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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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INFORMATION

April 6, 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR ROBERT C. McFARLANE

NOTED

FROM: OLIVER NORTH

SUBJECT: The Falklands Situation: An Operational Perspective

At a neighborhood brunch on Sunday, MGEN T. A. Boam, C.P., the U.K. Military Attache, invited me aside for a "chat" about the current situation. Though professing little expertise in amphibious operations, he noted that all "proper preparations" had been made by Her Majesty's Fleet for such action. Our dialogue then evolved into a generic discussion of amphibious operations. Today, our DIA analysts delivered the two JCS background papers at Tabs A and B.

Based on my discussion Sunday and what appears to be serious deficiencies in the papers at Tabs A and B, I believe there is great potential for misreading current developments. Accordingly, I have drafted a brief analysis from a different perspective. The bottom line of the assessment at Tab I is to lend urgency to our efforts to defuse the situation.

*Good analysis of the first
O. North. The analysis
made will
not*

CC: Thomas C. Reed

Attachments

- Tab I - Information Paper: Operational Perspective on the Falklands Situation
- Tab A - JCS Background Paper: British Options
- Tab B - JCS Background Paper: Current Assessment of Forces in the Falkland Islands Dispute

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AN OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE FALKLANDS SITUATION

Contrary to the assessment in the two JCS background papers at Tabs A and B, the British have neither the political latitude nor the logistical staying power for a protracted operation in the South Atlantic. Further, the static "bean count" analysis of each side's assets (particularly the emphasis on fixed wing aircraft) denies the realities of marginal weather conditions and indicates a lack of understanding of the requisites for a successful forcible entry. Unless the United States moves from anything but very sub-rosa support for the British venture, the following conditions will continue to prevail:

- Domestic politics demand that if the Thatcher government is to survive, the Argentines must do no less than withdraw their forces.
- The U.K. task force will have little or no staying time in the area due to logistic constraints. Thus, the British must act promptly -- or not at all.
- Seasonal weather conditions (overcast frequent showers, high winds, low ceiling/visibility) in the area will mitigate Argentine local Tac Air superiority and enhance the utility of the U.K. Sea-Harriers.
- There are no less than 13 assailable beaches on the three islands. Seasonal sea states (4-6 feet) are marginal for our LCM's, but less so for better trained British coxswains.
- The U.K. task force has a significant NGF capability -- thus rendering the defenders' superiority in heavy weapons ashore less of a threat to an assault force.

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Unless Galtieri agrees to a withdrawal (under whatever face-saving facade we can help him concoct), we should expect the British to proceed as follows:

- A British ultimatum when their task force is within 24-48 hours of arrival -- with the same time- frame permitted for an affirmative Argentine response.
- If Galtieri does not respond positively in the time allowed:
 - .. Submarine attacks on Argentine surface assets in the area;
 - .. An immediate amphibious assault by commandos on South Georgia Island;
 - .. Follow-on British assaults on East and West Falkland.

The two JCS documents at Tabs A and B leave the impression that the British have other alternatives. Aside from mining the Rio de la Plata estuary (which is not mentioned in the JCS papers) -- there are no other viable options for the Thatcher government. A blockade is logistically infeasible and delay will rapidly degrade both the task force and homefront political patience.

The bottom line of this analysis is to lend urgency to on-going diplomatic initiatives that would result in a withdrawal of the Argentine forces. The confrontation scenario depicted above will likely result in moderate British casualties (400-600), the fall of the Galtieri government and consequent unpleasant revelations about Argentine measures to assist us with our problems further north. Though we may be in a no-win situation, we can do some decent damage control. The U.N. vote and less than full support for the Argentine action in the OAS points us to a sustained diplomatic effort to extricate the Argentine forces without bringing Galtieri down.

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Background Paper for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT: British Options in the Falkland Islands Dispute (U)

1. (U) PURPOSE: To provide the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff with information for his use.

2. (U) POINTS OF MAJOR INTEREST:

a. (S/NOFORN) The UK will continue to seek a diplomatic solution during the lengthy transit of the Royal Navy Task Force. This effort will likely continue for a while after the task force is in the area, with the latter standing off in a show of force. If some amenable compromise cannot be achieved within a reasonable time, however, London appears intent on military action. Its precise measures will be limited by the fact that, although the Royal Navy enjoys a surface force superiority, it will be severely constrained by inadequate air cover and stretched supply lines. It is 4,000 miles to the small US facility on Ascension Island, where the UK does not maintain a garrison or prestocked supplies. The Royal Air Force will probably stage some items there for resupply as the task force passes by, however the distance precludes continuous effective resupply during operations. The British are looking at the possibility of obtaining base rights closer to the Falklands, however, there is little likelihood of this. Brazil and Uruguay have already stated they would not grant such a request. Chile has remained silent. Although alarmed that a successful Argentina may next turn to the disputed Chilean territory in the Beagle Channel, Santiago is unlikely to provide logistical support to the Royal Navy. However, should the British inflict substantial damage to the Argentine fleet, Chile may become more receptive to a British request.

