

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

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MINUTES of a Meeting held in Room 5301, Ministry  
of Defence, Main Building, Whitehall,  
on FRIDAY 23 APRIL 1982 at 4.15 pm

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PRESENT

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Terence Lewin,  
Chief of the Defence Staff

Admiral Sir Henry Leach,  
Chief of the Naval Staff

General Sir Edwin Bramall,  
Chief of the General Staff

Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Beetham,  
Chief of the Air Staff

ALSO PRESENT

Air Chief Marshal Sir David Evans,  
Vice Chief of the Defence Staff  
(Personnel and Logistics)

Lieutenant General Sir James Glover,  
Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff  
(Intelligence)

Lieutenant General Sir Maurice Johnston,  
Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff  
(Operation Requirements)

Air Vice-Marshal J A Gilbert,  
Assistant Chief of the Defence  
Staff (Policy)

Rear-Admiral D W Brown,  
Assistant Chief of the Defence  
Staff (Operations)

Sir Frank Cooper,  
Permanent Under Secretary

Mr J M Stewart,  
Assistant Under Secretary  
(Defence Staff)

Mr P R H Wright,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

SECRETARIAT

Brigadier J A C G Eyre  
Captain J E S Raymond RN  
Lieutenant Colonel J B R Peacock  
Commander M Bickley



C O N T E N T S

PART I - ITEMS DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING

1-3.(1) OPERATION CORPORATE

PART II - ITEMS DEALT WITH PRIOR TO THE MEETING

Nil

Note:

1. Recorded as a Confidential Annex.



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COS 29TH MEETING/82

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

CONFIDENTIAL ANNEX  
TO  
COS 29TH MEETING/82 HELD ON  
FRIDAY 23 APRIL 1982 AT 4.15 pm

OPERATION CORPORATE

ITEM 1. MILITARY APPRECIATION OF THE USE OF VULCANS  
FOR AN ATTACK ON STANLEY AIRFIELD

1. The Committee had before them a paper (1) prepared by the Air Force Department setting out a Military Appreciation of the use of Vulcans for an attack on Port Stanley airfield. In discussion the following points were made:

a. One aircraft could be ready to conduct bombing operations on the second night after authority to deploy to Ascension Island was given. Therefore, if given the necessary authority on Saturday 24 April, two aircraft would deploy to Ascension Island on Sunday of which one would be ready to make a first raid on Port Stanley airfield during the night of Monday 26 April.

b. It was probable that the Secretary of State would be able to authorise the deployment of Vulcans to Ascension Island having consulted the Prime Minister and he could do this the next day. However any decision to start bombing would require his OD(SA) colleagues' approval and this could not be obtained before Sunday at the earliest.

c. Given a decision the next day, the Vulcans could be in a position to mount their first bombing mission on the airfield 3 days before the Carrier Battle Group could be within range to carry out that operation with Sea Harriers.

d. Although not essential, it would be desirable to give some warning of our intention to close Port Stanley airfield. 48 hours notice would be required to allow the necessary promulgation to be effected.

Note:

1. COS(Misc) 153/742/1 dated 22 April 1982.



e. After each raid tactical intelligence would be needed to determine the extent of the damage. If necessary, after the first operation, the next raid could be mounted on the following night; additional raids every alternate night could be sustained for a reasonable period.

f. No accurate estimate could be given of the time it would take the Argentines to repair the airfield following a raid.

g. Consideration would need to be given to the timing of the first raid in relation to the timing of the arrival of the Carrier Battle Group. An early raid, though it would gain the greatest surprise and stop the re-supply operation as quickly as possible, might become an emotive issue in world opinion if it was clear that it had been mounted using a Vulcan based on Ascension Island. A raid coinciding with the arrival of the Carrier Battle Group might be less emotive as there could then be doubt concerning the means of delivery. It might also be easier to keep the runway continuously out of use once the Sea Harriers were in range, thereby avoiding the risk of its repair and the reopening of the airfield with a consequent boost to Argentine morale.

2. Summing up, SIR TERENCE LEWIN said there were three points they would wish to make to Ministers:

a. An early raid was preferable to gain surprise and prevent air re-supply at the earliest possible time.

b. Vulcans should be used for the raid to conserve the Sea Harriers, but that in this respect the timing of the raid was not critical.

c. If the deployment of the Vulcans to Ascension Island was delayed beyond 28/29 April there could be a clash of priorities over the use of the Victor tankers which were also required for the RAF Harriers deploying to embark in the ATLANTIC CONVEYOR.



3. Concluding, SIR TERENCE LEWIN said he would invite the Defence Secretariat to prepare a draft submission for him to forward to the Secretary of State that evening.

Note by the Secretary

The submission has been forwarded (2).

ITEM 2. STRATEGIC OPTIONS

4. The Committee had before them a paper (3) setting out broad strategic options which might merit further detailed study.

