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Prime Minister

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SOUTH ATLANTIC PRESENTATION UNIT (SAPU)

The attached paper was issued at 1745 hours on 23 April 1982 and contains suggested lines to take on the following:

- Mr Pym's talks in Washington
- Status of South Georgia
- Task Force plans as it approaches Falklands

Cabinet Office

23 April 1982

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1. Mr Pym's Visit to Washington

Mr Pym is on a short working visit. No time yet fixed for his return. He has no plans to meet the Argentine Foreign Minister who is also in Washington; and no plans to go on to New York.

Mr Pym has taken with him counter proposals to the proposals given to Mr Haig by the Argentines. As Mr Pym has stressed there is no disguising the difficulty of these exchanges, or the difference between the two positions. In the House of Commons on Wednesday he outlined three major areas of difficulty: the arrangements for Argentine withdrawal, the nature of any interim administration of the Islands, and the framework for the negotiations on the long term solution to the dispute. The aim remains a diplomatic solution in accordance with the terms of Security Council Resolution 502. Can give no details of the counter proposals which Mr Pym is discussing with Mr Haig.

2. Status of South Georgia

As the PM said in the House yesterday the title to South Georgia is different from that to the Falklands. It is a separate dependency, although it has been administered as a matter of convenience through the Governor of the Falklands. The Argentine claim to South Georgia dates only from 1927, whereas Captain Cook landed and took possession in 1777 and the British Government formerly annexed the Island in 1908. Argentina has consistently declined to submit to the International Court of Justice on the issue, although we have offered to do so.

3. Task Force Plans

Will Britain fire first?

- Argentina fired first when she invaded the Falklands. All our actions, including the establishment of the Maritime Exclusion Zone, have been in exercise of our right of self-defence. We have the capability to enforce the zone and Mr Nott has stated that we are prepared to fire first in order to do so.

Admiral Woodward said the opposite?

- The Admiral was not talking about the MEZ. He was speaking after the first contact with Argentine reconnaissance planes and about the possibility of further contact with Argentine aircraft or ships while still on passage to the Falklands.

What happens if the Task Force meets the Argentine fleet?

- Admiral Woodward has clear orders for such eventualities (cannot say what they are).

Fleet seeks, and gets, assurances from PM about air cover? (Times front page)

- No such exchange has taken place. Well aware of importance of air cover to Task Force. Government already sending extra Harriers.

Admiral Woodward's reported plans for an 'air blockade'?

- Cannot discuss operational plans but it is an obvious military option and the announcement of the MEZ clearly reserved our right to take additional measures.

Operational plans (eg landing on South Georgia)?

- Would be irresponsible to speculate about any operational plans.