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DATE	24/4
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COORD	24/5
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EXCLUSION		
DATE		
COO/CDS	AUS (D STAFF)	1
SEC/CNS	DS 11	1
MA/CGS	DS 12	
PS/LAS	DASS	
VOUS (F&L)	MO	
DCDS (I)	FCO (DEF DEF)	1
DUS (P)		
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APR 1982

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SECRETARY OF STATE

DEPLOYMENT OF VULCANS TO ASCENSION ISLAND

1. As you know the RAF have been working up a capability to attack Port Stanley airfield with conventional bombs from Vulcan aircraft launched from Ascension Island.
2. The Vulcan with air refuelling has a radius of action and bomb carrying capability to reach the Falkland Islands from Ascension Island which is 3,350 miles away. A force of 10 Victor tankers would be required to support a single Vulcan round trip from Ascension Island. There is enough fuel at Ascension to support this operation. The US Administration has today confirmed that there would be no objection to our deploying Vulcan aircraft to Ascension.
3. If a Vulcan aircraft attacked the Port Stanley runway with 21 1,000 lb bombs at low level there would be a 90% probability of causing one runway crater and a 75% probability of causing 2 runway craters. There would be considerable damage to the parking area, and any parked aircraft. The direction of attack would ensure that neither Port Stanley town nor its outskirts were within the predicted impact area. Vulcan aircraft have been modified for this operation, and crews have been training in air to air refuelling and conventional bombing in conditions similar to those they would encounter in the Falkland Islands.
4. So far as we know there are no Argentine Air Defence aircraft deployed to the Falkland Islands, and the distance from mainland bases should preclude interception by air defence aircraft, particularly at night. There are air defences around Port Stanley including anti-aircraft guns and surface-to-air missiles, and air defence radars but there is as yet no firm intelligence that these systems have an all weather and night time capability.
5. There is no doubt that an enforcement by our carrier task group of a total Exclusion Zone around the Falkland Islands would be easier to achieve if Port Stanley airfield were rendered inoperable. This can be done by bombing attacks by Vulcans or by Sea Harriers operated from the task group. The Chiefs-of-Staff believe that the sooner it is done the better. The

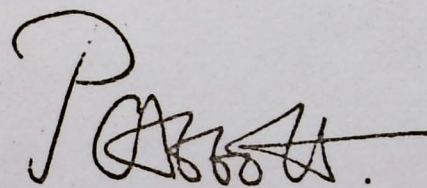
advantage of using Vulcans is that the attack can be mounted before the task group arrives and the reinforcement of the Argentine garrison would be inhibited two or three days earlier. Furthermore the Sea Harriers would be conserved for the air operations necessary to enforce the Exclusion Zone and protect our ships. The Chiefs-of-Staff are confident that such an operation is militarily feasible and stands a good chance of success.

6. The Vulcans are now ready to be deployed. The earliest time at which one of the aircraft could attack Port Stanley airfield depends on the timing of a decision to deploy aircraft forward to Ascension Island as follows:

Decision to be Deployed	Aircraft on Ascension Island	Attack on Port Stanley Airfield
Sat 24 Apr	Sun 25 Apr	Mon 26 Apr
Sun 25 Apr	Mon 26 Apr	Tue 27 Apr

The decision to deploy the Vulcans forward could be delayed beyond Sun 25 April with corresponding delay to the attack but it should be noted that a delay in the Vulcan operations beyond 28/29 April could lead to a clash of priorities with the requirement to fly reinforcement Harriers out to Ascension Island early in May.

7. We are clear on the military advantages of early use of Vulcans to put Port Stanley airfield out of action. This option will be available sooner if we have an early decision to deploy the two Vulcan aircraft to Ascension. I should stress that a decision in this sense will not commit you to authorise attacks by the Vulcans on Port Stanley airfield which you could decide upon separately. The deployment of the Vulcans to Ascension Island would itself have a deterrent value.



Approved by CDS
and Signed in his Absence

23rd April 1982