

Secretary of State



ALC 050/16

(45)

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1 For AM 28/4

2 Howgrave 28/4

Dyson Dept to ps

Private Secretary

BOMBING OF STANLEY AIRFIELD

1. This matter was discussed again at one of Sir R Armstrong's regular meetings - Sir M Palliser, Sir F Cooper, Sir T Lewin, Mr Wade-Gery and I being present.
2. Sir T Lewin, while supporting the military view that the airport should be destroyed, made the point that the Argentinians had in fact so far been deterred by our various warnings. They had not infringed the MEZ and more recently they have discontinued the surveillance by 707s (though it remains to be seen whether this is adhered to).
3. A possible option therefore is to issue the warning about the imposition of Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) which would include the reference to Port Stanley Airfield but not actually to bomb it until the Argentinians have once defied the ban. Instructions to the Force Commander could cover this. Sir R Armstrong, Sir M Palliser and Mr Wade-Gery certainly thought this a very attractive option - and it clearly is so in terms of international opinion.
4. For this option to be acceptable it is necessary to be sure that there is no enhanced risk to British lives, ships or aircraft. I pointed out that the Prime Minister had got it wrong this morning when she seemed to think that the Argentinians had strike aircraft already on the Falklands or were likely to be able to land them there. It was important that she was accurately and precisely briefed on these matters.
5. The Chief of the Air Staff will give a briefing to OD(SA) tomorrow on these points and on the capability and accuracy of the Vulcan as opposed to the Harrier. The CDS said that he would be glad to arrange for the CAS to brief you separately at any time to suit your convenience.
6. Sir F Cooper made the point that a single bombing of the airfield is totally inadequate. It would have to be followed by a subsequent bombing or bombings and by rocket attacks on the airport installations by the Harriers.

Why?
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Anthony Acland

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26 April 1982

cc: Mr Wright
Mr Gillmore