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From the Secretary of the Cabinet: Sir Robert Armstrong KCB, CVO

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After this morning's meeting of OD(SA) the Chief of the Defence Staff told the Prime Minister that it had been possible to identify the location of the Argentine naval force including the aircraft carrier 25 de Mayo in a patrol area between the Argentine coast and the Falkland Islands Maritime Exclusion Zone (MEZ). He had ordered one of the SSNs in the MEZ to proceed in the direction of the area in which the Argentine naval force was patrolling. Its distance from the area was about two days' steaming. The object of this manoeuvre was to reduce the time which it would take the submarine to carry out an attack on the Argentine naval force, if Ministers were to decide that it should do so.

This manoeuvre would take the SSN outside the MEZ. Outside the MEZ she would be under "high seas" rules of engagement, and would not be authorised to attack an Argentine surface warship save in self-defence. The Chief of the Defence Staff proposed, however, and the Prime Minister agreed, that any submarine detected by the SSN and not classified nuclear might be presumed to be Argentine and might be attacked.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Coles and Brian Fall.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

D B Omand Esq

on SSN operations
outside the MEZ

add

There was no suggestion at either the briefing this morning that either that a decision had been taken or that one was necessary in the near future. The impression left was that this was merely an option for future consideration.

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