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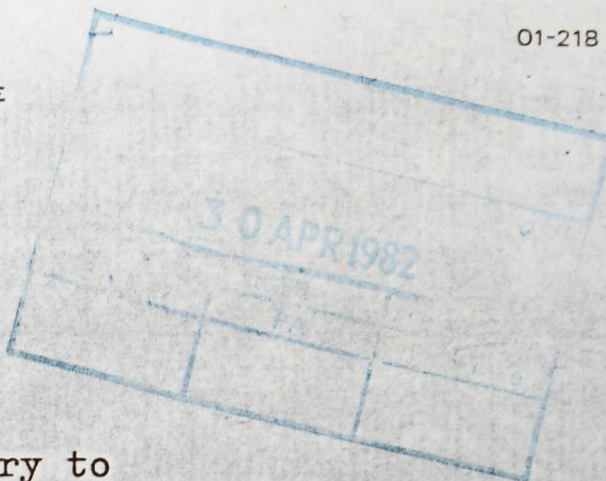
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D J Wright Esq
Private Secretary to
Sir Robert Armstrong KCB CVO
Cabinet Office
Whitehall
SW1

29 April 1982

Ira David

... I attach papers on the following topics for this afternoon's meeting of Sir Robert Armstrong's group. Copies go, as usual, to Andrew Burns and David Brook, and to Sir Michael Palliser and Robert Wade-Gery:

- a. Offensive Operations by Special Forces.
- b. Tasking of Canberras in Chile.
- c. Enforcement of TEZ.
- d. Measures against Argentine Aircraft Carrier.

Yours ever

S WEBB
Private Secretary

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OD(SA)82

ENFORCEMENT OF THE TOTAL EXCLUSION ZONEOBJECTIVES

1. The main elements of the Task Force, comprising INVINCIBLE, HERMES, 12 Escor^s and SSN's were expected to be in position to enforce the Total Exclusion Zone when it comes into effect at noon British Summer time on Friday, 30 April but have been delayed by weather. They are now expected to arrive on 2 May. Their objective will be to achieve complete air and sea control of the area, thereby isolating the Argentine garrison and reducing its will and capacity to resist a determined amphibious assault. This should progressively increase pressures on the junta. Hence, the successful enforcement of the Exclusion Zone could in itself have a significant impact on the outcome of the crisis; in any case it is a necessary precursor to further military options.

2. We cannot say with certainty when successful enforcement of the Exclusion Zone would begin to effect the garrison, but the garrison's will to resist may begin to crumble from mid-May onwards. However, further decisions need to be taken if the Task Force is to have the best possible chance of achieving this objective. The neutralisation of Port Stanley airfield would prevent air landed resupply and deny Argentine air Forces a forward base from which to sustain operations within the Exclusion Zone.

3. Port Stanley airfield is most vulnerable to air attack. HARRIERS' embarked on INVINCIBLE and HERMES are likely to be fully

committed initially to Air Defence of the Task Force and the enforcement of the Exclusion Zone. The airfield could be attacked by VULCANS operating from Ascension Island. There is a high probability that a single aircraft raid would cause significant damage to the runway and the airport installations without damage to Port Stanley town or its outskirts. In view of their heavy reliance upon in-flight refuelling from the VICTOR tanker force, VULCAN operations from Ascension Island could only be sustained from [] to [] days without detriment to the planned deployment of the [] HARRIERS from the UK to ASCENSION ISLAND on [] May, since this too would make heavy demands on in-flight refuelling support from the VICTORS. If, however, it proves necessary to sustain air operations against Port Stanley airfield or any other key installations during this period the task could be assumed by SEA HARRIERS provided they could be released from their primary fleet protection task.

RECOMMENDATION

4. Against this background, OD(SA) is recommended to:
 - a. authorise the immediate use of suffixes SIERRA and TANGO to ROE 123, thereby enabling attacks on the airfield and its installations to commence without delay;
 - b. allow the Task Force commander discretion to achieve the objective of neutralising Port Stanley airfield and its installations, and destroying any aircraft or helicopters which are based there, using all the means at his disposal.

