

COS 9/82

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

OPERATION SUTTON
DIRECTIVE TO THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FLEET

Note by the Secretary

1. The Chiefs of Staff have approved a Planning Directive for Operation SUTTON (1), together with an Appreciation (2) of the Options for Landing Operations in the Falkland Islands. These are attached at Annex A and Appendix 1 respectively.
2. The Directive has been forwarded to the Commander-in-Chief Fleet.

J A C G EYRE
Brigadier
Secretary
Chiefs of Staff Committee

Annex:

- A. Directive - Operation SUTTON (25 pages).

Notes:

1. COS 20th Meeting/82, Item 3.
2. COS 20th Meeting/82, Item 2.

Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall SW1A 2HB

15 April 1982

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(Concluded)

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DIRECTIVE TO COMMANDER IN CHIEF FLEETOPERATION SUTTON

Reference:

- A. MODUK I9F 111200Z APR (OPERATIONAL TASKS - OP CORPORATE).
1. As part of OP CORPORATE you are to produce an outline plan for OP SUTTON.
 2. Aim. The overall aim of HMG in the current situation is to bring about the withdrawal of Argentine Forces from the Falkland Islands and Dependencies and the re-establishment of British administration there as quickly as possible. Military deployment and operations are directed to the support of this aim.
 3. Military Aim of OP SUTTON. To land a force ashore in the Falkland Islands with a view to repossessing the islands.
 4. Limitations.
 - a. Civilian casualties must be kept to a minimum.
 - b. Safeguarding civilian property is a lesser but important consideration.
 5. Assumptions.
 - a. South Georgia has been retaken and a protection force has been stationed there.
 - b. An effective sea/air Exclusion Zone has been established around the Falkland Islands.
 - c. Intelligence other than in paragraph 6b below will be provided to the Task Force by your intelligence staff.

OPERATIONAL ASPECTS TO BE COVERED

6. a. The period during which this operation could be carried out giving the earliest, preferred and latest dates. The operational and logistic factors leading to the selection of the dates should be explained.
 - b. The acquisition of tactical intelligence by the Task Force in advance of the landing.
 - c. Options for helicopter and beach landings.
 - d. An outline plan of the landing, and operations considered necessary to support it. This should include neutralisation of local air opposition, attacks on enemy positions in the vicinity of the landing, diversionary attacks and deception plan.
7. In preparing your outline plan you should be guided by the Military Appreciation of the Options for Landing Operations in the Falkland Islands attached at Annex.
 8. Your outline plan should be submitted to the Chiefs of Staff by midday 19 April 1982.

15 April 1982

CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF

Appendix:

An Appreciation of the Options for Landing Operations in the Falkland Islands (25 pages).

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COS S1(7)

SECRET

AN APPRECIATION OF THE OPTIONS FOR
LANDING OPERATIONS IN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS
REVIEW OF THE SITUATION

1. On 11 April 1982 the Argentine ground forces deployed in the Falkland Islands were assessed, on current information, to number between 5,000 and 5,500, with the capability to reinforce by air by up to 500 per day to a likely practical maximum garrison of 7,000 men. The force comprises a reinforced Brigade of 5 or 6 battalions with artillery and armoured reconnaissance support and possibly a limited surface to air missile and anti-aircraft artillery capability. A small number of armed troop lift helicopters, light ground attack, anti-submarine warfare and transport aircraft were deployed at Port Stanley airfield. One frigate was probably on patrol in the Falkland Islands' vicinity, and no more than four transports were in harbour or nearby. Overall strengths and capabilities of the Argentine forces have been assessed by the Defence Intelligence Staff (1). The situation is unlikely to remain static and the conclusions reached in this appreciation will need to be reviewed in the light of developments.

2. A Maritime Exclusion Zone has been established around the Falkland Islands with effect from 12 April 1982. Argentine Warships and naval auxiliaries within the zone will be regarded as hostile and liable to attack. No decision has been taken whether or when to extend the application of the Exclusion Zone

Note:

1.. DCDS(I)26 dated 7 April 1982.

to merchant shipping and to civil or military aircraft. Hence the Argentinians retain the capability to reinforce and resupply by air and merchant shipping unopposed until the arrival of the Task Force in the area, and new Rules of Engagement are ordered.

