

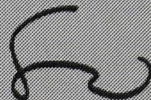
LOOSE MINUTE

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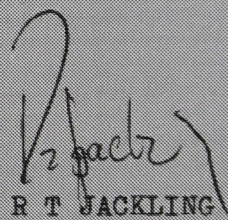
PS/PUS
AUS (D Staff)



OPERATION SUTTON

1. I attach some questions on the Chiefs of Staff's planning for Operation Sutton, which the Secretary of State might raise at his working lunch today.
2. The advice which the COS have provided on timing and on other aspects of the operation reflects, of course, the best military judgements which can be made at the present time. But there are inevitably varying degrees of uncertainty inherent in these judgements, and the questions attached attempt to pin down the key areas of uncertainty and the degree of flexibility which may exist.

20 April 1982



R T JACKLING
Hd of DS11
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OPERATION SUTTON

Prospects for successful landing operation

- How confident are the Chiefs of Staff about our ability to make a successful landing and to win the island back without causing significant civilian or heavy British military casualties? What are the key factors governing success or failure?
- What are the prospects for making the airfield completely unuseable? Could this be a key to the success of the operation?

Timings

- The COS judgement that a landing should take place before the end of May is based on what?
- What are the most crucial factors? Lack of spares for the HARRIERS?
- Are there no ways of remedying the position?
- Why do we need to allow for as much as two months sea-based support for the amphibious force once it has landed? Is this based on a study of attrition rates, including to their aircraft? Could their war maintenance reserves support combat for that length of time?

Length of blockade

- If there was no immediate requirement to support a landing, could a blockade be maintained adequately with only one CVS on station, on the assumption that it carried a maximum number of HARRIERS? If not, what are the key factors which would make this untenable?
- When could ILLUSTRIOUS be deployed on the area? What capability would it have? Would this be sufficient to overcome the temporary loss of

INVINCIBLE or HERMES? How soon could a fully capable ILLUSTRIOUS be deployed?

Overcoming maintenance problems

- What are the important areas in which we are likely to face maintenance or equipment fatigue problems?
- Are we not able to remedy these adequately at sea (remembering that the Argentinians would not be aware of the degree of deficiency)?
- What would produce a sudden rather than a progressive reduction in operational effectiveness?
- Are there any further steps the COS would recommend to overcome shortage of spares, etc?

Advantages from delaying any landing

- Are there not some advantages in delaying any landing, eg a weakened Argentinian land force, mine counter measures capability in the area, extensive crew familiarity with their combat role? Why do the COS judge these as insufficient to outweigh the disadvantages?
- If the amphibious shipping was left at Ascension, but the troops flown home, how long would it take to reassemble the force and make a landing?