

SPECIAL FORCES

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McCullough
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FALKLANDS: SPECIAL FORCES

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A

1. Sir R Armstrong's group discussed this yesterday. We now have a new (and different) paper from the MOD, apparently circulated for consideration by OD(SA) at 09.00 this morning but received at 09.10.

2. I submit a brief. This rehearses the main points of the brief which I submitted yesterday on the earlier MOD paper. It seems to me essential that Ministers should have a clearer idea of what they are authorising before they agree to the use of the special forces in offensive operations.

D H Gillmore

28 April 1982

cc:

Mr Wright
Mr Weston
Private Secretary

28/4

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POINTS TO MAKE

1. MOD paper unsatisfactory.

Reconnaissance and Offensive Operations

2. Need now only decide on insertion of special forces for intelligence and reconnaissance. Decision on special forces in offensive operations can be taken later.

3. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Method of Deployment

4. Para 2 of MOD paper refers to insertion of reconnaissance patrols 'probably by helicopter'. Ministers should be told exactly how insertion will be carried out. Paper yesterday referred to three possibilities: parachute from Hercules; submarine or helicopter landing.

5. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Only one 4-man team embarked on submarine: inadequate for proper reconnaissance. Helicopter best option.

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ESSENTIAL FACTS

1. SAS and SBS patrols can play vital part in intelligence gathering role. I see no need to object to a proposal for a reconnaissance operation as a matter of principle. But we need to know by what method the insertion of SAS/SBS patrols is to be carried out.

Reconnaissance and Offensive Operations

2. The MOD paper asked Ministers to approve the use of special forces both for intelligence gathering and for offensive operations. I see no reason to object to the former. Similarly, it is obvious that special forces will have a useful role to play in attacks on military targets if we can effectively establish the TEZ. But the list of targets in paragraph 5 of the MOD note may not be comprehensive. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Ministers should be given a more precise indication of what they are being asked to agree to.

3. Furthermore, there is no need at this juncture to take a decision on offensive operations. The forces inserted for reconnaissance may be on the island for anything up to 14 days (their maximum survival time). Special forces for offensive operations would, we understand, be inserted after the reconnaissance patrols had completed their task. There is therefore no need to give the MOD a blank cheque now.

/Method of Deployment

Method of Deployment

- B 4. In the earlier paper submitted to Sir R Armstrong's group yesterday, the MOD referred to three options:
- a. Parachute drop. The only way in which this can be done is by a flight of specially adapted Hercules from Ascension Island. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- b. Submarine. There are no problems of principle here. But we have only one SBS 4-man team available on the spot. This would not be adequate for a proper reconnaissance task.
- c. Helicopter. The advantage of helicopter insertion is that it can be done relatively early, with minimal risks, and in sufficient numbers to make the operation worthwhile.

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POINTS TO MAKE

Covering Paper

1. Distinction between direction action and reconnaissance role not sufficiently clear. Presume initial insertion of specialist forces designed for intelligence gathering.

Can MOD confirm this is the case?

Annex A

a. Parachute Insertion

2. List of disadvantages far from complete. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Moreover parachute drop in high winds most hazardous. Freefall technique only useful up to wind speed of 25 knots. Wind over Falklands considerably higher much of time.

b. Submarine Insertion

3. Disadvantages seem overwhleming if more than one 4-man team is required.

c. Helicopter Insertion

4. Best option. Least risks; relatively soon (29 April); disadvantages listed in paragraph 9 not too serious.

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ESSENTIAL FACTS

1. We have known for some time that the Chiefs of Staff were interested in the possibility of launching SAS patrols into the Falkland Islands at an early date. The Annex to the MOD note for discussion at Sir R Armstrong's meeting this afternoon lists 3 alternatives: parachute, submarine and helicopter insertion.

2. Parachute insertion can be done the soonest of all but it is clearly, of the three options, the one entailing the highest risks. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ~~the~~ Submarine insertion is a possibility. But we only have one SBS patrol 4-man team available. This surely would not be adequate for a proper reconnaissance task. My preference would be strongly for helicopter insertion because it can be done relatively early, with minimal risks, and in sufficient numbers to make the operation worthwhile.

3. The covering draft minute which describes ~~the~~ direct action operations by special forces is poorly drafted. As I understand it, the primary role of the special forces which the Chiefs of Staff wish to insert into the Falkland Islands at once is reconnaissance. As the last paragraph of the minute makes clear, in the light of intelligence gained by these reconnaissance patrols, other plans, perhaps involving direct action by a second group of special forces, could be developed. We need

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to be clear on this point; the second paragraph, for example, describing ~~the~~ operations by special forces does not mention reconnaissance or intelligence gathering at all.

27 April 1982

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