

318. Information Memorandum From the Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs (Howe) to Secretary of State Haig¹

Washington, June 1, 1982

SUBJECT

UK Military Requirements in Defending the Falklands

Even after the British take control of the Falklands, Argentina may continue the struggle and refuse any peace-keeping force.² The UK would face a sustained requirement to defend and supply the islands. In a continuing war scenario, the defense of the Falklands over the long-term could be a high-cost burden on the British, both financially and militarily. The UK could be forced to bring direct pressure on the Argentine mainland through air raids or SSN blockade if faced with intensified Argentine attacks. The UK probably still would be dependent upon the US for key materiel support, thereby providing us with some additional *leverage in discussions* with the British concerning the *future status of the islands*. The British must also recognize the long term drain of maintaining a war footing indefinitely.

This memorandum provides a preliminary estimate of what US materiel support the British may require following their seizure of the islands.

Continuing War of Attrition

Argentina may continue the war following the British conquest of the islands. Assuming they do so, the Argentine military options are:

- *commando operations* against British positions on the islands;
- continuing *air raids* against the islands and the British sea lines of communications (SLOCs); and

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/S Special Handling Restrictions Memos 1979–1983, Lot 96D262, ES Sensitive June 1–7 1982. Secret; Sensitive. Drafted by Clarke; cleared by Kanter and Haass.

² In a June 1 briefing paper, entitled “Falklands Posture,” Enders noted: “It is likely that a state of war will persist for some time following the surrender of Port Stanley, maybe indefinitely.” (Ibid.)

- small scale *naval engagements* against isolated RN shipping.³

The British should be able to handle the commando operations. The other two threats may require a continued large-scale British presence, although it is difficult now to estimate force size precisely. The Argentine threat will vary significantly, depending upon its ability to *acquire additional military equipment*.⁴ Most important would be additional aircraft, “smart” weapons such as EXOCET, and submarines. British refusal to compromise on the future status of the islands could increase the willingness of third countries to supply Argentina. Although there have been reports of offers from Peru, Cuba, Nicaragua and others, we do not have any confirmation that Argentina has taken control of aircraft from those sources. Nonetheless, *Argentina’s ability to acquire new arms over time will probably be greater than its limited success in the last few weeks*. Brazil has apparently sold at least two maritime patrol aircraft.

Argentina’s ability to pay for new weapons is limited, however, because of the effect of economic sanctions and reduced ship traffic compounding the difficulties of an already deteriorating economy. Thus, economic considerations may lead Argentina to accept weapons from those who would offer them free or at low cost, i.e., Cuba, Libya, and the Soviet Union. There are no reasons for such countries to exercise restraint if Argentina decides to accept their offers.

The availability of aircraft of the type with which the Argentine Air Force is already familiar is shown at Tab 1, as is a summary of submarine availability from likely potential suppliers.⁵

³ In a June 2 memorandum to Casey, Menges similarly argued that Anglo-Argentine hostilities might continue “in an open or clandestine way” after the United Kingdom reestablished control over the Islands, including “periodic harassment by air attacks, bombing runs, and commando raids.” Menges added: “Clandestine operations which could supplement or substitute for such open Argentine warfare could include the use of the 601st intelligence group and other similar units for anti-UK or anti-US terrorism in other parts of Latin America or even in the United Kingdom—perhaps operating jointly with the Irish Republican Army. The Soviet Union might well encourage either Cuba or Libya (with which a weapons-supply relationship has begun) to act as the intermediary for supplying Argentine needs for either type of warfare which could go on for many, many months.” (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of the Director of Central Intelligence, Job 83M00914R: EXDIR and Executive Registry Files (1982), Box 16, Folder 1: C-353 Argentina)

⁴ On June 1, in a breakfast meeting with Casey, Inman, Eagleburger, and Montgomery, Haig “voiced his concern regarding a future Soviet role in Argentina as a result of the Falklands crisis. It was agreed that Cuban and/or other proxy roles might be the likely first step except if Argentina requests arms which only the Soviets could provide.” (Memorandum for the Record, June 1; Central Intelligence Agency, Office of the Director of Central Intelligence, Job 89B00224R: Committees, Task Forces, Boards, and Councils Files, Box 11, Folder 406: Memos for the Record of Mtgs w/ Sec and DepSec of State (Apr 81-Dec 85))

⁵ Attached but not printed is a short summary paper entitled “Potential Suppliers of Aircraft and Submarines with Which Argentina is Already Familiar.”

