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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 27 May the situation was as follows. Despite pressures from Argentina and Latin America the Pope has decided to proceed with his visit to Britain. US support for us has become less forthright. Mr Haig's attitude has been affected by considerations of US relations with Latin America. There have been further unhelpful statements from Mrs Kirkpatrick, the American representative at the UN, who has spoken of Argentina as an old friend. The US Administration appears to be edging towards a more intermediate position. A White House statement on 22 May emphasised the US Government's consistent search for peace since the beginning of the dispute. The official US emphasis on an early peaceful solution is reflected in the US press. The American position may have been influenced by newspaper reports, perhaps inspired by Argentina, that the latter might break off diplomatic relations with the US because of material assistance to Britain. Old Commonwealth government support remains firm and was highlighted by Mr Muldoon's offer of a frigate to enable the Royal Navy to release a British /vessel

vessel for service in the South Atlantic. There has been some public criticism of Mr Muldoon's action in New Zealand. The Australian Foreign Minister, Mr Street, made an excellent speech in the Security Council on 21 May. Mr Trudeau has said Canada is 100 per cent behind Britain and the Canadian Foreign Minister, Mr MacGuigan, announced before the landings at San Carlos Bay that the use of force by Britain would be an act of self-defence.

2. The decision of six of our Common Market partners to agree to an indefinite extension of the import embargo on Argentina on 24 May was a welcome development. Although Italy and Ireland are continuing not to apply the Community regulation they undertook to prevent circumvention of its implementation in the eight countries applying the embargo. Denmark is also not applying the Community regulation but has passed national legislation imposing a similar embargo without time limit. The German Foreign Minister has told us that we can count on continued German support. However in public German politicians, including Chancellor Schmidt himself, are showing more concern about stopping the fighting, and German media reporting has assumed an increasingly critical tone. French support continues to be firm. President Mitterrand said in the Ivory Coast on 24 May that Britain was France's ally and friend. He also noted France's strong links with Latin America and desire to retain the friendship of Latin American peoples. The Italian Government has expressed sympathy for our position despite its inability to take part in trade sanctions. Italy has told Argentina privately that Italian condemnation of Argentina's aggression has not diminished. The Irish have continued to distance themselves from us. They proposed a draft resolution to the Security Council which would have provided for a 72-hour truce, although they knew this was not acceptable to us.

3. Following the Community's decision to renew its import embargo on 24 May, the Norwegians have confirmed that their embargo also remains in force. The Portuguese have been extremely cooperative in military matters and in public statements but they have now

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expressed public concern lest our use of military force should be excessive. Following earlier unhelpful public remarks, the Spanish Government is now keeping a low profile. The Peruvian Prime Minister during a visit to Madrid made an appeal for Hispanic solidarity.

4. There is increasing concern in many Latin American countries at British military actions. Latin American countries are expressing strong verbal support for Argentina both in the Security Council and in public statements although Panama is virtually alone in the unpleasantness of its rhetoric. Argentina has been canvassing support for a draft resolution to be presented at the second meeting of Rio Treaty signatories today. There are indications that a good majority may vote for supportive measures. Colombia is pressing for a moderate draft.

5. Mexico and Brazil continue to be moderate in their approach. Brazil submitted a draft ceasefire resolution to the Security Council which was even-handed. Brazil had earlier been in touch with Buenos Aires about the Secretary-General's proposals. The Mexican Foreign Minister has told us privately that he understands we were the victims of aggression. However, Mexican concern is evident in its renewal of its earlier offer to provide facilities for a meeting at the highest level. Venezuela is currently seeking endorsement for the withdrawal from London of Latin American Ambassadors. Peru is continuing its efforts to find new formulae for peace, but the Peruvian President is worried about his ability to hold to his present moderate line. He initiated a new peace formula on 20 May which was overtaken by the return to the Security Council. Bolivia and Uruguay have become more critical of us since the landings on the islands. The Bolivians have publicly accused us of using the landings to wreck the Secretary-General's peace efforts, and have privately told us that our relations have cooled. A major Uruguayan concern is the proximity of the TEZ to the River Plate. The Colombians have expressed concern about this. They

