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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

As of 6 pm on 28 April the situation was as follows: There has been concern around the world at the escalation of the crisis, after our recapture of South Georgia on 25 April, as well as some satisfaction that it was achieved so skillfully with no loss of life. Concern has increased as a result of the British Government's announcement on 28 April about the total exclusion zone. However, despite some misgivings, European and Commonwealth Governments continued to offer strong support, although Ireland and Italy are experiencing difficulty reconciling the requirement for European solidarity with public opinion at home. Support for Britain's position in the USA continues to be robust. Argentina's propaganda effort remains very active. While the majority of Latin American countries continue to support Argentina's claim to sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, some have publicly criticised her use of force to occupy them.

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2. On 20 April the Organisation of American States (OAS) voted overwhelmingly in favour of Argentina's request to convene a special Foreign Ministers Meeting to consider the possibility of assistance for Argentina under the 1947 Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, the Rio Treaty. The United States, Colombia and Trinidad and Tobago (the only Commonwealth party to the Treaty) abstained. The Argentines did not get the support, which they were looking for, at the meeting, which took place from 26-28 April. The approved resolution confirmed Argentina's rights of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and called for the implementation of all the terms of Security Council Resolution 502. The resolution urged the British Government to cease hostilities and both the British and Argentine Governments to refrain from any action that might affect Inter-American peace and security. The resolution deplored the EEC sanctions against Argentina, but did not call for reciprocal sanctions to be made. Strongest support for Argentina came from Venezuela, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Panama, but other Foreign Ministers (eg Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago) made moderate statements and criticised Argentina's use of force. The US, Chile, Colombia and Trinidad and Tobago abstained.

3. Argentina obtained reaffirmation of non-aligned support for their sovereignty claim at the Co-ordinating Bureau of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries meeting on 26 April. The Bureau expressed its support for the efforts to obtain a just, durable and peaceful negotiated solution in accordance with the application of resolution 502 (1982) of the Security Council in its entirety, the principles and decisions of the movement of non-aligned countries and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

4. Argentina requested the meeting of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (OPANAL) in Washington; to consider application of the Treaty of Tlatelolco (banning nuclear weapons in Latin America) to the Task Force. No decision has, however, been taken to summon a meeting, although there was some tentative discussion about it among a few of the signatories of OPANAL at the

OAS Foreign Ministers meeting. The Argentinian contention is that Protocol I to the treaty prohibits the use of nuclear propelled submarines in hemispheric waters.

5. There are some indications that Venezuela might help Argentina militarily in the event of hostilities. Minor anti-British popular demonstrations have been held in Buenos Aires and Caracas. In Lima dock workers refused to load and unload British ships. It is likely that a rupture in diplomatic relations with Venezuela would follow further military action. An element in the hardening of Latin American opinion has been the European Community's economic sanctions against Argentina and their consequent support for the Argentinian thesis that this must be considered an economic aggression against Latin America. Brazil remains on the side-lines. We have been assured that the Brazilian naval manoeuvres due to take place in the near future will be within the confines of Brazilian territorial waters. However, Brazil is likely to safeguard its longer term relations with Argentina by selling a limited amount of military hard-ware and providing trading facilities for Argentina. Chile continues to be privately sympathetic, but is keen to avoid antagonising Argentina by any active support for us; they were embarrassed by publicity here over the use of RFA Tidepool. Uruguay is privately helpful: Uruguay officials indicated that our hospital ships would be allowed into their ports.

6. The hardening of Latin American opinion has been echoed in Spain. The extreme right-wing Falange organisation staged a march in Madrid on 19 April to express Spanish support for Argentina over the Falklands. It is clear that the Spanish government does not want to get too far out of line with her future European partners and allies on this issue, but following the retaking of South Georgia issued a statement reaffirming its opposition to the use of force. Spanish popular feeling is very pro-Argentine.

7. The European Parliament has condemned the invasion and strong public support continues to be given by Chancellor Schmidt and the



French. The French Foreign Minister has, however, said in private that should force be used to settle the dispute, the position of our EC partners might change. The Germans have contented themselves with expressing a strong wish to see a peaceful solution to the dispute. The Irish and Italians remain less firm than our other European partners. Ireland's Foreign Minister spoke on Irish television on 20 April of Ireland's overriding concern to stop a greater conflict. They continue to show reluctance to support Britain's proposal for a series of demarches by the Belgium Presidency in Third countries. The Italian government is increasingly concerned about internal opinion, which is affected by the large Italian community in Argentina. Norway continues to give strong support for the British position, after their ban on imports from Argentina. Both Sweden and Portugal have given us private assurance that no arms exports will be made to Argentina. The Swiss government have told us privately that Switzerland could not for reasons of principle join in collective sanctions, but have said that they intend to ensure that Switzerland was not used by Argentina to circumvent measures taken by other countries.

8. There has been little change in Commonwealth opinion. The Canadians have decided that their Ambassador should return to Buenos Aires and the Australians have informed the Argentine Foreign Minister that their Ambassador will also return, but have also sent the Argentines a firm note supporting our position. There are signs that New Zealand domestic opinion may be less than wholehearted in its support for the Government's actions taken so far. Malta and Cyprus, hitherto silent, have both indicated that support from them will not go beyond the favourable Council of Europe resolution.

9. Soviet officials have been more circumspect and muted in their criticism in exchanges with our Embassy, but hostility to us in the Soviet media has been increasingly harsh.

10. The United States have continued to support us strongly, as has the American press and opinion in Congress. Mr Haig has given us a

private assurance that if the Argentinians were wholly intransigent, the US would apply economic sanctions against them. Senator Moynihan has introduced into the Senate a "sense of the house" resolution proposing economic sanctions against Argentina until she complies with SCR 502. The Americans, like the Germans, are showing increasing signs of nervousness at Soviet involvement in the dispute. The Japanese are still sitting on the fence.