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WAF?
Prime Minister

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SOUTH ATLANTIC PRESENTATION UNIT (SAPU)

The attached paper issued at 1900 hours on 26 April 1982 contains suggested lines to take in the following:

1. The landing at South Georgia
2. Legal position
3. What happens next
4. British Antarctic Survey Team

Cabinet Office
26 April 1982

RESTRICTED

1. The landing on South Georgia

Successful operation. Achieved objective of recovering South Georgia with minimum force. No British casualties and only one Argentine casualty (a submariner has lost a leg).

Troops landed on South Georgia by helicopter on Sunday at about 4.00 pm London time. Argentine forces at Grytviken offered only limited resistance and surrendered after two hours. British troops have subsequently taken the Argentine outpost at Leith. Some 150 - 200 prisoners were taken. These will be returned to Argentina as soon as possible. Commander of the local Argentinian forces has expressed gratitude for the humanity shown to the prisoners.

During the first phase of the operation the Argentine submarine Santa Fe was engaged off South Georgia by our helicopters. The submarine was not simply carrying stores and medical supplies as claimed by the Argentines. It was carrying at least 50 troops as reinforcements for the occupying force.

Was Mr Haig told?

- No-one can have been in any doubt from the Prime Minister's statements in London and Mr Pym's in Washington of our determination to use force if necessary. Sure Mr Haig understood this very well and could hardly have been surprised.

British title to South Georgia?

- As Prime Minister explained to House last week, South Georgia is not part of Falklands but a separate British dependency. In recent years South Georgia has been administered from Port Stanley purely as a matter of convenience. There is no doubt about our legal position, and the Argentine claim has no foundation whatever.

2. Legal Position

Not at war; a start of war would involve a declaration of war by either side or major armed conflict. Nor are we aggressor. Argentines fired first by invading Falklands and South Georgia. Their invasion of South Georgia took place after UN had adopted SCR 502 condemning Argentina as aggressor and calling

on her to withdraw. We attacked the submarine after giving Argentina clear warning last Friday that we would take action against warships threatening to interfere with our forces. Warning specifically mentioned submarines. Argentines chose to ignore warning and must accept consequences.

Sr Costa Mendez's claim that we are "technically at war"?

- Appears to have been off the cuff remark. No formal communication from Argentina.

Are we in breach of Security Council Resolution 502?

- No. The measures determined by the Resolution were explicitly related to Argentine aggression; they required their forces to be withdrawn and demanded an end to hostilities. What was the Argentine reaction? Since the Resolution they have doubled the size of the garrison and they invaded South Georgia. It is three weeks since the Resolution was adopted. In these circumstances there is no doubt whatever of our right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter (which is in no sense modified by SCR 502)

3. What happens next?

Remain determined to do all we can to settle this issue by negotiation. First objective to secure Argentine withdrawal - if possible without use of force. So far met with Argentine intransigence but hope that display of our resolve and ability to take military action if necessary will produce more constructive attitude. Meanwhile the Task Force is approaching the Falklands. The choice between negotiation and further force is up to Argentina.

Mr Haig's initiative finished?

- Not at all. Hope that Argentines will now be more flexible and that Mr Haig will be able to make progress. He now intends to pursue his efforts further with the Argentines, although the Argentines are currently reported to be unwilling to continue negotiations. Trust they will reconsider; time is short.

4. British Antarctic Survey Team and two girl film makers?

Reported safe on Sunday afternoon. Arrangements in hand to evacuate them if they so choose.