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TOP SECRET UK EYES A

PS/PUS

THE SCOPE FOR DELAYING LANDING OPERATIONS ON THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

I attach a copy of a paper which the Ministry of Defence have prepared on the scope for delaying landing operations on the Falkland Islands.

2. As you will see, the main conclusions of this paper are

(a) that it would be possible to hold the Task Force at Ascension Island for up to seven days without provision of accommodation on shore;

(b) that it would be possible to hold the Task Force at Ascension Island for up to two months, but decisions would be required very soon indeed to make the necessary tentage and water supplies available;

(c) that the operational effectiveness of the Task Force would be likely to reduce progressively from the end of May and that a landing could not therefore be deferred beyond the end of May without unacceptable operational risks;

(f) if the end of May is regarded as the latest date for a landing, the Task Force would have to leave Ascension by mid-May. The holding option is therefore for a period of not more than 3-4 weeks.

3. In discussion, the Chief of Naval Staff said that planning had been based on the assumption that a landing operation on the Falkland Islands might be required between 7 and 21 May. He had consulted CINCFLEET whose view was that the optimum landing date was 16 May and that any date before then would involve certain risks. One needed to remember that possibly the worst situation would be to have established a blockade, to have got a force on shore, but with Port Stanley not taken and the Argentine forces still resisting stubbornly. At that point, the effectiveness of the blockade and the sustainability of the Task Force on shore would begin to run down rapidly.

4. The Chief of Defence Staff asked what would happen if the Task Force were held on Ascension beyond 29 April and Ministers decided to postpone a landing until early June. The CNS said that it was difficult to define this, but repeated that the effectiveness of the force would start to tail off after the end of May.

/5.

5. I asked how long it would be possible to hold off the Fleet, if the Task Force had sailed for the Falkland Islands but Ministers decided, for some reason or other, to suspend the final order to attack. The CNS said that the Fleet could be held off "for a considerable time" and when pressed defined this as about one month.

6. CDS summed up the discussion by saying that we would need to hold the main part of the Task Force at Ascension Island until 29 April and might need to hold it beyond then. Decisions on tentage and water supplies could be deferred until CINCFLEET's operational plan had been considered (probably at the Chiefs of Staff meeting tomorrow).

7. In response to a question from Sir F. Cooper, the CNS thought that a blockade of the Falkland Islands could be held until early August.

(P.R.H. Wright)
19 April, 1982.

cc PS
Mr. Giffard
Mr. Gillmore
Mr. Weston

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OPERATION CORPORATE - STUDY INTO THE SCOPE FOR DELAYING LANDING OPERATIONS ON THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. In accordance with the instructions (1) of the Chiefs of Staff, the attached paper has been prepared by ACDS(Pol).

2. The paper will be tabled for consideration by the Chiefs of Staff at their meeting on Monday 19 April 1982.

Attachment:

Paper (23 pages).

Note:

1. COS 22nd Mtg/82, Item 5.

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COS TS3(5)

ATTACHMENT TO
COS(Misc)132/742/1
DATED 18 APRIL 1982

OPERATION CORPORATE - STUDY INTO THE SCOPE FOR DELAYING LANDING OPERATIONS ON THE FALKLANDS ISLANDS

INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with the instructions (1) of the Chiefs of Staff three Studies have been completed:

a. The practicability of maintaining the Amphibious Task Force at Ascension Island for up to 2 months from 20 April 1982.

b. The ability of the Amphibious Task Force to conduct effective landing operations on the Falkland Islands up to mid-July 1982.

c. The practicability of maintaining an effective sea/air blockade of the Falkland Islands from the end of April to the end of August 1982.

These studies, the first by VCDS(P&L) and the second and third by the Navy Department, are attached at Annexes.

AIM

2. The aim of this paper is to assess the scope for delaying landing operations on the Falkland Islands.

PRINCIPAL CONSIDERATIONS

Maintaining the Amphibious Landing Force at Ascension Island for up to two Months

3. The Amphibious Landing Force could be held at Ascension for up to 7 days without accommodation ashore. If delayed for a longer period tented accommodation for up to 3,500 men and additional water suplies would be needed.