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have also shown renewed interest in a Latin American peace initiative. The Chilean position remains neutral although the discovery of the wreckage of a British Sea King helicopter in Chile on 21 May and resulting speculation in the press that the helicopter may have been used in conjunction with an SAS raid on an air base in southern Argentina will have embarrassed Chile in her relations with Argentina.

6. The Soviet news agency TASS issued a hardline statement on 23 May (subsequently published in Pravda) saying that Britain bore responsibility for the situation both in its military and political aspects and accusing us of having stubbornly opposed the implementation of UN decisions on decolonisation. Cuba continues to seek to use the Non-Aligned Movement in its support of Argentina. Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers are due to meet in Havana on 1 June.

7. The rest of the world remains generally non-committal, but there are some exceptions. The Chinese have issued a strongly critical statement, reiterating their position on the Falklands and calling on us to refrain from military acts. The Libyans have issued a hostile statement criticising US readiness to supply weapons to us and European readiness to impose economic sanctions against Argentina. The Jordanians on the other hand have assured us of total support. Support in the new Commonwealth continues reasonably firm. Although the Indian Government adheres to its non-aligned position Indian public opinion now seems to be with us. Recent publicity about possible South African arms deliveries to Argentina will help to reinforce black African support. Kenya and Guyana were particularly helpful in the Security Council.

THE MEDIA IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES

8. The US press generally continues to support the British cause but is articulating US reservations about the longer term consequences. The Washington Post has said that it is right for the US to be on the British side but that a negotiated settlement remains essential and that having withdrawn our proposals we should formulate new terms. Similar views have been expressed in

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other leading newspapers including the New York Times and in articles by leading commentators. The press in the old Commonwealth continues to show less support than Governments. The New Zealand press in particular continues to prevaricate. The West German media (especially radio and television) has become increasingly unsympathetic. Some right-wing papers (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Die Welt) remain supportive and give us credit for flexibility in last week's negotiations but Der Spiegel with its recent story that the Task Force is carrying nuclear weapons has been particularly unhelpful. The French press is generally more positive. Le Monde has however described our losses as proof of the failure of the Prime Minister's strategy of intransigence (which it links to the EC context). But the right-wing press is reasonably favourable following the landings. Le Figaro and Le Quotidien have carried strongly supportive editorials and Le Monde has also said that whatever Argentina's rights might be over the Falklands it had been the aggressor. Several papers have drawn parallels between the Falklands and the French overseas territories. Some sections of the Italian press have been critical of their government's failure to support us over sanctions and there have on occasion been helpful editorials in left-wing newspapers. Generally the Italian press is in favour of an early peace settlement but shows no disposition to support Argentina. In Ireland there is a notable divergence between the Fianna Fail press (especially the Irish Times) which criticises us for intransigence and the Fine Gael Irish Independent which is sympathetic. The liberal Spanish press blames the Argentines for starting the conflict but the right-wing and popular press are pro-Argentine. In Latin America the general pro-Argentine stance is tempered by some understanding of our position, though there is a tendency to gloss over Argentina's initial aggression. In terms of support for us Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Mexico score best. The Mexican press has been reasonably neutral, displaying a wide range of attitudes not all of them unhelpful to us (the case of Lt Cdr Astiz has provoked a spate of articles about Argentine repression). This balanced approach is also apparent in Brazil where some newspapers have been markedly critical of the Junta's

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aggression and human rights record. There have also been helpful press editorials in India. The section of the press in Nepal subsidised by the Soviet Union has now initiated local publicity opposing the use of Gurkha troops in the Falkland Islands. The press in the rest of the world tends to follow Governments.