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DRAFT OD(SA) PAPER

Military Threat Posed to British
Forces by the Argentine Aircraft
Carrier "25th of May"

Note by MOD

1. This paper identifies the military threat posed to our forces in the South Atlantic by the Argentine aircraft carrier "25th of May", formulates options for eliminating that threat, and makes recommendations.

The Threat

2. Argentina has one old aircraft carrier. However, she can carry 7 to 9 A4 Skyhawk and, possibly, up to 5 Super Etendard aircraft. Both types of aircraft are capable of mounting air-to-surface and air-to-air attacks at a distance of about 400 miles from the carrier. The 6 Tracker aircraft can carry out radar surveillance operations up to 500 miles from the carrier, giving her the capability to direct other air and naval units into attack positions as well as using her own offensive aircraft. Her own helicopters would provide limited ASW capability. The Argentines are thus able to threaten our forces from the air at a great distance from the Argentine mainland. We would expect the carrier to be escorted by 2 or 3 other vessels with a balanced ship-borne

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surface-to-air and surface-to-surface capability.

What is Threatened

3. The threat is posed to:
 - a. The main amphibious Task Force on passage from Ascension Island, which will be only lightly escorted by RN warships and RAF aircraft;
 - b. Our forces engaged in enforcing the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ);
 - c. Vessels in the continuing re-supply and reinforcement chain from Ascension Island;
 - d. Aircraft undertaking maritime and other operations south of Ascension Island.

Capability to Defeat the Threat

4. Argentine carrier-launched aircraft engaging our forces can be countered by our own aircraft, by anti-aircraft missiles and by neutralising the carrier. The Sea Harriers will be stretched to cope with land based Argentine aircraft which challenge the TEZ and may be near the end of their radius of action. The additional threat from carrier based aircraft launched outside but close to the TEZ would further extend air resources, leaving little

offensive effort available for other priority targets. Without air cover from the Harriers, our ships would look to their anti-aircraft missiles for air defence and against attacks on the scale which could be launched from "25th of May" this could be inadequate, particularly on the re-supply/reinforcement route from Ascension. The best defence, therefore, would be to neutralise the carrier itself.

OPTIONS

5. There would seem to be broadly 5 options for achieving this objective.

a. To sink the carrier as soon as possible wherever she is on the high seas.

Action against the carrier could be taken by our surface ships, Harriers or submarines. Attack would best be taken without warning, though one could be issued if politically desirable. Under this option, the carrier could have been neutralised before it became a threat to our forces, and the threat would be removed permanently. This option would, therefore, be the safest and most economical from a military point of view. It might not be attractive in legal or political terms.

b. To sink the carrier if any attack was made in our Naval or Air Forces by any Argentine Unit. *We would forewarn the Argentine of our intention*

Action could be taken by any of our forces suitably positioned. It could enable a major threat to our forces to be permanently removed immediately any Argentine attack was delivered. This might well be before the carrier had herself been able to deliver an attack. This option is attractive militarily but it does not in itself prevent the carrier getting into a position ready to deliver a pre-emptive attack before other hostilities had broken out. As it is retaliatory in nature, the political and legal objections ^{may be} are less.

C I. To induce the "25th of May" to return to port and stay there. We would issue a warning to the Argentine to withdraw the "25th of May" to port within 48 hours. After that time, if she remained at sea, or put to sea again, she would be liable to attack wherever encountered by our forces. Militarily, this option is less attractive than A^{or B} because we could not be sure of enforcing it, and even if we did, the carrier would remain a potential threat. Our action might be difficult to justify in legal or political terms

D. To induce the "25 of May" to stay within the Argentine internationally recognized territorial waters of 12 nm. off-shore, and north of 43° S

This would be implemented similarly to option C. It would be more difficult to enforce, and the carrier would remain a potential threat. ~~It~~

This option, as it to an extent recognizes Argentine rights within their territorial waters, might be easier to justify politically than A, or C. (Although Article 51 of the UN Charter might not provide sufficient legal basis).

