

280. Memorandum From Oliver L. North of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (McFarlane)¹

Washington, May 20, 1982

SUBJECT

Response to President Reagan's Query on 18 May Regarding Vulcan OPS

During our Crisis Management briefing on 18 May in the Oval Office, President Reagan asked about the U.K. Vulcan refueling OPS during the Falklands strikes.² I indicated that 12 refueling OPS had been required. The following information is provided as amplification for your "hip pocket" use as appropriate. Sources: [*less than 1 line not declassified*] DIA.

- Only 2 VULCANS are based on Ascencion

—For each mission, both A/C sortie to a decision point approximately 1800 miles SW. There, the pilots determine which A/C is in best shape for mission and other A/C returns to Ascencion.

- Single A/C continues to target, 3500 nm at 600 Kts in high/high flight profile (35,000'+)

—Bomb load: 21 1000 lb. bombs, loaded internally (necessitates removal of internal fuel cells—thus refuel requirement).

—Time of flight: 6–7 hours each way.

- VICTORS used for refueling 8 to 14 times per VULCAN on each mission.

—Range to abort fields and removal of interior fuel cells generates frequent refueling.

- Last week, both VULCANS were returned to UK for refit to accommodate SHRIKE anti-radiation missiles.

—SHRIKE refit did not work (Avionics problems) so VULCANS equipped with MARTEL (NATO anti radar missiles) instead.

—Anti-Radiation missiles to be used to attack Argentine ROLAND SAMS.

¹ Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Latin America/Central, Falklands War (05/20/1982–05/24/1982). Top Secret. Sent for information. A stamped notation at the top of the memorandum indicates that McFarlane saw it.

² Presumably a reference to the President's national security briefing, attended by Bush, Clark, and McFarlane and held in the Oval Office from 10:10 until 10:25 a.m., May 18. (Reagan Library, President's Daily Diary) No memorandum of conversation or other record of this briefing has been found.

- Two days ago, both VULCANS launched, but problems with A/C (probably MARTELS) caused mission to be aborted.
- One VULCAN scheduled to return to UK *today* (20 May) for unspecified repairs/rework.
 - Possible refit for Precision (Laser) Guided Munitions (PGM).
 - Brits have hand-held and A/C mounted Laser Target Designator.
- If A/C cannot be repaired and returned, Amphib OPS may be delayed. Plan was to have VULCAN sortie soften up/disrupt Argentine C³ concurrent with landing.