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FALKLAND ISLANDS: RECORD OF MEETING IN SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE AT 1715: 10 APRIL 1982

1. The Secretary of State had just returned from Chequers where he had had lunch with the Prime Minister. Mr Nott, the CDS and a Private Secretary from No 10 had also been present.

2. The Prime Minister had been concerned about the difficulties which might arise with public opinion if, after the 0400 deadline on 12 April, no Argentine ships were sunk. There would be a need to make it clear that, if this was the case, it was because Argentine ships had left the exclusion zone. It had been well understood that in putting this line across to the public care would have to be taken that no intelligence was put at risk. This might argue against stating that Argentine ships were in mainland ports. We might say that we expected ships to leave the area by the time our declaration came into effect: that was its point.

3. The Prime Minister has also been concerned about Argentine disinformation, some of which appeared already to have been transmitted through US media. Mr Nott had said that he proposed to tell defence correspondents that the Argentine statement about mining around the Falkland Islands was absurd because Argentina would fear the risk of UK retaliation in waters of Argentine ports. In discussion at the Secretary of State's meeting it was thought that there might be some risks in this line. It might perhaps be better to say simply that there were no mines around the Falkland Islands, or that we were sceptical of this Argentine statement, and that any Argentine vessel trying to lay mines after the 0400 deadline would be attacked and sunk.

4. At the Prime Minister's meeting there had been some discussion about whether HMS Fearless and Canberra should be held back at Ascension Island when they arrived there in about 10 days time. It would be preferable to avoid having these two ships travel south without naval escort.

5. In discussion of an assault landing on the Falklands, Mr Nott had expressed doubts about the feasibility of such an operation. The Secretary of State said he shared these doubts.



7. The Secretary of State said that there had been some discussion at Chequers on the longer term problems and possible political and diplomatic solutions. Both he and Mr Nott had argued that we might have to accept the introduction into the Falklands of an international or third party body (perhaps the US or a Commonwealth country). It had been thought that this body should preferably not be selected through the UN. Discussion at Chequers had not been specific and had not, for example, covered the precise role which an international body might play (e.g. in supervising withdrawal or as an interim step towards the re-establishment of the British administration). The assumption however was that if the group were there it would supervise withdrawal. The Secretary of State and Mr Nott had also made the point that there might have to be some negotiation on sovereignty, a point which the Prime Minister had noted.

8. Mr Pym said there had been some discussion of the possible need to reinforce Gibraltar. The CDS had mentioned the shipment of a Rapier unit to the colony. Mr Pym had argued against this. If there had to be reinforcements, they should as far as possible be discreet or even out of sight e.g. on ships.

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9. Other points raised at Mr Pym's meeting are being recorded separately.

C S R Giffard

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10/A

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