Note:

1. COS(Misc)129/742/1 dated 17 April 1982.

4. The Amphibious Landing Force is due to arrive off Ascension on 19 April 1982. If the option to retain the force at Ascension for more than 7 days is to be preserved decisions are needed now to: (10 days — but on board).

a. Fly in tentage and accommodation stores.

b. Despatch Fort Toronto, a water tanker, or arrange for the installation of water distilling plant.

5. Helicopters, landing craft and other equipment could be damaged or become unserviceable during the course of ship to shore movement and training. Adverse weather conditions could require ships to leave anchorages at frequent intervals and could delay re-embarkation of the force.

6. Adequate facilities exist on Ascension Island to allow physical fitness and operational standards to be maintained. However, the transition from the sub-tropical climate of Ascension Island to the Antarctic winter conditions on the Falklands could increase acclimatisation problems.

7. Stores consumed by the force ashore will need to be reprovided from the UK; this should be manageable. The serviceability of vehicles and equipment remaining embarked will deteriorate with time. Afloat support would be needed for amphibious ships. Some unserviceabilities could be expected.

8. Overall, there will be a progressive reduction in the operational efficiency of the Amphibious Task Force, including the ships taken up from trade. However, a delay of up to two months would not prejudice the ability of the force to conduct and sustain landing operations.

The Maintenance of a Sea/Air Blockade

9. The maintenance of an effective sea/air blockade would require Rules of Engagement which allowed attacks on merchant ships and civil aircraft, unless Stanley airfield could be closed and harbours blocked.

10. The operational effectiveness of the force will decline progressively with:

a. Attrition due to enemy action and intensity of operations.

b. Weapon consumption.

c. Weather damage.

d. Increasing maintenance problems.

e. Fatigue, especially among aircrews.

f. Reduction in motivation which could arise from a prolonged period of low intensity operations and adverse weather.

11. It is impossible to define with any certainty, the extent of attrition likely to be experienced by either side during the maintenance of a sea/air blockade. If Argentine operations were confined to sub-surface and air attacks and losses were inflicted on the Task Group, the problems of maintaining the blockade and establishing the sea and air control necessary for a landing could become acute. The Argentine Air Force, in particular, could afford to sustain a high level of attrition and still maintain a significant threat to the Task Group and the Amphibious Landing Force. Should Argentine Navy surface units be committed in advance of a landing, the UK Task Group

could be expected to sustain some losses but, given the relative capabilities, the Task Group would be expected to inflict heavier losses on the Argentine forces; the subsequent establishment of sea control for a landing would, therefore, be less demanding.

12. The loss, for any reason, of INVINCIBLE or HERMES, and particularly the Harriers embarked, could make it impossible to maintain a sea/air blockade or achieve the local sea and air superiority essential for a landing on the Falkland Islands. The carriers could not be maintained on station at an acceptable level of operational effectiveness beyond early August and could not be replaced. (ILLUSTRIOUS could be made available by 1 August, but without sea trials and crew work-up periods completed her operational effectiveness would be suspect; however, a limited capability to operate aircraft could be achieved). Similarly, no replacements exist for the air defence ships (Type 42) and modern anti-submarine frigates (Type 22), although older ships with lesser capablity could be made available.

13. It would be possible to relieve pressure on the UK Task Force and increase its operational effectiveness, by the use of airfields in Southern Chile for mounting long range maritime reconnaissance, air defence combat air patrols and anti-shipping operations; but, at present, this must be regarded as a remote possibility. Current clearance to use Chilean facilities is limited to 2 Canberra PR9's; the basing of Nimrods is not being pursued at present. The scale of operations would, in any event, be severely limited by the air transport support available and the number of aircraft required to maintain significant cover at

ranges in the order of 700 - 1,000 miles. Land based air operations could not, therefore, be regarded as a substitute for carrier based air defence and offensive air support.

14. Maritime surveillance could be made available by in-flight refuelled Victors and possibly Nimrods operating from Ascension Island. Similarly Vulcans could attack land targets in the Falkland Islands during the landing operation; here again these operations would supplement rather than replace the capability offered by carrier-borne offensive air.

