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2038/1

Secretary of State

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CNS
CGS
CASFALKLAND ISLANDS

1. I attach a note which reviews the Military options. It has been produced at speed following Chiefs of Staff's meetings today, and will be further refined tomorrow; meanwhile it is forwarded as an aide memoire which reflects our views.
2. The note excludes, at this stage, consideration of attacks on ships in Argentinian harbours and on targets in the Argentinian mainland.
3. The earlier set of dates given for both options is approximate and could vary depending on further decisions.
4. The note does not seek fully to address those political international and legal implications which are mainly for the FCO to assess.
5. It goes without saying that the deployment of these forces will severely inhibit our ability to fulfill our NATO obligations and to conduct operations elsewhere.

5th April 1982

CDS

Enc

FALKLAND ISLANDS: MILITARY APPRECIATION

1. The aim of military operations in the current situation is seen to be to bring about the withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands, and the re-establishment of British administration there, as quickly as possible and with minimal loss of life among the Falkland Islanders.

Options - Declaration of an exclusion zone around the Falklands, which might extend to 200 miles.

2. In this zone, Argentine warships, military support vessels and commercial shipping resupplying the Falklands would be sunk without warning.

a. Between Approximately 11 and 29 April such operations could be undertaken by the SSNs alone.

Military Pros

- (1) SSNs would be extremely effective in this role and relatively invulnerable to counter-attack from Argentine forces;
- (2) Such operations would severely inhibit the Lines of Communication (LOC) from the Argentine mainland to the garrison on the Falklands.

Political Pros

- (1) Action can begin on 11 April;
- (2) Military action clearly related to political aim and therefore likely to attract international support initially;
- (3) Withdrawal of the Argentine fleet from the zone would be a humiliating concession for them.

Military Cons

- (1) It would be necessary to declare the zone, and to give a period during which shipping could withdraw. The Argentine Navy might do so, and thus frustrate efforts to sink its warships;

(2) If operations are restricted to warships, the LOCs to the Falklands would not be good, and in the event re-supply by air would be unrestricted.

Political Cons

(1) Any accidental attack on neutral merchant shipping would rapidly erode international support for our position;

(2) With the SSNs alone, it would be impracticable to identify, search and turn back merchant shipping the zone;

(3) An attack on any vessel, naval or civil, would be likely to attract widespread criticism, particularly in the UN. Freedom to conduct further operations could therefore be politically inhibited.

b. From 29 April When the Task Group had arrived, the policing of an exclusion zone could be much more effectively conducted.

Military Pros

(1) Operations could be extended to interdict air re-supply of the Falklands;

(2) The Task Group could quickly establish complete superiority at sea, and seek to establish air superiority.

(3) Once such superiority was established, merchant shipping could be intercepted, and turned back;

(4) Necessary condition is established for a major amphibious assault on the Falkland Islands.

Political Pros

(1) Exclusion zone would be policed with complete effectiveness.

Military Cons

(1) No certainty of being able to engage Argentine navy, if its warships avoided zone;

(2) It follows that Argentine navy might survive crisis to threaten our position whatever diplomatic or military result is achieved;

(3) It might be necessary to continue this operation for a considerable period before, by itself, it could hope to bring about an Argentine withdrawal, and this would pose very difficult logistic problems.

Political Cons

(1) Similarly, political success could take some time to achieve. Meanwhile, international support for our position might be eroding.

General Options Against the Argentine Navy

3. Our naval forces could be employed to seek out and destroy Argentine warships wherever they are at sea. These operations could be begun with or without an ultimatum giving warning of our intention.

a. Between 11 and 29 April such operations could be undertaken by the SSNs alone.

Military Pros

(1) SSNs would be extremely effective against Argentine warships and relatively invulnerable to counter-attack;

(2) Such operations would inhibit to some extent the reinforcement and re-supply of the Falkland Islands.

(3) Assuming a degree of success, would make it easier to hold the Falkland Islands subsequently.

Political Pros

(1) Early action;

(2) Engaging military targets only;

(3) Sinking of one or two major Argentine warships would be dramatic demonstration of our naval capability and would be a major blow to Argentinian Government.

Military Cons

(1) Argentine warships could withdraw to port;

(2) No effective air re-supply on Falklands.

Political Cons

(1) International reactions to the first engagement could be so strong as to inhibit further engagements, and if only a few ships had been sunk, the objective of disabling the Argentine navy would not have been achieved.

b. After the 29 April After the Task Group had arrived, operations could be conducted with considerably more effect.

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Military Pros

- (1) More Argentine warships could be sunk more quickly;
- (2) Air re-supply of the Falklands could be inhibited during these operations, even though it was not their prime objective;
- (3) The maritime and air superiority necessary for any successful amphibious landing on the Falklands would be very largely established.
- (4) Would make major contribution to holding the Falkland Islands following our re-occupation.

Political Pros

- (1) Sinking the major part of the Argentine fleet would be a devastating blow politically to the Argentine Government;
- (2) If the Argentine fleet were sunk, it would be much easier to maintain our position on the Islands once re-established by either diplomatic or military action.

Air Operations

4. All air operations by land based aircraft would require access to airfields on the mainland of South America, ie in Chile. With such access, land based air operations could begin before 29 April when the Task Group arrives. They could not take the following form:

- a. Surveillance. Operations by Nimrod, Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA). A force of 4 MPA operating from the airfield of El Tepual would be necessary to sustain such operations;

Military Pros

- (1) Such operations greatly enhance the effectiveness of SSNs, and surface warships.

Political Pros

- (1) Could be portrayed to the MPA for use in the reconnaissance role. Could be more acceptable to the Chilean Government.

Military Cons

- (1) There is some risk that MPA operating from Chilean airfields could be vulnerable to Argentinian fighter aircraft in transit.