3. The UK Task Force comprises: 2 Aircraft Carriers, 5 Destroyers, 7 Frigates, 1 Assault Ship, 5 Logistics Ships, 10 Royal Fleet Auxiliaries and a number of ships from trade, including: the SS Canberra (troopship), the SS Uganda (hospital ship), and the Elk (RO-RO). 3 Commando Brigade, 3rd Battalion Parachute Regiment, 1 SAS Squadron, SBS, plus armoured reconnaissance and combat and logistic support are embarked. Aircraft and helicopters embarked include: 20 Sea Harrier, 34 Sea King (12 Commando), 8 Wessex (2 Gunships), 12 Lynx (5 Sea Skua), 4 Wasp, 5 Scout and 9 Gazelle. A number of landing craft are deployed with the amphibious ships. There is considerable Naval Gunfire support available from within the force.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE SELECTION OF THE AIM

4. HMG's express policy aim is to bring about the withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands and dependencies and the re-establishment of British administration. Diplomatic efforts continue and economic sanctions have been imposed; but HMG remain committed to the use of force if all else fails.

5. The over-riding requirements to minimise civilian casualties and, to a lesser extent, the destruction of property, preclude a direct assault against the Argentine forces concentrated on Stanley.

AIM

6. The aim of this appreciation is to assess the various military options for putting a force ashore in the Falkland Islands, with a view to repossessing the islands.

ASSUMPTIONS

7. For the purposes of this appreciation it is assumed that before a landing on the Falkland Islands is contemplated:

- a. South Georgia has been retaken.
- b. An effective sea/air Exclusion Zone has been established round the islands.

FACTORSTiming

8. Elements of the Task Force capable of implementing fully an air and maritime Exclusion Zone and achieving an acceptable level of sea control and air superiority could arrive in the Falkland Islands area by 28 April 1982.

9. The timing of a landing operation will be determined by passage time and by the maximum length time troops may remain at sea and retain fitness to fight. This is assessed to be about a month. Thereafter a spell ashore would be required before troops were fit for a further month.

10. The amphibious force is scheduled to arrive at Ascension Island on 19 April 1982 to embark combat and logistic elements. A four day period has been proposed for redistribution of forces and exercises ashore. The Falkland Islands are some 14 days steaming from Ascension Island. On this basis the earliest date by

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which the amphibious force would be in the Falkland Islands area would be 7 May 1982, the latest date a landing could be attempted would be about 21 May.

11. Alternatively, to provide time for international negotiations, the amphibious force could be held in readiness at Ascension. It would be necessary to disembark the landing force and some of their equipment, and provide some tented accommodation ashore. Limited training could be conducted within the confines of Ascension. The feasibility of holding a force of this size ashore in Ascension Island would require further study. It is estimated that the force could be poised in this manner for up to 2 months, after which time its fighting effectiveness would be significantly degraded. Given the overall aim the Carriers and their escorts would have to proceed directly to the vicinity of the Falkland Islands to establish an effective sea/air Exclusion Zone. Given the logistic challenges, possible attrition and the Antarctic winter, the longer the Carrier force was required to maintain an Exclusion Zone the greater the risk of reduced availability and effectiveness at the time of the landing, which could at worst prejudice the success of the operation.

12. Deductions. Landing operations could be contemplated after 7 May 1982 but delay might be necessary to acquire tactical intelligence. A lengthy delay for any reason would pose greater risks to the capability of UK forces and would allow the Argentine forces longer to:

- a. Reinforce and resupply if the Exclusion Zone had not been applied to civil air and merchant shipping.
- b. Prepare defences.
- c. Improve Port Stanley airfield, airstrips and other internal lines of communication.
- d. Prepare for winter operations.

Weather

13. The weather in the Falkland Islands is variable and changes rapidly. Stormy weather is frequent in late April and winter sets in in mid-May. Prevailing winds are westerly. Mean speeds are of the order of 15 knots and exceed 21 knots for 60-70% of the time. Gales occur on 5 days per month. Day temperatures in April/May are 40°F dropping to below freezing at night. Chill factors are high. Rain falls on 15 days each month; snow occurs on 10 days a month in June and July but rarely lies for long. Visibility is generally good below an overcast sky with cloud bases 1,500-2,000 ft; breaks in cloud occur at night.

14. Deductions. With the onset of winter the weather will:
- a. Pose morale and survival problems for troops in the open, especially on high ground. But RM Commandos are arctic and mountain warfare equipped and trained.
 - b. Lead to Argentine deployments being concentrated in the immediate area of settlements, particularly Port Stanley, where accommodation exists for uncommitted troops.
 - c. Severely inhibit parachute operations.
 - d. Limit daylight satellite and air reconnaissance.