CONCLUSIONS

16. It is concluded that:

a. It would be possible to hold the Amphibious Task Force at Ascension Island for up to 7 days without provision of accommodation ashore.

b. It would be possible, alternatively, to hold the Amphibious Task Force at Ascension Island for up to 2 months, but decisions are required now to make tentage and water supplies available. There would be a progressive reduction in operational effectiveness, but this would not in itself prejudice the conduct of landing operations and subsequent sustainability.

c. Lack of replacments, particularly for carriers, progressive deterioration in the serviceability of ships, weapons systems and aircraft, fatigue brought about by continuous operations in adverse weather conditions, and perhaps some reduction in motivation indicate that the operational effectiveness of the Task Force is likely to reduce progressively from the end of May.

d. The carriers are crucial to landing operations and the maintenance of sea and air superiority; they could not be maintained on station at an acceptable level of operational efficiency in order to provide an effective level of support for a landing and subsequent ground force operations at the same time as maintaining sea and air control. The landing could not, therefore, be deferred beyond the end of May without introducing unacceptable operational risks.

f. With the end of May the latest date for a landing, the Amphibious Task Force would have to leave Ascension Island by mid-May. Embarkation of the force could take up to 3 days. This would limit the holding option to a period not exceeding 3 - 4 weeks.

Annexes:

A. The Practicability of Maintaining the Landing Force at Ascension Island for up to Two Months (8 pages).

B. The Ability of the Amphibious Task Force to Conduct Effective Landing Operations up to mid-July 1982 (5 pages).

C. The Practicability of Maintaining an Effective Sea/Air Blockade of the Falkland islands from the end of April to the end of August 1982 (4 pages).

ANNEX A TO
ATTACHMENT TO
COS(Misc) 132/742/1
DATED 18 APRIL 1982

OPERATION CORPORATE - A STUDY INTO MAINTAINING THE LANDING FORCE AT ASCENSION ISLAND FOR UP TO TWO MONTHS

INTRODUCTION

1. The Amphibious Task Force with approximately 4,700 men embarked is due to arrive off Ascension Island on 19 April 1982. It is likely to be reinforced later by 2 Parachute Battalion Group of 900 men bringing the total force to 5,600.

2. Dependent on which option is selected for the achievement of the aim of Operation CORPORATE, it may be necessary for the Landing Force to remain in the area of Ascension Island for up to 2 months. VCDS(P&L) has been tasked(1) with a study to assess the practicability of maintaining the Force there.

AIM

3. To assess the practicability of maintaining the Amphibious Task Force at Ascension Island for up to 2 months.

ASSUMPTIONS

4. 5 Brigade will not be deployed as long as 3 Commando Brigade is at Ascension Island and its support resources would be available to 3 Commando Brigade.

5. SS Canberra will be available to accommodate and support part of the Landing Force.

6. The Landing Force will rely, to the greatest possible extent on its own and afloat resources.

7. The accommodation of the Landing Force at Ascension Island will not be allowed to inhibit unduly the British Forces Support Unit (BFSU) Ascension in the performance of its task.

FACTORS

ACCOMMODATION

8. BFSU Ascension, with a permanent staff of approximately 250, has accommodation under its control for up to 300 personnel in transit. There is no other permanent accommodation available on the island.

Note:

1. COS(Misc)129/742/1 dated 17 April 1982.

9. RAF personnel on the island are expected to increase from the present figure of a little over 200, to about 450 as Victor Tanker, Harrier GR3 and other forces arrive on the Island. This increase is small in relation to the total numbers involved and can be accommodated.

10. The accommodation requirement for the Landing Force plus 2 Parachute Battalion Group is for a maximum of 5,600, of which 2,100 can be accommodated in SS Canberra. This leaves a need to provide accommodation for up to 3,500 ashore on Ascension Island, depending on the Force Commander's wishes. This will have to be under canvas. Weather and helicopter availability permitting, units or parts of units can be moved ashore either to live in tented accommodation or for training, though it is quite possible that the Commander may wish to keep part of his force embarked for a variety of reasons, which are discussed later.

11. There is adequate space available for tented camps for up to 3,500. The tentage and accommodation stores, a total of 150 tons, can be provided by the Army and could be delivered to Ascension Island within 4 days. Depending on what support facilities are provided by the Army, a number of additional Army personnel may need to be accommodated.