British Ability to Handle Continuing Presence and a War of Attrition

British *land-based air defenses* on the Falklands are *limited*. British aircraft on the islands will be concentrated at one or two small airfields and will be highly vulnerable to air attacks while on the ground. Their ships are in need of repair and their logistics burden will grow once they are on the islands. Thus, the British could have a need for:

- *Airborne Early Warning (AEW) Aircraft*. Grumman has already received informal requests for information on AEW aircraft. The UK now has only test-bed aircraft in its NIMROD AEW program and has retired all of its GANNET AEW aircraft from its carriers. There are E-2Bs in the US Navy Reserve. Six would be required to maintain one continuous orbit. E-2Bs can operate from relatively short airstrips. Less capable alternatives would be radar on balloons or on high hills on West Falklands.

- *I-HAWK SAMs*. Despite press reports that HAWKs are on the Falklands, Britain does not operate the HAWK or any other medium to long-range land-based SAM. The US could only provide HAWK by diverting from inventory and/or deferring the sale to Egypt. I-HAWK could relieve some of the requirement to keep British anti-air capable ships near the islands for that purpose.

- *Airfield Equipment*. We have already agreed to provide runway matting and some “bare base” parts. The British will probably construct at least two main operating bases because of the extreme vulnerability of small airfields to aerial attack. We can anticipate that we will have additional requests for similar equipment and for other items such as revetments, radars, and spare parts for certain aircraft (F-4, C-130). The British will need an extensive spares supply on hand, given the great distances involved in resupply. The F-4, for example, has a very high requirement for maintenance-per-flight-hour and an extensive number of replacement parts.⁶

- *Naval Support*. Because the Argentine Navy remains essentially intact, it poses a threat-in-being that will require a continued RN presence. If the Argentine submarine threat grows or if Argentine surface ships armed with EXOCET begin raiding tactics on the SLOC from

⁶ Howe produced a memorandum for Eagleburger on May 29, which considered the possibility of the British redeploying F-4 fighter aircraft from Ascension to the Falklands/Malvinas. (Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/S Special Handling Restrictions Memos 1979-1983, Lot 96D262, 1982 ES Sensitive May 25-31) Later, during a June 4 breakfast meeting, Weinberger informed Inman and Calucci that “the UK had submitted a new request for the short-takeoff version of the F-5, which the British would like to base at Stanley once they regain control.” (Memorandum for the Record, June 4; Central Intelligence Agency, Office of the Director of Central Intelligence, Job 89B00224R: Committees, Task Forces, Boards, and Councils Files, Box 11, Folder 406: Memos for the Record of Mtgs w/Sec and DepSec Defense (May 81-Dec 85))

Ascension, the British may need to maintain their fleet at high levels in the South Atlantic. Currently, of RN ships in A-1 status (i.e., not in for repairs) 23 surface combatants and 18 naval auxiliaries are in the South Atlantic and only 20 surface combatants and 18 naval auxiliaries elsewhere. The best RN ships are those in the South Atlantic. Many of the ships in the South Atlantic will probably need repairs soon, thus necessitating a return to the UK. The Task Force's supplies of anti-aircraft missiles may be running low, necessitating further resupply at sea. A continued high naval presence and long supply line to the South Atlantic may mean that the UK will continue to need the US to support RN ships in the North Atlantic.

- *Logistics Support.* Supplying a British garrison on the Falklands will require continued aerial and sea-borne supply. US estimates of the daily supply requirements for a 3500 man force in peacetime are 63 tons of consumables and 25,000 gallons of fuel. A 5000 man force would require over 90 tons and 36,000 gallons daily. In light combat, those requirements would almost double. Depending upon the size of the garrison, the supply effort could strain UK assets. Already they have chartered 43 commercial ships for South Atlantic supply duty. If the British can establish a 6000-7000 foot runway, they may request US C-141 flights to ease their resupply problem.

MOD sources say that there is no firm estimate of what the war is costing (some sources say most of the 2.2 billion pound government contingency fund has been spent), nor are there yet cost estimates for replacing lost ships. Nonetheless, there is already talk of a "*Falklands tax.*" The British have been leaking stories about "internationalizing the defense of the Falklands" and a US role along the lines of Ascension (i.e., their island, our airbase). Thus, the British may already be thinking they will need our help in the longer term.