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Close air support operations should be possible for much of the time, while helicopter operations could be limited by gales. The swell built up by strong westerly winds would cause heavy swell and surf on exposed coasts precluding, or making hazardous, amphibious landings and small boat operations, particularly on the west of West Falklands.

Ground

15. East and West Falklands are separated by the Falkland Sound (2-12 miles wide). Together the area is similar in size to that of Wales, but with twice the coastline, deeply indented and with a number of potential landing areas.

16. East Falkland has a substantial range of hills running west to east in the north; movement north to south is restricted to a few passes. To the north of the hills the ground is soft peat bog, while to the south it comprises flat grasslands and peat bog.

The north and south of East Falklands are joined only by a narrow isthmus.

17. West Falkland has a range of hills along the east coast; the ground is less boggy than in East Falkland.

18. There are no roads outside the immediate vicinity of Stanley. Tracks exist which are passable by land rover; progress is slow and, without detailed local knowledge, the risk of land rovers becoming bogged down is considerable. Movement between coastal settlements relies on bridges capable of supporting vehicles no heavier than a land rover. Restrictions on the movement of over-snow vehicles, of which there are 70 in the force, may not be so great.

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19. Deductions.

- a. Surface vehicular movement would be difficult and slow, and limited mainly to land rovers. The BV 202 (RM over-snow troop transport) may provide an additional cross country capability; it could not use the majority of bridges but could by-pass them, though the swim capability is untried and therefore risky. It is likely, therefore, that vehicles and equipment not transported by helicopter would be confined to the Stanley area for the Argentines or the point of landing for our own forces.
- b. Movement on foot is limited by boggy ground, swollen streams and rock runs on high ground.
- c. Helicopters will be vital to both sides for tactical mobility, flexibility, surprise, covert insertion and supply. Landing sites can be found on hard beaches, inland on drier ground in most areas, except the rock runs.
- d. Cover for movement on high ground is good, but exposed on the plains.
- e. There are a number of beaches potentially suitable for landing operations - subject to further reconnaissance. Those exposed to the westerly winds will be prone to swell. Few, if any, offer rapid access inland for wheeled vehicles. Kelp concentrations will be a limiting factor. Detailed reconnaissance for beach composition, gradient, off-lying dangers and enemy defences, including mines, would be essential. Strong tidal streams could cause problems for small boat or "swim" operations.

f. Tactical mobility, including the deployment of artillery, and logistic support will depend primarily on helicopter lift, supplemented where possible by boat and over-snow vehicles.

g. The size of the islands precludes complete ground surveillance by OPs. It may well be possible, therefore, to achieve an unobserved amphibious landing, particularly if the sea approach is by night.

h. The political/military importance of Stanley, its harbour and airfield, and the accommodation it offers, indicate that there will be strong Argentine defences. The ring of hills dominating Stanley will be of particular tactical significance to both sides and will probably be the site for Observation Posts (OPs) and major defensive positions/ fire bases.

j. It is important to control the land routes to Argentine positions west of Stanley.

Relative Strengths: Maritime/Air

20. Numerically the Argentine Navy is marginally inferior to the UK Task Force. Its strength lies in its anti-ship capability, with 8 ships armed with EXOCET missiles and in its 2 fast, quiet German submarines. The maritime capability is enhanced by A4 aircraft embarked in a carrier. The Argentine Navy has a limited mining capability using either surface ships or aircraft. Its weaknesses are assessed to be in tactical training, logistic support, lack of airborne early warning capability, equipment

unreliability and ocean surveillance, although this last could well be made good by the Soviets. The deductions below draw on the Navy Department's detailed assessment (2) of relative capabilities, and Air Force Department studies (3).

21. Deductions

a. Sub-Surface Operations

(1) The Argentine Type 209 submarine could pose a threat to UK SSNs if it was able to close to short range; if well-handled the Type 209 would present a difficult target for UK SSNs.

(2) The UK Task Force's anti-submarine capability should be effective against the Argentine Guppy class submarines, but less so against well-handled Type 209s, particularly in shallow water. The latter equipped with long range torpedoes pose a threat to UK surface units, though the type 182 towed decoy in the warships should afford protection. UK SSNs would risk detection in attacking Argentine major units but should be able to evade.