UTILITIES

12. Local utilities are available to support the indigenous population but are insufficient to support a large increase in numbers. The major utilities that will be required are:

a. Water. There is a limited supply of water on the Island produced by distillation. There is a small surplus which can be made available but will have to be distributed to camp sites by road tanker, for which purpose some water trailers may have to be brought in by air from the UK. Rationing of water will be necessary initially, but within two weeks, provision could be increased by the installation of a a water distilling plant or importing water by tanker to meet the needs of the force. A water tanker, the Fort Toronto could be at Ascension Island by 1 May, provided that an immediate decision is made to allocate it. Initial deployment of men ashore will be limited by the availability of water. Until then, the amphibious ships and troop transports will need to remain.

b. Drainage, Sanitation and Electricity. Drainage, sanitation and electricity will be required at camp sites and can be provided by the Army Department as necessary within the time-scale of the establishment of the camp.

FEEDING AND NAAFI

13. Landing Force units have adequate cooking facilities in their equipment scales to be self-supporting. If additional equipment is required, this can be supplied by air from Army resources in UK.

14. In order to conserve operational ration scales, air resupply of fresh rations will be necessary, but resupply of non-perishable rations can be done by sea. There are NAAFI facilities available on Ascension Island, which will have to be supplemented from the UK.

MEDICAL

15. With the facilities available in SS Canberra and SS Uganda and the augmented Medical Squadron of the Commando Logistic Regiment, the Force should be self-sufficient. Casualty evacuation would be by air to the UK.

TRANSPORT AND HELICOPTERS

16. Military sites on the island are dispersed and although the island is small, road transport is required. There is insufficient local transport to meet the needs of the Landing Force. Essential vehicles for unit training must be provided from the Landing Force's unit scales.

17. There are 6 x Wessex 5 and 1 x Sea King 4 helicopters under control of CBFSU. Because the Sea King 4 helicopters are with the CVBG, further helicopters will be required for continuation training with the troops and possibly for ship-to-shore movement. A further squadron of 12 Wessex 5 helicopters has been formed and is currently at 24 hours notice to embark in the second wave of ships. Ship-to-shore movement will impose heavy use on helicopters.

RESUPPLY

18. During this period, the force must not draw on its operational stocks for maintenance and training. There will inevitably be some demand for air resupply, but it is assessed that it will not be excessive as it should be possible to arrange bulk resupply by sea of such commmodities as dry and frozen rations, ammunition for training, POL and high consumption general stores.

19. The Commando Logistic Regiment will be employed in the management and distribution of stocks and may need augmenting from its rear party in the UK.

REPAIR

20. The Commando Logistic Regiment and the organic second line repair elements of other units will be required to provide second line repair for vehicles and equipment. Helicopter maintenance manpower should be sufficient although some second line augmentation and portable workshops from UK, which have not yet been identified, may be necessary if adequate facilities are not available in ships remaining at Ascension. Equipment and vehicles remaining on board will need to be maintained and personnel for this must remain embarked.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FLEET

ANCHORAGES

21. It is assessed that up to 8 ships could anchor off the North West coast of Ascension. The distance to the nearest landing place will vary between ¾ and 2½ miles. All anchorages are open to weather from South to North through West; however the prevailing winds are Easterly. South Westerly rollers up to 3 metres in height can be expected about once every two weeks and will prevent boats landing.

SHIP TO SHORE MOVEMENTS

22. If for some reason the amphibious ships were to be removed from Ascension Island and the Commander is forced to deploy more of his force ashore than he might wish, it will be necessary for their landing craft and some helicopters to be left behind for ship-to-shore movement. In this case there will be problems in berthing/anchoring the landing craft when they are not in use. The main implications are:

a. Boats. There are two landing places; the major at Georgetown which is the more convenient for the majority of the anchorages mentioned at paragraph 21. The minor landing is at English Bay at the North of the island. The Georgetown landing has mobile cranage and is that normally used by visiting ships. The main problem with landing by boat occurs with the presence of rollers which can prevent landing for several days in succession.

b. Helicopters. The difficulties of ship-to-shore movement by lighter or boat are likely to require the extensive use of helicopters for this purpose. In order to preserve helicopters for operational purposes, it may be necessary to limit ship-to-shore movement.

c. Landing Craft. If Landing Craft from the LPD (or LPDs) are used for ship-to-shore movement of the Landing Force at Ascension, there will inevitably be some attrition due to unserviceability and damage caused by the high rollers which are prevalent. Further it could prove extremely difficult to base the craft ashore, again, because of the high seas. These difficulties would be greatly ameliorated if the LPD remains at Ascension and is able to service the craft, quite apart from the command, control and communications to the craft that the LPD provides.

