

423. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (McFarlane) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Eagleburger)¹

Washington, February 9, 1983

SUBJECT

CPPG Meeting: Possible Argentine Moves Against the U.K. in the South Atlantic/Antarctic (S)

[*less than 1 line not declassified*] the Argentine military may be contemplating the use of force against the British in the Falklands,² or other U.K. bases in the South Atlantic/Antarctic. [*less than 1 line not declassified*] even a relatively low probability is disturbing considering the consequences of any attack. [*portion marking not declassified*]

Such an event would have serious consequences for U.S. interests in the region as well as within NATO. Our responses to Argentine military action against the U.K.—or even the threat of same—will be carefully scrutinized. These developments require that we prepare contingency plans to prevent—or ameliorate the consequences of—such an event. Our planning should address the full spectrum of options available to deter the Argentines or, failing that, to mitigate the adverse impact of such action. (S)

The CPPG will address this issue at a meeting in the White House Situation Room, tentatively set for Friday, February 18, 1983.³ In preparation for the meeting, would you convene on a “close hold” basis an Interdepartmental Group (IG) comprised of representatives at the Assistant Secretary (or equivalent) level from the Office of the Vice President, the Department of Defense, the JCS, DCI and NSC Staff to develop a paper on this issue.⁴ (S)

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/S Special Handling Restrictions Memos 1979–1983, Lot 96D262, ES Sensitive February 1–10 1983. Top Secret; Eyes Only. Copies were sent to Gregg, Iklé, Gates, Gorman, Fontaine, and North. The memorandum was found attached as Tab A to a February 10 briefing memorandum from Enders to Eagleburger. Also attached to the February 10 briefing memorandum at Tab B is an undated paper entitled “Assessment of Possible Argentine Military Actions;” at Tab C is an unclassified first draft of a memorandum for the CPPG entitled “Possible Argentine Moves Against the UK in the South Atlantic/Antarctic: Assessment and U.S. Options.”

² See footnote 3, Document 419.

³ According to the February 10 briefing memorandum from Enders to Eagleburger (see footnote 1 above), the date of the meeting was moved to February 11. No memorandum of conversation of the CPPG meeting has been found.

⁴ See Document 424.

It is requested that the format at Tab A⁵ be used, as appropriate, in preparing the paper and that the paper specifically address the issues indicated at Tab B.⁶ Copies should be delivered to CPPG principals by noon, Thursday, February 17, 1983. CPPG principals will be contacted by Oliver North, NSC Staff, regarding a specific time for the meeting to discuss/decide the paper prepared by the IG.⁷

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for National Security Affairs*

⁵ Not found attached.

⁶ Attached but not printed is an undated list entitled "Issues for Consideration CPPG Issues Paper," which contains ten items: "likelihood of attack and when and how," "nature of U.K. response: military, economic, diplomatic," "effect on U.S.-U.K. relations," "effect on U.S.-Argentine relations," "effect on U.S.-Latin American relations," "opportunities presented to the Soviets and the Cubans," "effect on U.S. international credibility as 'peacemaker,'" "measures U.S. can take to prevent Argentina action," and "risks and viability of each option."

⁷ A note in an unknown hand under this paragraph reads: "S/S: Paper to Eagleburger (COB today)."

⁸ McFarlane signed "Bud" above his typed signature.