(3) The Argentine Navy is unlikely to have a submarine mining capability. No mines are carried in the UK Task Force. However, they are available in the UK and could be embarked in a roulement SSN at penalty to its torpedo capability to enable it to lay a small minefield.

Notes:

2. D/DNW/97/3/10 dated 7 April 1982.
3. D/AFOps/TF16 dated 11 April 1982.

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b. Surface Operations.

(1) Superior EXOCET tactics and more modern gunnery systems should give the UK Task Groups advantages over the Argentine surface fleet.

(2) The Argentine Navy has 7 gun-armed fast patrol boats. It is doubtful if weather conditions at this time of year would permit transit to the Falkland Islands. If some could be deployed they would pose a threat to amphibious landings. UK Sea Harriers and missile armed helicopters should provide an effective counter.

c. Anti-Aircraft Operations. The UK Task Force is well equipped for area and point air defence. At the limits and beyond of Argentine land based air cover the Task Force should be secure from air attack; it would be more vulnerable in areas where sustained attacks from land based aircraft were possible. The Argentine fleet is vulnerable to air attack; it has few effective medium range surface-to-air missiles or point defence missile systems, and relies primarily on outdated and probably ineffective gun systems.

d. UK Air Operations.

(1) The UK Task Force's organic air assets, although limited in number, give it a good surveillance and attack capability against sub-surface and surface targets, and land targets in the Falkland Islands.

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(2) From Ascension Island, at some risk, limited tactical photographic reconnaissance of the Falkland Islands would be possible using a Victor aircraft with a limited camera fit.

(3) If air bases were available in Chile, Nimrod Mk 2 aircraft could provide a significant surface surveillance and anti-submarine capability outside Argentine fighter cover. Buccaneers with tanker support could provide an anti-shipping capability and/or attack the Falkland Islands, while Phantoms with tanker support could provide air defence cover over the Falkland Islands. These options would require substantial base support, including crews and weapons.

e. Argentine Air Operations.

(1) A limited in-flight refuelling capability exists.

(2) Without improvements to existing facilities, Stanley airport can be used by Tracker and Pucara aircraft which provide for maritime surveillance out to a radius of 350nms and close air support for the Argentine garrison respectively.

(3) From the airfield at Puerto Madryn and those further south, the Argentine Air Force could mount air defence and attack operations in the western sector of the Exclusion Zone. The Canberra, A4 and Mirage V have the unrefuelled radius of action to reach Port Stanley,

though the range of the A4 could be extended by air-to-air refuelling. Operations in the Eastern Maritime Sector would be confined to the limited Canberra force and possibly air-to-air refuelled A4s.

(4) The effectiveness of air operations would be limited by incomplete radar cover. The positioning of a TPS 43 radar at Port Stanley would help to overcome this deficiency.

(5) Stanley airport could be improved to cope with limited operations by FBA/AD aircraft. It would be vulnerable to air attack from the UK Task Force; its use as a forward operating base for offensive air operations would carry risks which the Argentines might find unacceptably high. The mounting of very limited air operations would be feasible, thereby marginally increasing the threat to the UK Task Force air assets and providing cover for the Argentine air link between the mainland and the Islands.

(6) Carrier-borne aircraft could pose a threat to the UK Task Force, particularly if the Argentine CVA became capable of operating EXOCET armed Super Etentard aircraft. Air defence operations are likely to be limited by air search radar maintenance problems. Night, poor weather and co-ordinated operation capabilities are likely to be somewhat limited.

22. Summary.

- a. The UK Task Force could operate successfully in the eastern sector of the Exclusion Zone with only a minor threat from Canberra aircraft and air-to-air refuelled A4s in that sector. If, however, the Argentines have improved the Stanley airfield to support offensive air operations, these will need to be countered to achieve air superiority.
- b. The UK Task Force would be at increasing risk as the western boundary of the Exclusion Zone was approached. The greater vulnerability of units in this area could hinder implementation of the western part of the Exclusion Zone.
- c. Local sea and air superiority could be established to allow amphibious and/or heliborne assault landings on the Falkland Islands; East Falkland presents the least problem in this respect. The lack of a sea mine detection/mine clearance capability could prove a deficiency.
- d. UK land-based maritime reconnaissance and offensive air from Chile would increase the overall effectiveness of UK forces.

