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OPERATION CORPORATE - STRATEGIC OPTIONS

The attached paper by the Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Policy) will be tabled for consideration by the Chiefs of Staff at their meeting at 1130 on Friday 23 April 1982.

Mr Hulse

Attachment:

ACDS(Pol) 104/82 dated 22 April 1982 (9 pages).

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Mr Hulse
As expected
following
discussion
between FCO/
MOD at which
mentioned in
my minutes
of 22 April
I have written
in some
BH-ent
relations.

22 April 1982

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ATTACHMENT TO
COS(Misc)150/742/1

ACDS(Pol)104/82

OPERATION CORPORATE - STRATEGIC OPTIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. The aim of this paper is to identify what broad strategic options, in addition to OP SUTTON, might be feasible in principle and suitable for further detailed military study. The options which follow are all designed in one way or another to achieve attrition of Argentine forces or will, and to lead to the withdrawal of Argentine Forces from the Falkland Islands. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

2. For the purpose of this paper it is assumed that:

a. OP PARAQUET has been successful and international support for the British position has not been greatly eroded.

b. There would be no overriding legal constraints on the application of necessary rules of engagement.

c. A combination of UN, international, economic and domestic political considerations would preclude attacks on Argentine mainland targets.

OPTION 1

3. To land in the Falkland Islands as presently planned, but with the aim changed from "re-possession of the Falklands" to "establish a British presence".

This is certainly more realistic as per him

Objective. To occupy and secure a substantial part of the Falkland Islands, but not to attempt final military eviction of the main body of Argentine forces from Port Stanley. To achieve thereby a negotiating position, perhaps for a mutual withdrawal of forces and a restoration of mainly British administration.

5. Operations. Landing forces and procedures would be essentially as presently outlined by the Force Commander for operation SUTTON. However there would be options of landing in the less heavily defended areas of West Falkland Is or the South of East Falkland, with high chances of success and lower casualties. In terms of area, the majority of the Falkland Islands might be occupied and consolidated, leaving Argentine forces as the gaolers of Port Stanley.

6. Timing. The landing window would be subject to the same constraints as the main operation SUTTON ie from about 7 May to about end May, after which our ability to effect a landing would be progressively degraded.

Very
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ent.

Discussion

7. a. Would this action provide a worth while negotiating platform? Could we control or predict the diplomatic environment for negotiations eg Security Council initiatives?

b. If it does not lead to an immediate and satisfactory political outcome, the military situation may be difficult. Land operations may not have engaged the main Argentine force

Is it
really
sustainable
in the
winter?

before our carrier air availability declines. Would tide then turn against us? After how long?

c. Further study would be needed on the political aspects of this option, and on the second phase military operations if no quick negotiated settlement is achieved.

OPTION 2

8. To continue for as long as possible to enforce the 200 mile Maritime/Air Exclusion Zone with the full Carrier task force, but not to attempt a landing.

9. Objective. To isolate and weaken the Argentine garrison to the point where a negotiated withdrawal on our terms might be possible.

10. Operations. Forces involved would be the 2 CVS, 3 SSN and 12 DD/FF of the present TG 317. Operations would be directed to attaining and maintaining air/sea superiority around the Falklands. Some attrition to Argentine sea and air forces might be expected. Traffic in and out of Port Stanley would be stopped. Stanley Airfield would be put out of action. Harrassment operations would be conducted against the Argentine garrison, to wear them down. Operations would continue until a carrier had to be withdrawn for maintenance - the date would depend largely on the intensity of flying operations, but might be late July. Amphibious landing forces would be held at Ascension and ultimately to Gibraltar or UK.

1. Timing. From 29 April until about the end of July.

Discussion

12. a. Using a high proportion of our naval force for this option, we would only be able to replace it with lesser capability ships when declining serviceability forced withdrawal of ships for maintenance.

b. Would the Argentine garrison be sufficiently worn down by this time?

c. If they were not, we would be short of military options in August. Would we have used up our major increment of maritime power without a decisive effect?

d. Assessments are needed on: the duration of this option; the detailed effect on Argentine forces; the level of attrition possible to sea and air forces of both sides during its implementation.

*This is
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Very
much an
all-in-one
option.*

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OPTION 3

*This is probably
the best option
out of options 1-4.*

13. Following achievement of sea/air superiority by Option 2,
reduce to a blockading force level that can be sustained by
roulement for at least 6 months.