b. (S/NOFORN) Given a decision to take military action, the most likely British response is a blockade of the Falklands. The task force's inadequate intercept capability will be a major drawback in preventing Argentine resupply by air. In addition, logistic constraints will again be an inhibiting factor in such a war of attrition. British actions against the Falklands will likely be coupled by an attempt to retake South Georgia. This island's distance from the mainland poses great logistics problems for Argentina and gives London an opportunity to achieve a psychological victory.

c. (S/NOFORN) A third, although unlikely, option is to engage the Argentine Navy to gain control of the seas off the Argentine coast. However, land-based aircraft from Southern Argentina will give Buenos Aires air superiority which may suffice to offset the Royal Navy's surface force advantage. Only two submarines, including one nuclear-powered, are known to be in the task force. Should additional subs be dispatched to augment the force, this option would become viable.

d. (S/NOFORN) A final option is an amphibious landing, either opposed near Port Stanley or unopposed elsewhere along the coast. The Royal Marine force numbers approximately 2,500 combat troops. At least some of these are mountain and arctic qualified. However, the approach of winter weather will create additional hazards for this option if it is not exercised quickly.

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-- Tactical assets are 56 A-4 Skyhawks and more than 60 indigenously produced IA-58 Pucaras. Some A-4s include the Israeli "Shafir" air-to-air missile.

-- Two KC-130 tankers provide air-to-air refueling capabilities for A-4 aircraft.

b. (S/NOFORN) Argentine military options:

-- Defend Argentine territory, to include the Falkland Island group.

-- Attack the British task force before it moves into position off the coast of Argentina.

-- Withdraw from the Falkland Islands when the British Fleet arrives.

-- The Argentines are more likely to adopt the defend-in-place option. They will use submarines to detect and track the British fleet, respond to moves by the fleet, but ultimately defend from attack all territories with its fully mobilized armed forces.

c. (S/NOFORN) British capabilities:

-- Ascension Island

-- No POL prestocked.

-- One asphalt runway (10,000' X 150') in good condition.

-- Some communications capability.

-- May send Royal Marine Commando company.

-- Royal Marines Third Commando Brigade in British Task Force.

-- Manpower approximately 2500-3000 in three commandos-- the 40th, 42d and 45th.

-- Training basically infantry, with emphasis on special operations.

-- 42d and 45th Commandos are both mountain and arctic warfare trained.

-- Armament is standard NATO small arms plus three heavier weapons (each commando):

19	81-mm mortars
60	51-mm mortars
100	84/120-mm antitank weapons
63	Milan antitank missiles
18	105-mm howitzers

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-- Each commando is a lightly equipped infantry unit, with a minimum of administrative detail, trained for cliff and assault landings and raids, or landings on difficult beaches.

-- Almost no capability for sustained combat operations since their normal deployment anticipates British Army control, heavy weapons, and administrative/logistic support. A reinforced commando is capable of limited operations for 30 days, relying solely on shipborne supply. A major logistics problem lies in second-line support for commandoes when in the field.

-- Ships capabilities:

-- Royal Navy Task Force is forming and will include the following ships, some of which deployed on 5 April.

-- Antisubmarine warfare carrier Invincible with 5 Sea Harrier V/STOL aircraft, 9 Sea King helicopters and twin Sea Dart SAM.

-- Helicopter carrier Hermes normally embarks 1 commando (800 men) and can embark an additional commando in an emergency (about 1600 total); it can also carry 3213 tons fuel oil, 815 tons diesel fuel, 51 tons AVGAS, 4 LCVP, 16 Wessex assault helicopters and 4 Gazelle assault helicopters; one leg is 5,950 nm steaming at 20 knots.

-- LPD assault ship Fearless normally can carry 319 marines, an additional 700 in an emergency by putting 300 on the tank deck; can also carry 2300 tons of cargo, 4 LCM (1 Chieftain or 2 Centurion tanks in each); one leg is 7,500 nm steaming at 17 knots.

-- Sir Lancelot class logistics landing ships (LSLO each can carry 340 troops, 1000 tons palletized cargo, 120 tons POL, 1200 tons fresh water, provisions for 28 days for crew and troops and 17 tanks and trucks; one leg is 9,800 nm steaming 17 knots,

-- 5 guided missile destroyers:

-- 2 County class with 2 4.5" guns, 4 Exocet SSM, 1 twin Seaslug and 2 quad Seacat SAMs.

-- 3 Sheffield class (type 42) with 1 4.5" gun and 1 twin Sea Dart w/SS capability.

-- 13 Frigates

-- 3 Type 22 with 4 Exocet SSM and 2 6-tube Sea Wolf SAM.

-- 4 Rothesay class with 2 4.5" guns and 1 quad Seacat SAM.

-- 2 Type 21 with 1 4.5" gun, 4 Exocet SSM and 1 quad Seacat SAM.

-- 4 Leander class with SAM, 1 quad Seacat, and 1 Limbo anti-ship weapon.

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-- 1 Fort Class AOE Fort Austin capable of carrying 3500 tons of armaments/victuals.

-- 1 Hudson Class AO Appleleaf.

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