

Page No...!... of .2...

Copy No...!... of .4...

Private Secretary

Sir Antony Acland

c.c. Mr Wright
(without encs)Mr Gillmore) with
Mr Fearn) encs.FALKLANDS : MILITARY OPTIONS AND SSN RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

In his minute of 6 April recording the upshot of the Chiefs of Staff meeting today, Mr Wright recommended that the Secretary of State should see a copy of the military options paper prepared by the Chiefs of Staff. You told me separately that the Secretary of State should also see a copy of the rules of engagement for SSNs. I submit herewith copies of both documents.

Military Options

2. The military options paper has already been given by Mr Nott to the Prime Minister on a personal basis but not for further circulation. Paragraph 4 of the cover note makes the point, included at our request, that the paper does not cover political, international or legal implications which are for the FCO to assess. The inclusion in the paper of 'political pros and cons' for each option reflects only the thinking of the Chiefs of Staff, and fails to cover the ground fully. Nevertheless, as Mr Wright has recorded separately, Mr Nott's first reaction was that these political comments were 'too pessimistic'.

3. The military options boil down to the following:

(a) Declaration of an exclusion zone round the Falklands within which Argentine shipping would be sunk without warning.

(b) General operations against the Argentine Navy, mainly seeking out and destroying Argentine warships on a targets-of-opportunity basis.

(c) Air operations, requiring access to neighbouring airfields, either for surveillance or for anti-submarine warfare.

(d) Landing operations with amphibious forces either on Falklands or in South Georgia. This assumes prior sea/air control.

(e) Other options including (i) special operations from SSNs and (ii) evacuation of civilians.

(f) Long-term military occupation of the Falklands after successful landings, which would be proof against subsequent Argentine re-invasion.



B Options (a) and (b) above offer short and medium term variants, depending on whether one uses SSNs alone or waits for the entire task group. A further option not included in this paper would involve invading the Eastern half of the island Tierra del Fuego which is a province of Argentina, and holding it as a bargaining counter against the Falklands. The Chiefs may have also mentioned this to Mr Nott.

C Rules of engagement for SSNs

4. This paper will be cleared with Mr Nott this evening and the rules of engagement are likely to be issued by the First Sea Lord to the SSNs by about midday tomorrow. The cover note by CDS explains the background. CDS makes clear that these rules are merely a catalogue and that individual rules would only be activated on collective Ministerial authority. Nevertheless it is open to question whether rule of engagement FOUR should even be included on this hypothetical basis among rules sent to SSN commanders. If implemented, it would imply that British SSNs should attack e.g. a Soviet submarine in the South Atlantic which might have strayed, whether deliberately or by accident, into an exclusion zone. The chances that Ministers would wish to risk such a possibility seem to me so remote as to argue for the complete exclusion of this rule from the list. Should the rule not rather state 'If you detect a submarine which cannot positively be identified as Argentine, you should take evasive action'?

P J Weston

P J Weston
Defence Department

6 April, 1982

1 I think that the Options paper may be somewhat overtaken by the Plan paper which I have described separately.

2. The underlined passage in § 4 above is important.

3. I strongly support Mr Weston's suggestion for amending Rule FOUR.

Anthony Acland
6/4