



SECRET

Dismissed at OD(SA) today

PS/PUS

Mr Wright

pa

PH
26/4

POSSIBLE USE OF VULCANS FOR AN ATTACK ON PORT STANLEY AIRFIELD

1. At the Chiefs of Staff meeting which I attended this evening, there was some discussion of the attached paper prepared by the Air Force Department on the use of Vulcans for an attack on Stanley airfield.

2. The Chief of Defence Staff opened the discussion by asking for our views on the need for an Air Exclusion Zone. Sir Frank Cooper explained the action in hand for the declaration of a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) which he said should be ready by close of play today. In theory therefore Ministers should be able to consider this question, if they so wished, at their meeting at Chequers on 25 April.

3. The Chief of Air Staff explained the timing considerations set out in paragraph 5 of the enclosure, pointing out that a decision on 25 April would allow for an operation to be mounted on 27 April, at the earliest. There was some discussion about the relative advantages of an earlier or later operation, but the conclusion of the meeting was that, if Vulcans were to be used, action should be taken as soon as possible, both to stop further reinforcement through the airfield and to gain extra surprise in advance of the arrival of the Task Force. The Chief of Defence Staff also pointed out that any delay beyond 28-29 April would clash with the Harrier requirement, although it would again be possible to use Vulcans on 4 May.

4. The Chief of Defence Staff said that he proposed to minute the Prime Minister this evening to invite her to consider with colleagues a decision to deploy Vulcans to Ascension Island, with the aim of subsequent action to immobilize Port Stanley Airport. He would point out the timing considerations in paragraph 5 of the paper and added that he might ask the Prime Minister whether she was prepared to take the decision herself, or whether she would wish to consult her colleagues.

5. In spite of some scepticism from the civilians in the Ministry of Defence about the likely effectiveness of Vulcan attacks, the consensus of the Chiefs was that deployment of the Vulcans as soon as possible was desirable, and was likely to be effective. Ministers will of course need to consider the implications of an attack against Port Stanley Airport at a time when Mr Haig may be in business again in Buenos Aires.

*of course the colleagues
must be consulted
about this*

P R H Wright
E 122

23 April 1982

cc: Private Secretary
Mr Gillmore
Mr Weston

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