Relative Strengths: Land Forces

23. The Argentine land forces deployed are numerically superior to those embarked on the UK Task Force. Argentine supporting arms are likely to include 81 mm mortars, artillery (105 mm and possibly, though unlikely, 155mm) BLOWPIPE, TIGERCAT and OERLIKON anti-aircraft systems; the air defence systems have a daylight, fair weather capability only, and the number of launchers and

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missiles deployed is likely to be limited (eg 4-6 BLOWPIPE posts with 20 - 30 missiles). These systems have a significant capability against helicopters but are likely to be deployed primarily in support of Argentine concentrations in the Stanley area. Some may, however, be sited forward or be held as part of a quick reaction force. Argentine freedom of action will depend on a solution being found to the provision of adequate aviation fuel supplies, and a substantial increase to their current holdings of helicopters.

24. The UK Amphibious Force is equipped with organic artillery and air defence weapons. Training standards, tactics, reliability of equipment and, most importantly, tactical mobility should be superior to those of the Argentine forces. But against this, there will be time available to the Argentine forces to reinforce and prepare forward positions, defences, shelters and internal lines of communication.

25. Deductions. The UK Amphibious Force has the capability to counter Argentine forces deployed forward from Stanley. With local air and sea superiority established and with good tactical intelligence and adequate softening up of the enemy, an amphibious and/or heliborne landing could be achieved with minimal casualties if mounted outside the engagement zones of the Argentine air defence and artillery weapons, which are likely to be concentrated on Stanley. The neutralisation of Stanley airfield would be an important initial objective. The destruction of the Argentine helicopter and Pucara force would severely inhibit their quick

reaction capability and subsequent tactical mobility. An initial direct assault on Argentine concentrations around Stanley is precluded because we do not have the capacity for such an operation, and by the need to minimise civilian casualties.

Reinforcement

26. One Infantry Battalion Group with 30 days supplies could sail as early as 22 April provided MV NORLAND can be acquired and proves suitable for the operation; in this case ETA Falkland Islands would be about 14 May. For this option notice to move must be reduced now (15 April).

27. The remainder of 5 Brigade (up to 3 battalions with some combat support and support helicopters) is at 7 days notice. Movement would require taking up the QE2 on 3 May which would enable the force to be positioned in the Falkland Islands area by about 20 May.

28. Deductions. For the earliest delivery of the battalion group to the Falkland Islands, notice to move must be reduced now (15 April); the move of 5 Brigade by QE2 would require notice to be reduced from 21 April; the latest decision date.

Sustainability of the Landing Force.

29. The UK forces embarked have war maintenance reserves for 30 days at limited war consumption rates. But plans must allow for greater intensity of operations or the duration of the land battle to exceed this period; logistic support may be required for an occupation force of up to 6 months. Given the extended supply lines for the United Kingdom early provision of those

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items of logistic support not available in the RFAs must be set in train. Additional ammunition could only be provided from stocks held in UK and BAOR against Priority 1 requirements.

30. Major repair will present problems. Accommodation will be required in the longer term.

31. Deductions.

a. Reprovision of war maintenance reserves from the UK for the landing force would have to reach the operational area 20 days after the initial landing to cater for higher than expected consumption.

b. Prolonged operations ashore could create serious deficiencies in Priority 1 stocks, some of which could take 18 months to replace.

c. Prolonged operations could cause major problems of equipment maintenance, repair and replacement.

Morale

32. Morale is likely to be a significant factor. Despite reinforcement and improved defences, morale among the Argentine troops deployed in the Falkland Islands is likely to deteriorate as worsening weather takes its toll, troops feel progressively isolated, and equipment deficiencies are revealed. The knowledge that a strong, well trained, well equipped, British Task Force is approaching is likely to lead to increasing apprehension, especially among young conscripts. This apprehension would be heightened by:

a. An increasingly effective blockade.

- b. The successful re-occupation of South Georgia.
 - c. Air attacks against military targets.
 - d. Disruptive and diversionary operations prior to the landing.
 - e. Psychological operations.
 - f. Deception plans.
 - g. Electronic warfare.
33. A successful British landing, followed by individual operations against Argentine out-posts could have a marked effect on Argentine morale. But extended operations without adequate protection from the elements could also have a serious effect on the morale of British Forces. However, effective isolation of the force, and inability of mainland based aircraft and naval forces to provide support could seriously undermine the Argentine will to resist.
34. Deduction. Argentine morale is likely to deteriorate the longer the blockade lasts. However if the landing is deferred overlong British morale could also suffer. On balance the British landing should take place as soon as sufficient intelligence has been acquired and a reasonable level of attrition achieved.