23. Severe weather conditions may delay re-embarkation when the Landing Force is required to resume its journey South.

TRAINING AND RECREATION

24. Given sufficient canvas, accommodation and support facilities, it is considered that the embarked force could be landed in Ascension to carry out simple training; much depends on the judgement of representatives of MGRM Commando Forces (Deputy Military Commander to CINCFLEET) currently visiting Ascension and the wishes of the Landing Force Commander.

25. First impressions indicate that it would be possible to carry out the following training, providing adequate priority was given to the support of the force:

a. Range firings provided that a basic range safety organisation was set up.

b. Weapon training, artillery and mortar procedural exercises.

c. Sub-unit tactical training day and night.

d. Field exercises for phases of war, including patrolling.

e. Fitness training.

26. The Commander of the Landing Force should retain the option of either leaving men embarked and landing them for specific training, when the full tented accommodation will not be required, or basing them ashore permanently.

27. Recreational activities could also be arranged including sport, possibly bathing, cinema and CSE live shows. It would also be feasible to deploy some ships to St Helena, 700 miles away, for a change of scene and recreation, compatible with the notice to move.

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ADDITIONAL FACTORS

COMMAND AND CONTROL AND COMMUNICATIONS

28. During the disembarked phase, TU 317.0.2 will remain under command of CINCFLEET. Operational command of disembarked forces and any elements placed in support will be under Commander 3 Commando Brigade RM. His channel of communication is through CINCFLEET. Appropriate liaison will need to be established with CBFSU.

29. Arrangements will need to be made for Commander 3 Commando Brigade to use the established communications facilities on Ascension Island, which are adequate.

30. The command and control problems of the Landing Force Commander will be greatly eased if the LPD remains, quite apart from retaining his main communications with CCATF and CTF. Planning for future operations will be much better achieved if the Brigade Staff have the facilities of the LPD and proper access to its maps, records and equipment. For the same reasons it is likely that the COs and OCs of other units of the force would also wish to keep their main HQs embarked.

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

31. The position on sovereignty is clear: Ascension Island is a British Dependency over which HMG exercises full sovereignty. Notwithstanding this fact, the US will probably have reservations about the formation of Ascension into a large military camp. The movement ashore of 3,500 men would arouse US sensitivities. They have already made clear their concern at the level of their involvement in our activities on Ascension (at present restricted to the use of the airfield and the supply of fuel) and the implications this has for their role as an even-handed mediator. Other than increased air traffic, this operation is unlikely to make further demands on US resources. However, US support for our operations, provided by their facilities on the Island, would inevitably become more public, despite the fact that the calls on US base facilities would be minimal. The US would have to be alerted in good time to our intentions.

CONCLUSIONS

32. The maintenance of the Landing Force at Ascension Island for up to 2 months is practicable.

33. If accommodation and facilities in SS Canberra are utilised to the maximum, tented camps for up to 3,500 will be required depending on which units the Commander deploys ashore.

34. Facilities and utilities available are austere and it will be necessary to ration water and limit deployment ashore initially until alternative sources of supply can be arranged. This will need to be done urgently. Fort Toronto, if available would be the preferred option.

35. The Landing Force will provide as much equipment, manpower and resources as possible for the maintenance and training of the Force ashore. The balance, including tentage and accommodation stores can be provided by air from the UK. The tentage and accommodation stores can be provided within 4 days.

36. The Landing Force can be maintained at Ascension Island by air, supplemented by sea supply from the UK.

37. Anchorages available will be adequate on occasions for TU 317.0.1, but the sea conditions may dictate frequent periods at sea.

38. There will be a considerable airlift requirement (10 x Hercules or equivalent) to move the tentage to Ascension Island, but resupply, which can be effected mainly by sea, would not impose a significant additional demand on the ATF.

39. Ship-to-shore movement may have to be restricted in order to preserve helicopters for operational use.

40. Other than increased air traffic, there will be no requirement for additional US assistance.

41. Many clear advantages accrue if the LPD and other amphibious ships and troop transports remain in the area. They are:

a. The Commander has more options for the deployment of the force.

b. Command and control and future planning will be more effectively achieved.

c. The management, maintenance and safety of the landing craft will be greatly improved.

d. The maintenance of vehicles and equipment remaining emmbarked will be improved.

