reasons, then reversed the decision in response to Argentine representations. They have now confirmed it can be released. Low-level Brazilian support for Argentina continues. There have been reports of stop-overs in Brazil of Argentine Boeing 707s carrying war material from Libya. The Mexican Foreign Minister has expressed the view that the Falklands conflict will complicate north/south relations and Latin American relations with the United States, but he did not think that Mexico's

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relations with the US would be directly affected. Official Venezuelan pronouncements have become more cautious and they do not now seem disposed to break diplomatic relations with us. The Venezuelan President has however bitterly criticised us to the German Minister of State, Dr Corterier, in Caracas. The Peruvians have made 10 Mirage fighter aircraft available to Argentina for defensive reasons. The Peruvian Foreign Minister has told our Ambassador in Lima that this had been done in the context of long-standing cooperation arrangements. He also referred to the hardening of our position and the impression given that we wished to impose an ignominious defeat on Argentina. The Peruvians have publicly denied that there are Peruvian planes involved in the Falklands conflict or patrolling Argentine coasts. Chile has offered port facilities, medical teams and humanitarian assistance to Argentina. There are signs in Chile of concern about the long-term consequences of an overwhelming Argentine military defeat. The Chilean government has protested formally to Argentina about the excessive publicity given to rumours of UK/Chilean complicity. Guatemala has repeated earlier strong criticism of us, criticised our veto power at the UN and has made what is probably a token offer of troops to Argentina under the provisions of the Rio Treaty. There have been conflicting reports that Nicaragua has also offered military assistance to Argentina. The Salvadoreans have given us the draft of a suggested peace agreement, but this has probably been overtaken by recent events at the UN.

4. A joint communique issued following the visit to Moscow by the Czechoslovak leader, Mr Husak, included a sharp condemnation of 'Britain's military actions against Argentina' which were said to represent a 'threat to international peace and security'. This is the first time President Brezhnev has associated himself with a direct condemnation of British policy in the Falklands, although he has alluded to the situation in recent speeches. The Soviet Union is now trying to stir up trouble in Nepal over the use of Gurkhas in the Falklands.

5. The final communique of the Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers meeting in Havana (31 May - 4 June) was highly unsatisfactory. It acknowledged Argentine sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich. It also condemned British military action, any attempts by any power (a reference to the US) to establish military bases in the South Atlantic, and the use of the UK/US veto in the UN. Such efforts as were made by friendly nations to moderate the Cuban/Argentine draft were ineffectual. Although 11 countries have so far entered reservations,

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the text as adopted is likely to be used against us.

6. Argentina is sending a delegation to the Arab League to enlist support for her position. The League has deliberately taken no position on the conflict. The Secretary-General has privately expressed sympathy with our actions, but has made unfavourable references to the international community's unwillingness to make Israel comply with innumerable UN resolutions.

THE MEDIA IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES

7. The US media continue to be concerned about the future after the capture of Port Stanley and about damage to US/Latin American relations. There are suggestions that we may already have decided to grant independence and/or instal more settlers on the islands. A Washington Post editorial says Britain is fully and rightly supported by the US, but that we should avoid a post-war strategy which could leave Argentina still determined to regain the islands. The newspaper speculates that the United States would not be willing to join in a peacekeeping force that was opposed by Argentina and other Latin American countries. The New York Times is sceptical about the 'calamitous' harm that is being done to US relations with Latin America.

8. The German press has recently turned to a more reasonable consideration of options for ending the conflict. The Sueddeutsche Zeitung, the least favourable of the four main German dailies, notes the welcome the inhabitants gave to the British forces, despite Argentine claims to be liberating the islands. The Stuttgarter Zeitung favours 'a rational (Argentine) capitulation to save senseless losses' but Die Welt foresees a fight to the finish since Britain has now paid too much to accept the terms previously on offer, and the Argentine junta, which started the crisis, must stake all on its last throw. The French press has commented on the similarity of French and US views. Le Monde and Le Quotidien see President Mitterrand as having joined President Reagan in putting discreet pressure on the Prime Minister.

9. The lead story in Brazil has been the 'interception' of the RAF Vulcan. One newspaper commented that the retention of the plane and crew was tantamount to internment and that the Brazilian Government has been less than even-handed in its treatment of the UK. But there has been concern at what is seen as a hardening of the British Government's position. The Brazilian press has carried articles on the discovery of napalm at Goose Green and reported an earlier Argentine approach to

purchase napalm from Brazil.

10. There are signs that Indian press attitudes are becoming more critical. The Statesman Leader of 1 June concluded: 'even a decisive victory may not win Britain international laurels'. The Hindustani Times has referred to our actions as the exercise of 'traditional racist gunboat diplomacy'. Soviet inspired reports from Nepal about the use of Gurkhas in the Falklands have been carried in Delhi newspapers.

11. The English language China Daily has printed an article supplied by our Embassy explaining that Britain is not motivated by the slender economic prospects in the islands. The China News Agency said on 2 June that the recapture of the islands would be a pyrrhic victory in view of the heavy political, economic and moral losses involved and that the war had tarnished the image of Britain in the eyes of the Third World. Almost all the Swedish press carried pictures of napalm bombs at Goose Green but in one newspaper this took second place to critical comment on British use of splinter bombs and reports of death and injury to Argentine POWs.