

Defence

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Private Secretary

c.c. Sir A Acland
Mr Ure

Now issued in amended form

SOUTH GEORGIA : SHIPS

1. I submit a draft minute on ship movements as agreed at this morning's meeting. It is currently being cleared in the MOD and Mr Omand will telephone comments to you. SAmD concur.

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P J Weston

P J Weston
Defence Department

30 March, 1982

(Revised)

S E C R E T

DRAFT: minute/letter/teletype/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM: Secretary of State
Mr Blaker

Reference

DEPARTMENT: **TEL. NO:**

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO: PRIME MINISTER

Your Reference

Top Secret
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Confidential
Restricted
Unclassified

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT: SOUTH GEORGIA

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

1. In addition to my statement in Parliament today and the next diplomatic moves, we have been considering what precautionary steps to take in order to reinforce the British naval presence in the Falklands area. As you know, a support ship will arrive there in two weeks' time with provisions for HMS 'ENDURANCE' sufficient for another 2 months' stay. But this by itself is obviously not enough in the face of recent moves by the Argentine navy.

2. It would be possible to detach a force of some 7 RN destroyers and frigates from current exercises in the Atlantic off Gibraltar. It would take some 16 days for them to reach the Falklands area. But I fear our intentions would become known very quickly, which would be likely to complicate our diplomatic exchanges with the Argentines. In any case, the Navy have reservations on military grounds about using a detachment of surface ships of this size as a show of force against the Argentines.

3. A more credible force in naval terms would be a task group comprising a carrier, 4 or 5 frigates, some 800 Royal Marine Commandos and perhaps a submarine, as well as support ships. Quite apart from the fact that this would take a month to muster and arrive in the area, it would be very difficult and

Enclosures—flag(s).....

S E C R E T

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expensive to sustain there for more than 2 to 3 months. It would of course also be highly provocative and escalatory, unless the Argentines were preparing to invade the Falklands: there is at present no sign of this.

4. We have therefore concluded that our best bet lies with a judicious use of our nuclear-powered fleet attack submarines (SSNs). One is already on the way South and will arrive in the Falklands area by 13 April. Another will follow, leaving present duties by the end of this week. We both favour detaching a third submarine to join them as soon as possible. The great advantage of using these boats is that their passage can remain covert until we wish to reveal it. Even if media speculation focusses on SSNs the Argentines themselves will be left guessing. If we do have to make use of the submarines on the spot, i.e. to provide any necessary protection for HMS 'ENDURANCE', they constitute a formidable naval force. We can meanwhile face Parliament confidently if pressed about naval contingency measures, without of course revealing details. We retain political and operational flexibility. If the problem is resolved through the diplomatic channel, nothing will have been lost.

5. I hope you can agree that this is the right way to proceed.