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e. The administrative and logistic support of the force will be more successful.

f. Additional accommodation will be available if augmentation by Army personnel and members of the Commando Logistic Regiment exceeds the capacity of accommodation ashore.

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OPERATION CORPORATE - A STUDY OF THE ABILITY OF THE AMPHIBIOUS TASK FORCE TO CONDUCT EFFECTIVE LANDING OPERATIONS UP TO MID-JULY 1982

INTRODUCTION

1. The Chiefs of Staff have instructed that the scope for delaying landing operations on the Falkland Islands by up to two months be assessed (1).

AIM

2. To assess the ability of the Amphibious Task Force to mount and conduct effective landing operations up to mid July 1982.

ASSUMPTIONS

3. The Landing Force and associated helicopter lift is based on Ascension Island for a period of up to two months prior to the landing under acceptable conditions and accommodated partly ashore and partly in ships of the Task Force.

4. An effective sea/air blockade of the Falkland Islands has been maintained during this hold over period.

FACTORS

GENERAL OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

5. An amphibious operation carried out in the face of possible opposition requires a very high level of operational effectiveness.

6. The longer the delay in mounting the landing operation the greater will be the deterioration in equipment serviceability, in the efficiency of ships and aircraft crew and the risk of attrition through battle casualties.

STATE OF THE LANDING FORCE

7. Training. Following two months training at Ascension the physical fitness of the whole force would still be at a relatively high standard. Adequate exercises can be designed, on the limited terrain of Ascension Island, to develop the weapon training,

Note:

1. COS(Misc)127/742/1 dated 17 April 1982.

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techniques and battle procedures in preparation for operations. The climate on Ascension during May and June however is that of a heat-wave during an English summer and is not well suited for acclimatising the Force to operate in the Falkland Islands in temperatures akin to a particularly harsh and unforgiving English winter. Finally, Ascension Island is a limited environment in which to sustain the motivation of a force bound for operations.

8. Equipment and Resupply. If realistic training is to be achieved in Ascension the equipment which is landed will suffer some attrition. The bulk of equipment and vehicles which will remain embarked will inevitably suffer some deterioration because only limited servicing and maintenance can be ahcieved. However, providing that:

a. Third line repair will be available in the UK for equipment transported by air.

b. Technical spares consumed in Ascension can be replaced by air from the UK.

it is assessd that the equipment of the Force will be retained in an adequate state. The WMR must remain intact because it can only be broached once hostilities have started. Peacetime Maintenance Stocks consumed by the Force in Ascension can be provided by air and sea from the UK. It is assessed that the whole of the Commando Logistic Regiment will be needed in Ascension to provide logistic support for the Force.

9. Posture.

a. Although there will be disadvantages to the Force, outlined in paragraph 2, through some degradation of their battle readiness and acclimatisation for operations in the Falkland Islands, a short delay would give the Commander the opportunity to restructure his Force and rearrange it in a tactical posture throughout the ships of the Force.

b. Much of the ability of the Landing Force effectively to conduct a landing after a lengthy period will depend on the serviceability and battle readiness of the ships, aircraft and helicopters of the Force. If the Exclusion Zone has been fully effective in stopping any resupply by air or sea of the Argentines in the Falkland Islands then after say, a 2 month delay, it would be reasonable to expect the Argentine Land Forces to be considerably weakened in their own battle worthiness.

10. Initially a short delay is likely to improve the landing force tactical posture and thus its efficiency, but after a lengthy delay in Ascension it will be at a reduced state of battle efficiency compared with its state when it left UK.

STATE OF THE AMPHIBIOUS FORCE

11. Ships. Because of the lack of protected anchorage facilities in Ascension Island the effectiveness of amphibious ships will steadily decline.

12. Helicopters. Assault helicopter serviceability should generally remain adequate. Less sophisticated avionic support is required than for ASW counterparts. However some deterioration will occur and since no more Sea King Mark IV are available, deficiencies can only be made up by replacement by the less capable Wessex V with a resultant reduction in the total lift available.