14. Objective. To isolate and weaken the Argentine garrison
to the point where they might surrender or withdraw on our terms,
or a new UK landing operation could be mounted with high chances
of total success.

15. Operations. After perhaps a month, when sea/air superiority
had been established and some attrition of Argentine forces
achieved, slim down our force to half size ie 1 CVS, 6 DD/FF,
1-2 SSN. Change their aim from enforcement of the whole MEZ to
✓ stopping sea and air traffic in and out of Port Stanley. The
Amphibious landing force, first held at Ascension, is withdrawn.
The blockade is kept up over the Southern winter, by roulement of
✓ ships. Launch a series of harassing raids, whose timing and
execution can be tuned to the political situation, at the
Argentine garrison. Intelligence suggests that Argentine
garrison effectiveness and morale might be markedly weakened by Aug/
Sep.

*[Kantler - for mind of Carter?]
See on.*

16. Timing. It might be possible to reduce the force level and change the aim to blockade at about end May, and maintain it thereafter for at least 6 months if necessary.

Discussion

17. a. This option might have the advantage of appearing as a steady level of minimum force, more acceptable to international and domestic political opinion.

b. Blockading Port Stanley is a less demanding task than enforcing the whole of the present MEZ.

c. Further work is necessary on the level of naval forces needed, and the ability to keep them on station by roulement.

d. The risks to our forces, with only one carrier, need study. It would be assumed that sea/air superiority was achieved before our force was reduced; Stanley airfield was kept out of action; our one Carrier could operate well to the East of the Falklands.

e. The effects of a long blockade on the civil population - and any way of ameliorating these by Red Cross intervention - need further thought.

f. The concept of blockading forces being used as a platform, from which raids against the Argentine garrison could be deployed in the light of international/political factors, might have advantages.

OPTION 4

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lots

18. General offensive operations against the Argentine navy.
19. Objective. To sink sufficient units of the Argentine navy to influence their Government to make substantial concessions in early negotiations. To provide also an improved military setting for any later UK landing or blockade operations, and eventually for a smaller UK re-occupation force.
20. Operations. Authorise the Fleet (or perhaps only the SSNs) to undertake offensive operations against the Argentine fleet on the high seas. The task is within the capability of the forces we have in the South Atlantic. The Victor reconnaissance aircraft now at our disposal will assist operations. One or two early sinkings might well shake the Argentine Government; as well as provide a better platform for HMG to negotiate from. They would also enhance the chances for a successful blockade of the Falklands by a smaller and more sustainable RN force.
21. Timing. Operations could commence immediately. They can be launched at any later time when opportunity affords. They are not mutually exclusive with other options, particularly MEZ/blockading options, and may indeed arise out of such options.

Discussion

22. a. The decisive nature and high level of visibility of such operations might bring a strong world reaction. Would Latin-American opinion combine against us?
- b. The operations have some advantages, in that there would be no civilian involvement (with its consequent political and

legal problems).

c. This option contains a good deal of flexibility. It can be done now, or later as desired. It can be done at different levels - against submarines, or destroyers, or the Argentine carrier. It can be done as a quick strong punch to shake the Argentine Government into concessions; or as a more steady attrition to enhance the probabilities of success of our other operations.

d. The operations need not be seen as a total alternative to enforcing the MEZ or blockade. The availability of maritime reconnaissance might make more feasible quick strikes by carrier aircraft or SSNs, followed by a return to MEZ/blockade duties.

SUPPLEMENTARY OPTION

Yes, good idea.

23. A series of specific raids against the Argentine garrison in the Falkland Islands.

24. Objective. To weaken and wear down Argentine troops, in a series of operations whose timing and level could be tuned to the World and political setting.

25. Operations. Raids could be conducted by SAS, SBS, Harrier aircraft, Vulcans, Helo-borne troops. They could be aimed at key Argentine points such as communication centres, storedumps, strong-points, airfield facilities, barracks, command facilities etc. Isolated Argentine outposts or observation points away from Port Stanley could be overwhelmed. The result could be steady attrition of men and material, and a war of nerves exacerbating the already difficult conditions of weather, terrain and accommodation.

26. Timing. From the arrival of the Fleet off the Falklands about 29 April, at intervals and over a period of time as the situation dictates.

Discussion

27. a. A series of raids would be practicable.
- b. Would their cumulative effect weaken the garrison to surrender point?
- c. Such harassment might best be employed to enhance an MEZ or blockade option.

22 Apr 82