Surprise.

35. Tactical surprise is essential to minimise Argentine reaction to any landing.

ENEMY COURSES

36. The Argentine forces are likely to take advantage of the time available before the arrival of UK Task Groups in the Falkland Islands area to:

- a. Upgrade Stanley airfield facilities and aviation fuel storage.
 - b. Stockpile war maintenance reserves.
 - c. Improve internal communications and supply lines.
 - d. Establish defensive positions and landing obstructions, including mining.
 - e. Deploy additional forces, particularly helicopters, heavy weapons and, subject to airfield improvements, offensive air and air defence aircraft.
 - f. Interweave defensive positions with civilians, including defences on the airfield.
 - g. Establish surveillance over as many of the likely landing beaches as possible.
37. Three Argentine Regiments are likely to be deployed in the Stanley area, with others in Lafonia and West Falkland. Artillery and air defence weapons could be deployed tactically to increase coverage, and a quick reaction force could be formed relying on helicopters for tactical mobility.
38. Argentine surface naval units may not try to penetrate the maritime exclusion zone until an assault operation is judged imminent; equally, the Argentine fleet may not seek to intercept the UK Task Force well in advance of its arrival in the Falkland Islands area. Argentine operations, therefore, might be confined initially to surveillance, shadowing and, perhaps, sub-surface harassment. Air, sub-surface and surface launched missile attacks could be expected if the Task Force entered the exclusion zones declared by Argentina.

39. Should the Argentine Navy avoid being drawn into combat in contesting the UK Exclusion Zone the force would be intact to counter a British landing. However, given the very considerable impact the loss of a major unit would have on domestic public opinion, the Argentine Navy may be reluctant to put these ships at risk until major action is judged essential to avert loss of the Falkland Islands.

OWN COURSES

40. Own courses of action are constrained by: the ability to establish sea control and air superiority, the ability to obtain tactical intelligence of enemy dispositions and the suitability of beaches and landing sites, the rate of build-up of forces ashore and their subsequent support, and the requirement to soften up the enemy by military and psychological means while minimising civilian casualties and destruction of property.

41. Sea and Air Superiority. There is confidence that the Task Force could establish sea control and a reasonable degree of air superiority over the Falkland Islands. The ability to do so in the Western extremes of the Exclusion Zone is less certain because of the proximity of the mainland. However, this should not affect the choice of landing options significantly. The achievement of this superiority would require pre-landing softening up operations to include Port Stanley airfield, Argentine helicopters and any combat aircraft on the island.

42. Intelligence. Knowledge of beaches, helicopter LZs, enemy dispositions and strengths, preparations and equipment, could be achieved by covert and overt means. SBS or SAS operations would

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be covert and would have the benefit of retaining the maximum degree of surprise; but problems exist in inserting special forces covertly and it will take several days to acquire sufficient tactical intelligence. Visual and photographic air reconnaissance by carrier based aircraft could supplement this activity without prejudicing our detailed intentions. Beach and landing site reconnaissance could be conducted only by special forces; these forces could also:

- a. Act as pathfinders.
- b. Assist in target acquisition for Naval Gunfire Support and air to ground attacks.
- c. Create diversions.
- d. Take direct action against key elements of the Argentine Garrison; helicopters, aircraft stockpiles etc.
- e. Conduct "coup de main" operations.

43. Ship to Shore Mobility. Ship to shore mobility could be limited by strong winds and high sea states. Given favourable conditions a simultaneous two company helicopter lift would be possible, while a further 2 companies and combat support could be landed concurrently using LCVPs. A rapid build-up of combat elements can be achieved by using helicopters and landing craft, to establish a strong bridgehead. This is judged adequate to counter the likely response of Argentine quick reaction forces. However, while helicopter landing operations would allow for greater flexibility, aircraft losses (if substantial) could have a marked adverse effect on subsequent tactical mobility and resupply.

Landing Options

44. With the exception of the immediate area around Stanley and other areas within the known engagement zones of Argentine artillery, unopposed landings could be achieved on both East and West Falkland. Prevailing winds and sea states are, however, likely to preclude landings on exposed western coasts. Three principal options exist:

- a. West Falkland.
- b. South of East Falkland (Lafonia).
- c. North of East Falkland.