13. Landing Craft. If Landing Craft from the LPD (or LPDs) are used for ship-to-shore movement of the Landing Force at Ascension, there will inevitably be some attrition due to unserviceability and damage caused by the high rollers which are prevalent. Further it could prove extremely difficult to base the craft ashore, again, because of the high seas. These difficulties would be greatly ameliorated if the LPD remains at Ascension and was able to service the craft, quite apart from the command, control and communications to the craft that the LDP provides.

14. Re-embarkation of Assault Force. Will be constrained by the availability of helicopter support at Ascension Island and the uncertain sea conditions governing re-embarkation by boat. An element of damage/unserviceability will be inevitable during the re-embarkation phase.

ASW CAPABILITY

15. Submarines. SSNs would be available for operations.

16. Surface Ships. Weapon stocks will be significantly depleted through the prosecution of non-sub targets.

17. Air. Low but continuous ASW threat will have required sustained ASW helicopter operations. Aircrew will be highly proficient at deck operations in all weathers but will be tired.

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PROTECTION OF THE AOA

18. General. Gun and Missile systems are likely to be degraded and missile resupply will be required.

19. Naval Gunfire Support. Sufficient Gun Systems will be available.

20. Mining. Flank mine barriers could be used with advantage.

21. Mine Counter Measures. A two month hold would allow minesweeping trawlers to work up and conduct MCM operations.

AIR DEFENCE CAPABILITY

22. Availabililty of Air Cover. Both CVS will be required on station to enforce the Exclusion Zone. Sea Harrier availability, already critically dependant on resupply, will be reduced. Thus any delay would put progressively more at risk the ability to provide sufficient aircraft for adequate air defence and close air support both during and subsequent to the landing.

23. Aircrew Effectiveness. The cumulative effect of air operations maintaining the Exclusion Zone, whether of high or low intensity, the unaccustomed stress of the environment and hostile climatic conditions will together lead to a steady decline in operational effectiveness.

WEATHER

24. In contrast to Ascension Island the weather in the Falkland Islands area in July is wet, windy and cold. It is not markedly worse than in May but daylight is reduced and temperatures are lower. Visability is slightly better.

CONCLUSIONS

25. A stay of up to two months in Ascension Island will reduce the battle efficiency of the Landing Force. By itself, however, this would not prejudice the ability of the Force to conduct and sustain landing operations.

26. Effective support by the ships and aircraft of the Force before the landing takes place, during the amphibious landing and throughout the subsequent operations ashore is fundamental to the success of the operation. Given the logistic challenges, possible

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attrition and the onset of antarctic winter, the longer the carrier force is required to maintain an Exclusion Zone the greater will be the reduction in the availability and effectiveness of the Force at the time of the landing. By as late as mid-July the success of the operation will be severely prejudiced.

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OPERATION CORPORATE - STUDY OF SCOPE FOR DELYING LANDING OPERATIONS ON THE FALKLAND ISLANDS - MAINTENANCE OF THE SEA/AIR BLOCKADE

BACKGROUND

1. The Chiefs of Staff have instructed the Navy Department to carry out a study into the practicability of maintaining an effective sea/air blockade of the Falkland Islands from the end of April to the end of August 1982 (1).

AIM

2. To determine the practicability of maintaining an effecive sea/air blockade off the Falklands from the end of April to the end of August 1982.

ASSUMPTIONS

3. South Georgia has been taken before or early in the period under consideration.

FACTORS

4. ROE. To achieve an effective blockade it will be necessary to stop ships and aircraft of any nation, including merchant ships and civil aircraft, unless Port Stanley airfield is made ineffective and potential harbours are blocked.

5. Deduction. Without appropriate ROE the blockade cannot be effective.

6. Weather. From a maritime viewpoint conditions will be similar to those in winter in the NE Atlantic.

7. Deduction. Severe damage to ships is unlikely; on occasions air operations and the performance of weapon systems will be degraded; likewise replenishment at sea will present difficulty under the more severe conditions - particularly for ammunition and stores. The long term effect will be to degrade operational efficiency and morale.

LINES OF COMMUNICATION

8. The Falklands Exclusion Zone lies some 8,000nm from the UK.

Note:

1. COS(Misc)129/742/1 dated 17 April 1982.

9. The closest airhead and Forward Operating Base (FOB) is at Ascension, 3,400nm from the operations area.

10. South Georgia appears to be suitable for use as a limited FOB. Being 800nm from the Falkland Islands it is within 48 hours steaming of the Exclusion Zone; could provide shelter for self maintenance, replenishment and acclimatisation and some training facilities for the Landing Force. There is no air head.

