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Mr. Weston  
Defence Dept.

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DESK OFFICER	
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ARGENTINE AIRCRAFT CARRIER

At this morning's Chiefs of Staff meeting, there was extensive discussion of the attached paper on the military threat posed by the Argentine aircraft carrier, and options available to us to deal with that threat. The FCO had been associated with the drafting of the paper, and we had already told the MOD that we were content with it as a statement of the problem.

2. The Chief of Naval Staff however objected to the paper saying that it was, in his view, wrongly slanted, since the recommendation in it was no more than a fall back position. In military terms, it would be very difficult to police a long line of the type shown in the annexed map, and any such policing would put a considerable strain and diversion on our SSN effort. Bearing in mind our knowledge of the Rules of Engagement under which the Argentine Navy were operating, he questioned whether it was right to limit our action in the way proposed. He therefore suggested that the options should be described as follows:

- (a) to sink the carrier without warning, under ROE 206, if necessary
- (b) to issue a warning some 48 hours in advance, telling the carrier to return to harbour and stay there
- (c) to issue a warning to the carrier to keep inside a 12 mile off shore limit
- (d) an amended version of the recommended option in the attached paper.

3. The CNS said that his own recommendation would be that either option (a) or (b) should be accepted. Anything else would be "a hiding to nothing". He claimed that he had consulted the Fleet Commander, who agreed with his view (although a member of the MOD staff, please protect, told me that the Fleet Commander had in fact expressed agreement with the paper).

4. The Chief of Defence Staff said that he was broadly content with paragraphs 1-6 of the paper, but agreed that the options needed re-examination. The Chief of the General Staff said that he liked the paper, since it came down on the side of the one option which he believed to be both militarily and politically acceptable. He argued that the MOD should not put up "outrageous proposals" on the grounds that they reflected pure military advice, but

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should accept the need to take political arguments into account.

5. Sir F. Cooper argued that it would be better if any public warning were not confined to the carrier, but extended to the whole fleet. I argued that there was a good logical reason for singling out the carrier, since public opinion would probably find it difficult to understand that a ship 500 miles away could constitute a real threat. Sir F. Cooper also argued against option (c) above, on the grounds that this would leave it open to the carrier to move to a point further south, well within 200 miles of the Falkland Islands. With some amendment to take this into account, Sir F. Cooper was in favour of a warning to the carrier to move within 1200 miles of the coast. DCDSI pointed out that we needed to consider the likely Argentine reaction to any such proposal (I agree with this; in terms of face-saving, it would surely be very difficult for Galtieri to bring his carrier back to port, or within sight of the mainland, if we had issued a public warning in these terms).

6. It was agreed that the paper should be redrafted to take account of the discussion and that it would be taken by the Chiefs of Staff again tomorrow.

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OK.

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(P.R.H. Wright)  
28 April, 1982.

cc PS/PUS  
Sir I. Sinclair  
Mr. Giffard  
Mr. Gillmore  
Mr. Fearn

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