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

Political Cons

(1) Political price to be paid for Chilean support could be high.

b. Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) with MPA or BuccaneersMilitary Pros

(1) MPA are armed with torpedoes [and depth bombs] and are first class submarine killers in their own right. Buccaneers would be highly effective versus shipping.

Military Cons

(1) ASW operations by MPA and/or Buccaneers would require more logistic effort to supply than surveillance operations;

(2) Aircraft operating in this role would require airfield air defence against attack from Argentina.

Political Cons

(1) Chilean support for offensive operations of this kind would be difficult to secure, and might be more likely to lead to hostilities between Chile and Argentina which could draw in other countries in the region.

Landing Operations

5. This option depends on sea and air control around the Falklands. It will be significantly effected by the success or otherwise of our earlier operations against the Falkland LOC and the Argentinian Navy. (It will depend on good intelligence. Subject to all these, the flexibility of the amphibious force should enable a surprise landing to be conducted in a lightly defended area. The terrain would probably preclude any immediate Argentine response, and a viable bridgehead should be possible. This is unlikely to be in the vicinity of Port Stanley.

6. Another possible option is a landing operation in South Georgia. This could lead to an early success, but would dissipate our resources and delay the main operations in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands.

7. The final stage would be the progressive re-occupation of the Islands - probably feasible if our sea and air control was absolute, but a difficult task in the Antarctic winter and in terrain favouring the defender. The potential effect on the civilian population and infrastructure would inhibit operations. The use of helicopters for rapid response and outflanking manoeuvres would be a dominant feature. Neither the scenario or the outcome of this final phase can be predicted with certainty.

TOP SECRET

OTHER OPTIONS

8. Special Operations from SSNs. The value of operations by a Special Boat Section from a submarine are well established. They could include clandestine landing in the Falklands for reconnaissance or sabotage of important objectives or limpet mine attack against shipping in harbour. Unfortunately it needs calm weather conditions; also an SSN is ill suited to them. The gains of a special operations would have to outweigh the very real risk to the SSN.

9. Evacuation of Civilians. It might be an option to seek early evacuation of the civilian Falklands population by the Red Cross. The final phase of our operations would thus be freed from some serious problems. The Argentine Government might of course refuse, but in that case would have to bear the odium of being seen to hold the population hostage. However, our action in requesting an evacuation could be misrepresented and misunderstood publicly.

MILITARY OCCUPATION

10. Following a successful re-occupation of the Falklands, we might have to defend them against a bitter and hostile Argentine. Assuming the Argentine Navy had been largely neutralised, an initial estimate of our required force level is 2 frigates or destroyers, an RM Commando Group, Rapier Anti-Air Defences, 4-6 Harrier a/c, 6-8 support Helos, and supporting elements. The Falkland Islands population would virtually be doubled. The runway and facilities at Port Stanley airfield would need to be upgraded. If the Argentine withdrawal had taken place with their sea and air forces largely intact, the force levels required would be much greater.

2038/1/8

Copy No ONE of ONE Copies
Total No of Pages: 3FALKLAND ISLANDS - MILITARY APPRECIATIONOPTIONS AVAILABLE1. SHORT TERM

THIS PERIOD IS FROM DATE OF ARRIVAL OF SSN'S ON 11 APR
TO ARRIVAL OF TASK FORCE ON 27 APR.

A. EXCLUSION ZONE - 200 MILESB. GENERAL OPERATIONSC. BLOCKADE2. COMMENTS

THE PROS FOR 1A ABOVE OUTWEIGH THE CONS NAMELY:

A. CONCENTRATES ASSETS

B. PREVENTS RE-INFORCEMENT BY SEA

C. ENTICE ARGENTINE NAVY

3. AIR SURVEILLANCE

VERY EFFECTIVE PARTICULARLY IN THE SURVEILLANCE ROLE.
IGNORE OTHER ROLES AND CHILEAN AGREEMENT MORE LIKELY AS AIRCRAFT
NOT AGGRESSIVE. IF ELIMINATE A/C IN ASW ROLE THIS REDUCES THE
SUPPORT PACKAGE.

4. USE OF BUCCANEERS

IGNORE BUCCANEER STRIKE AS SUPPORT SORTIES BY C130 WOULD
BE 80 AT LEAST. CHILEANS WOULD NOT LIKE THIS - PROBLEMS WITH
OVERFLIGHT.

5. MEDIUM TERM

POST ARRIVAL OF TASK FORCE 27 APRIL:

- A. EXCLUSION ZONE
- B. OFFENSIVE MARITIME OPERATIONS
- C. BLOCKADE

6. COMMENTS

THE PROS OF 2A ABOVE ARE THAT ZONE IS MORE EFFECTIVE INTERDICT AIR AS WELL AS SEA. MANY MORE ASSETS BUT FORCE MORE VULNERABLE.

7. CONDUCT OF LANDING OPERATIONS

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8. SPECIAL OPERATIONS BY SSN'S

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9. CONSEQUENTIALS

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10. SOUTH GEORGIA OPTION

MUCH FAVOURED BECAUSE:

- A. EASY
- B. PLUS POLITICALLY
- C. DIFFICULT FOR ENEMY
- D. ENTICE ARGENTINE NAVY OUT
- E. EXAMPLE OF UK WILL

DISADVANTAGES OF TIME DELAYING/LOGISTICS ETC.

11. PUNTA ARENAS

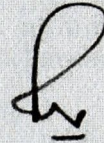
DISADVANTAGES

- A. POLITICAL ESCALATION
- B. TERRITORY NOT IN DISPUTE
- C. DANGER OF SIDING WITH CHILEANS

12. SSK

SURFACE SPEED 11 KNOTS

5 Apr 82



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