E. ~~*~~ To confine the "25th of May" within an area bounded by the parallel 43° S and the rhumb-line connecting the positions 43° S 56° W and 23° S 35° W. This boundary would ^{at least} confine the carrier to an area from which it could not mount attacks against either the amphibious and other shipping on passage from Ascension or our forces enforcing the Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ). In one

respect, this regime would be more difficult to enforce than options B. or C. since it would depend upon timely and accurate intelligence about the carrier's movements. Against that, the boundary is well off-shore and our forces would be less inhibited by shore-based aircraft or the need to operate in shallow water. This regime would be introduced by a warning to the Argentine navy of our intentions, and of the action liable to be taken against "25th of May" if she moved outside the boundary. This action could be more easily defended in relation to Article 51 of the UN Charter than options A., C., and D., and presentationally it could have the advantage of similarity with the MEZ and now TEZ which we have imposed around the Falkland Islands, but it would exert less pressure.

Implementation

6. Which ever option is preferred, it would be for the Task Group Commander to decide how to enforce it. He has at his disposal surface ships, Harriers or SSNs.

- a. Destroyers and Frigates would attack the "25th of May" with surface-to-surface missiles. To do so, they would need to approach the carrier in the face of attack from her aircraft and her surface

escorts armed with EXOCET missiles. It would be necessary to divert substantial forces from the enforcement of the TEZ.

b. Harriers would attack with 1,000 lb bombs. In the numbers likely to be available, they could be vulnerable both to missile defence and the carrier's own aircraft. They too would be diverted from enforcing the TEZ.

c. SSNs would attack with mark 8 torpedoes. A SSN could be instructed to shadow the carrier at all times. This would be difficult to achieve if the "25th of May" was operating in water less than 35 fathoms as she has been recently. The shadowing task can be further complicated by the use of speed by the carrier and aggressive escorting.

On balance, a SSN would give the greatest ^{chance} ~~certainty~~ of success with the least prejudice to other operations. Following a torpedo attack from a SSN, the "25th of May" would be disabled. It is possible that she might sink quickly, but this is unlikely given good damage control practices. An attack by gunfire, missiles or bombs would also result in severe damage to the carrier or loss of life. If the carrier did sink, it is probable that a large proportion of her crew numbering about 1,000 would have time to abandon ship with life rafts. Her escorting vessels should be able to pick up survivors.

Conclusions

7. The foregoing makes it clear that on strictly military grounds option A offers the most economic and certain prospect of neutralising the threat to our forces from the "25th of May". We recognise, however, that the legal basis for such action could be difficult to establish, and that the political reaction to it could be damaging. Option B, being retaliatory in nature, is less open to legal and military objections. It offers a good chance of neutralising the carrier before she has delivered a pre-emptive attack but only if other Argentine forces attack first. It would not ^{in itself} prevent the carrier obtaining a position from which she could pose an immediate and great threat to our forces, before hostilities broke out elsewhere. It ~~is~~ is not, therefore, in itself a solution to the problem. Militarily option C is clearly the next best course and its legal basis and public presentation could be easier to sustain.

Options D ~~and E~~ ^{is} less attractive militarily, although ~~their~~ ^{its} legal basis and ~~their~~ ^{its} public presentation could also be easier to sustain.

In both options C and D, Argentina is likely to object strongly and is unlikely to concur.

Option E is the soft option, militarily it is the least attractive but it is the most acceptable legally. Politically it is the least stark but also applies the least pressure on the Argentine.

Accepting it would still allow their carriers freedom within a sizeable area.

Recommendation:

I recommend that Option B be implemented now. This will enable the threat of the carriers to be removed ~~and~~ immediately any Argentine unit attacks our Naval ^{or} Air forces, irrespective of the carriers location. To prevent the carriers being positioned for a pre-emptive attack it will be necessary to adopt a geographically restrictive option in addition. While militarily C and D have advantages

their legal and political difficulties lead
me to recommend Option E. ^{its implementation} This ~~to~~ should
~~be accompanied~~ in conjunction with
Option B. The implementation should
be ^{preceded} ~~accompanied~~ by an appropriate
warning.