5. SIR EDWIN BRAMALL said he considered the subject would be better approached from a different viewpoint. At one extreme, attacking the Argentine fleet would be tantamount to full-scale warfare with all the attendant political, military and diplomatic implications which this would entail. At the other extreme, they could rule out any question of delaying landing operations until the next Falklands summer because of the sustainability problems we would face. All other options fitted into a series of graduated steps leading up to Operation SUTTON itself. He further considered that there would be three principal decisions they would require from Ministers:

a. Whether, when and how they should attack the airfield at Port Stanley. Ministers would need to be presented with all the options ranging from Vulcans to Special Forces, with the time factor and probable effectiveness of each option. This was vital to their plans, not least because Special Forces would not be able to operate effectively until the Argentine helicopters were neutralised.

b. Whether they should sail the Amphibious Force from Ascension Island. If it extended its waiting period at Ascension Island, it might not be in a position to take quick advantage of a favourable situation for a landing, and such a delay might

Note:

2. CDS 2038/1 dated 23 April 1982.
3. COS(Misc) 150/742/1 dated 22 April 1982.



also be seen as indicating a lack of resolve on our part. He therefore considered that the disadvantages of keeping the force at sea should be accepted, and it should sail at the earliest opportunity.

c. Whether they should attack the Argentine fleet outside the Exclusion Zone. In his view it was vital that it was neutralised; its existence would pose a continuing threat, not only to the operation but in the longer term as well.

6. In conclusion, SIR EDWIN BRAMALL said he considered that we should seek to maintain pressure and show resolve by continuing our build-up, conducting harassing operations, and being in a position to mount Operation SUTTON by the end of May. At that time either a military victory would be possible or we would be forced to break off due to the weather and other factors. He thought the present political and diplomatic climate was favourable, while a policy of delaying Operation SUTTON in favour of a long blockade would lead to a loss of public support and an ignominious failure.

7. In discussion the following points were agreed:

a. They would not support Option 1 of the paper; it would not achieve the aim of repossessing the islands, and it would lead to a military stalemate which would be the worst possible outcome.

b. Similarly, they would not support Option 3, because it was beset by too many uncertainties. Too many factors would be beyond their control, and they would have to destroy the Argentine fleet to assure success.

c. Option 2 would be feasible, although on its own it would not be sufficient. The enforcement of a Total Exclusion Zone would have to be augmented by supplementary options.

d. Option 4 would be feasible, although its effectiveness would depend to a large extent on the Argentine fleet being willing to take to the high seas; the closer inshore it remained, the more difficult an effective attack on it would become.

e. If a total blockade was contemplated, it would be essential to have an accurate assessment of how long the Argentine garrison could hold out both with, and without, re-supply by air drops.



f. It would be essential to take some decisive action soon if our determination was not to come into question at home and abroad.

g. In recommending any course of action there needed to be a clear distinction between short term and long term objectives. Militarily it would be difficult to sustain a long campaign of attrition, during which national will would be eroded. A balance needed to be struck, however, between that and taking extreme measures in the short term which might be interpreted as too harsh.

8. Summing up, SIR TERENCE LEWIN said they would wish to bear these points in mind during their discussions with Ministers on 25 April 1982. Thereafter they would wish to consider whether further work in this area should be set in hand.

ITEM 3. MEETING WITH MINISTERS

9. SIR TERENCE LEWIN said it would be important, at their meeting with Ministers on Sunday 25 April, for them first to obtain from Ministers a clear restatement of the Government's aim in the present dispute. They would then need to discuss with Ministers two principal subjects:

a. The Total Exclusion Zone, and how it should be imposed.

b. OPERATION SUTTON, including all land operations to complete repossession of the Falkland islands.

10. Continuing, SIR TERENCE LEWIN said that once the Amphibious Force had sailed from Ascension Island there were only two circumstances which could stop a full-scale landing operation: a resolution of the dispute by negotiation; or a decision to abandon the operation, based on intelligence that a landing operation would not be successful. Anything less decisive would lay the nation open to ridicule. On current intelligence he considered the force must sail on the assumption that it would conduct a landing operation.

11. In discussion the following points were made:

a. The first event calling for a political decision, and needing an assessment of likely public reaction, would be the bombing of Port Stanley airfield.

b. The second such event would be the landing operation.



c. Diplomatic moves, particularly the US Secretary of State's negotiations and the meeting of the Organisation of American States, would have to be considered in any decisions on timings.

d. In selecting any option Ministers would be influenced by its likely sustainability and flexibility.

12. Summing up SIR TERENCE LEWIN said he would produce a revised timetable of events and note of decisions required for their meeting at Chequers on 25 April 1982.

Annex:

A. Operation CORPORATE - Actions in Hand (1 page).



OPERATION CORPORATE - ACTIONS IN HAND

ITEM	ARISING FROM CCS MEETING	DECISION OR ACTION REQUIRED	SPONSOR	ACTION/ DECISION BY	CONTINUED	CURRENT STATE
0061	23/82 Item 7	Battle Casualty Replacements	ACDS(P&L)	ACDS(P&L)		
0065	-	Maintenance of a British Garrison in the Falkland Islands	VCDS(P&L)	ACDS(P&L)	VCDS(P&L)127/3/3 dated 19 Apr 82	By 26 Apr