45. West Falkland.a. Advantages.

- (1) Minimal opposition, unopposed landing possible.
- (2) Better ground and cover for deployed troops.
- (3) Maximum distance from quick reaction forces likely to be based at Stanley.
- (4) Minimal risk of civilian casualties

b. Disadvantages.

- (1) Greatest vulnerability to mainland based offensive air.
- (2) No direct pressure on the main Argentine force at Stanley.
- (3) Subsequent move to East Falkland would be exposed and hazardous.
- (4) West coast exposed to prevailing weather, and much of East coast lacks suitable beaches.

46. South of East Falkland (Lafonia).a. Advantages.

- (1) Light opposition, but unopposed landing still possible.
- (2) Minimal risk of civilian casualties.
- (3) It would create slightly more direct pressure on the main Argentine force than a landing in West Falkland.

b. Disadvantages.

- (1) Cover for deployed troops is poor.
- (2) Surface movement to ground of strategic importance near Stanley constrained by a wide water gap and by the ring of hills encircling Stanley.

47. North of East Falkland.a. Advantages.

- (1) A landing closer to Stanley would be possible and would exert immediate pressure on the Argentine force both in Stanley itself and in the likely key positions on the surrounding hills.
- (2) Coup de main operations less difficult to mount.
- (3) Forces and logistic support could be concentrated close to the area of main tactical interest.

b. Disadvantages.

- (1) Unopposed landing less likely.
- (2) Difficult ground.
- (3) Tactical surprise less likely.

(4) Argentine quick reaction forces would be closer at hand.

48. Selection of Landing Location. The final choice between the main landing options must depend, among other things, on current and detailed intelligence. Subject to this, and in purely military terms, a landing on the North of East Falkland appears most likely to achieve early and significant results.

49. Repossession. The landing of a brigade will not in itself necessarily achieve the overall political aim. It re-establishes the presence of British Armed Forces on the Falkland Islands and provides the means to effect military pressure on the Argentine forces to withdraw or surrender. But a direct assault on the main Argentine force could not be conducted without the risk of major loss of life among the civilian population. Operations subsequent to a landing may have to be confined to attacks on selected Argentine positions and to special force operations. It is difficult to foresee how the Argentine garrison would react to such an attack; on the one hand their morale might collapse, on the other they might become more entrenched.

50. Additional Forces. A corollary to the constraints on post-landing operations is that additional forces deployed would not necessarily accelerate the achievement of the ultimate objective and would greatly magnify the logistic support and resupply problem. Indeed the helicopter lift required to support a greater force in the field could limit tactical mobility to a marked degree. A decision on the commitment of further

reinforcements must however be taken now in respect of a battalion group, and by at latest 21 April in respect of a brigade if they are to be available in the area at the earliest possible date.

Conclusions

51. It is concluded that:

a. Landing operations are feasible, following:

(1) Attainment of sea control and local air superiority.

(2) Acquisition of vital pre-landing intelligence.

(3) Pre-landing softening-up operations, to include Stanley airfield, Argentine helicopters and any combat aircraft on the island.

b. The earliest possible date for landing operations is 7 May. Militarily, landing as soon as possible thereafter is preferred.

c. The initial landing option can be delayed from 7 to about 21 May. Thereafter, if the force can be held at readiness ashore in Ascension, the landing option can be delayed to late July but at some risk to the effectiveness of the Carrier force in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands, which could at worst prejudice the success of the operation.

d. The choices for landing operations are West Falkland Island, Lafonia, or the North part of East Falkland. It should be possible to achieve tactical surprise and an initially unopposed landing at all three.

- e. A landing on the North part of East Falkland would have the most impact on the main Argentine forces and the most chance of avoiding prolonged operations ashore.
- f. Wherever the landing, a British presence ashore can be established and sustained.
- g. The final phase of military eviction of Argentine forces from Stanley itself may prove extremely difficult and could be protracted given the need to avoid loss of civilian life. Once their forces are isolated they may capitulate, but the final outcome is uncertain.
- h. The assessments in this paper may well be affected by events in the interval before a landing operation is undertaken.

Recommendation.

52. This paper should form the background to the development of an operational plan by the Force Commander, who should also undertake a study of the possible need for further reinforcements. A decision on the latter is required by 21 April.