Deductions

11. Such distances militate against ease of sustaining the Task Force.

12. It would be a great advantage to set up a FOB nearer the operations area.

13. The distance from the air head means the stores not available from within the force will take a considerable time to reach it and thus operational effectiveness may be degraded in particular areas for long periods.

14. Using South Georgia limited maintenance could be carried out at some penalty to the numbers of ships in the Exclusion Zone.

TRAINING AND MANPOWER

15. After the long transit from the UK, the Task Force's morale should be high and its training at a peak. A lengthy blockade with low intensity operations in mid winter prior to the landing will cause some loss of motivation and a certain staleness.

16. Deduction. An early landing is desirable.

MAINTENANCE

17. A high percentage of the Task Force's ships and aircraft and their sensors and weapons systems will be fully operational on arrival in the area of operations.

18. By the end of the period under discussion, ships will have been away from their Base Support for up to five months. Routine maintenance during the period will be required apart from that resulting from intensive operations or battle damage.

Deductions

19. Prolonged operations will cause increasing maintenance problems.

20. Roulement of ships will become increasingly necessary as the period progresses.

LOGISTIC SUPPORT

21. This requires a continuous cycle of RFAs and Ships taken up from Trade to be maintained in order to prevent interruptions in re-supply of ammunition, food, stores and fuel.

Deduction

22. A very considerable effort will be required to maintain effective support operations over the period under consideration.

OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

23. The current compositon of the Task Force is the best likely to be available in this timescale to meet the task both in numbers and quality. Given the threat this is considered adequate but some elements, notably the 2 CVSs are essential. Specifically only ILLUSTRIOUS is available as a replacement CVS, possibly by 1 August, but in an unworked-up condition without sea trials completed or a dedicated Air Group. She could not be counted upon to maintain the blockade or to support an opposed landing adequately.

24. Certain ships such as the CVSs, Air Defence Ships and modern AS Frigates could not be replaced if sunk or on a roulement basis.

25. The two existing CVSs can probably be sustained on station until early August. The escorts would also require replacement at regular intervals. A satisfactory SSN force can be sustained.

26. After a prolonged period of operations in the Exclusion Zone operational effectiveness will be reduced through the effects of weather and limitations of maintenance on availability of ships and aircraft.

27. It is difficult to quantify the length of time before the Task Force reaches a level of operational effectiveness such that it could not support land operations without serious risk or be fully effective in countering the Argentinian sea and air threat. However it is assessed that after about a month enforcing the Exclusion Zone operational effectiveness would be reduced.

Deductions

28. A Task Force of the same numbers and quality could not be provided as replacement and by the beginning of August roulement will present difficult problems particularly for the CVSs.

ANNEX C TO
ATTACHMENT TO
COS(Misc) 132/742/1
DATED 18 APRIL 1982
(Concluded)

29. Progressively after the end of May there will be a reduction of operational effectiveness of the Task Force.

MAINTENANCE OF SEA AND AIR BLOCKADE

30. Providing the Rules of Engagement are adequate, the enforcement of the sea and air blockade can be maintained without undue difficulty unless the Argentinians raise operations to the highest level and attempt to break the blockade with a major engagement, which they should lose.

Deductions

31. If the Argentinians attempt a major engagement which they lose, then providing sufficient SEA HARRIERS and Assault Helicopters remain, a landing and subsequent operations ashore should be successful.

32. The later such a major engagement occurs the less effective will be our response and thus the less certain the outcome.

33. If there is no major engagement in the period under consideration, the landing may be successful, but the Falklands would be vulnerable to a further offensive by the Argentinians.

CONCLUSIONS

34. It is considered that:

a. After an initial phase of high effectiveness which could last about a month until the end of May, the blockade will become increasingly difficult to sustain. This is critically dependent upon HARRIER availability, for which only limited replacements are available.

b. By the beginning of August blockade operations could be seriously jeopardised by reduced effectiveness and the lack of key ships for roulement.

c. In order to provide support for, and give a reasonable chance of success, landing operatins should take place no later than the end of May.