

Mr Weston  
Defence Department

cc:- PS  
PS/PUS - with enclosure  
Mr Giffard  
Mr Gillmore

OPERATION PARAQUET: RECONNAISSANCE BY VICTOR TANKER

1. Following the meeting of Chiefs of Staff this morning, I was handed the enclosed copy of a minute by Mr Nott's Private Secretary recording his agreement that planning should be set in hand for reconnaissance of South Georgia by Victor Tanker aircraft. As the minute records, the Defence Secretary believes that the decision to mount this Operation should be taken only on the specific recommendation of the Force Commander. There might also be the need to warn HM Ambassador in Brasilia of the possibility of a diversion flight.

2. Mr Nott has asked that we should be kept informed, but we are not at this point asked to give advice. If planning goes ahead, I understand that nine Victor Tankers are likely to be deployed to Ascension in the next few days.

*PRH*

17 April 1982

P R H Wright

ALG 062/3		
<del>5 AUG 1982</del>		

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PS/CAS

OPERATION PARAQUET  
RECONNAISSANCE BY VICTOR TANKER

The Secretary of State has studied CAS's minute of 16th April. The Secretary of State agrees that the option of a photographic reconnaissance should be kept open, and he is content for planning for the operation to be set in hand, keeping the FCO informed. The decision to mount the operation should, he believes, be taken only on the specific recommendation of the Force Commander given the evident dangers to Operation Paraquet through the possibility of losing the element of surprise, and in the light of his assessment at the time of the availability and quality of other imagery.

2. If the Force Commander asks for the sortie to be mounted the Secretary of State suggests that once the Victor is airborne the FCO warns HM Ambassador, Brasilia of the possibility of a diversion so that he can be ready to respond quickly should the final stages of refuelling fail.

*[Handwritten signature]*

16th April 1982

(D B OMAND)  
PS/S of S

Secretary of State

UCC: VCAS  
ACAS(Ops)  
AUS(AS)

Copy to: CDS  
CNS  
CGS  
PUS

OPERATION PARAQUET - RECONNAISSANCE BY VICTOR TANKER

CINC Fleet considers that his plans for Operation Parquet would be considerably strengthened if airborne visual and photographic reconnaissance could be provided off South Georgia immediately prior to the arrival of TG 317.9. The aim would be to establish the location of Argentinian ground forces on the island and to reveal whether shipping is concealed in inlets and coastal waters.

2. An airborne reconnaissance operation could be mounted from Ascension Island using a Victor Tanker in the reconnaissance role; an additional five Victor Tankers would provide airborne refuelling support. The sortie profile would allow for one hour of low level visual and photographic reconnaissance in the areas of interest. An outline of the route is at Annex A. The results of the visual reconnaissance could be communicated direct to the task force, and subsequent analysis would be signalled from Ascension Island.

3. To meet the timescale of the operation, it would be necessary to deploy a force of 9 Victors (6 + 3 reserves) to Ascension Island on Sunday 18 Apr 82 to fly the sortie from 20 Apr 82 onwards. The aircraft would be operating outside the range of Argentinian Air Defence Units, and there is no intelligence that the Argentinians on South Georgia possess an effective anti-aircraft capability. With one exception, each of the refuelling brackets would allow for the Victors to return to Ascension Island if fuel transfer was not achieved. The exception is the last refuelling rendezvous over 400 miles off Rio de Janeiro. If the reconnaissance Victor failed to take on fuel there, the crew would have to divert to Brazil. (It would do so on the pretext that it had become unserviceable during a training flight from Ascension). Although that eventuality is unlikely, you will wish to be aware of this element of potential political embarrassment implicit in the plan.

4. In view of the political implication of an emergency diversion to Brazil I should be grateful for your approval to proceed with this operation in support of CINC Fleet's plans.

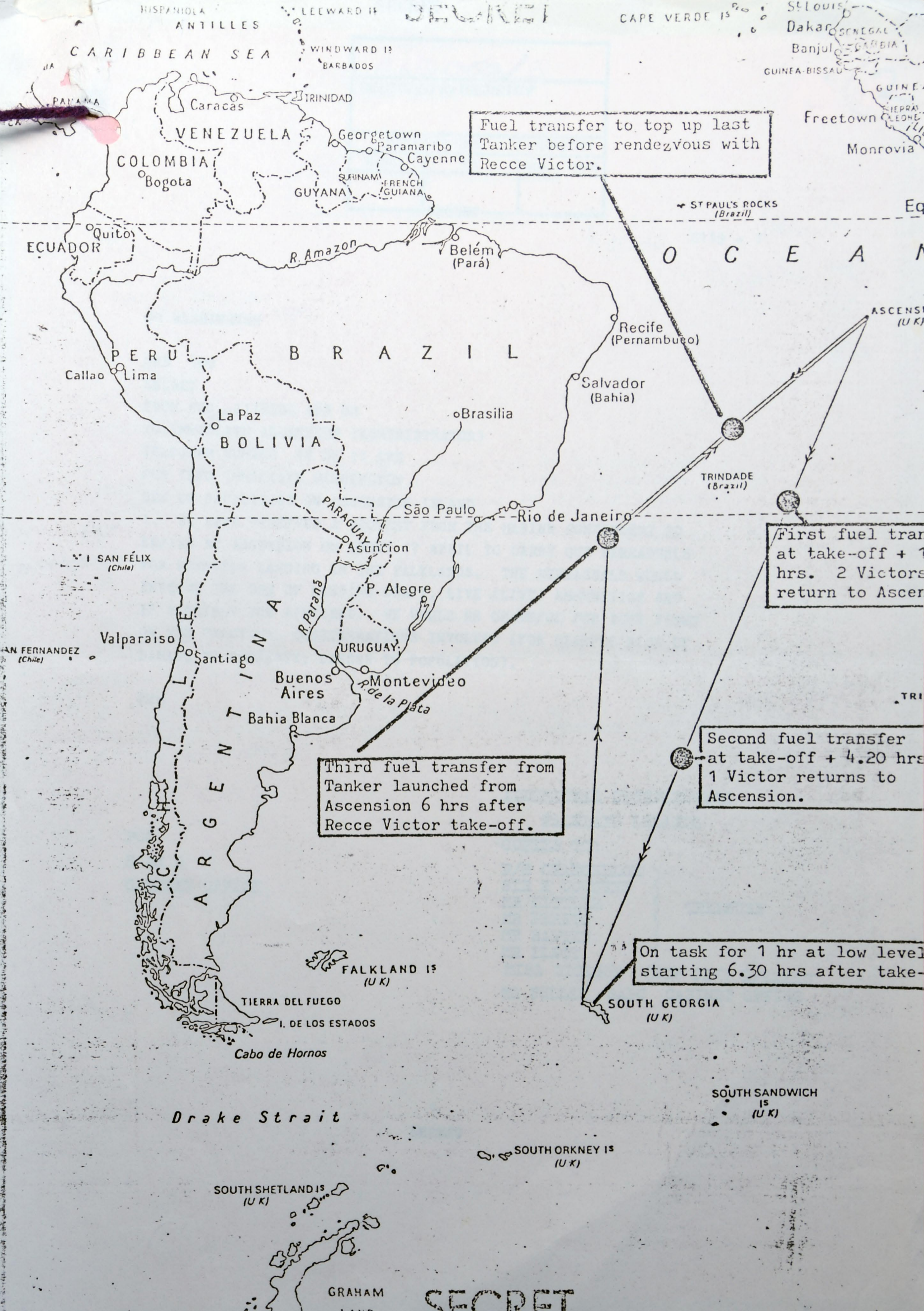
16th April 1982



CAS

Annex:

A. Map showing proposed sortie route



Fuel transfer to top up last Tanker before rendezvous with Recce Victor.

First fuel transfer at take-off + 1 hrs. 2 Victors return to Ascension.

Second fuel transfer at take-off + 4.20 hrs. 1 Victor returns to Ascension.

Third fuel transfer from Tanker launched from Ascension 6 hrs after Recce Victor take-off.

On task for 1 hr at low level starting 6.30 hrs after take-off.