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SW/52/724

D.J. Wright Esq
Cabinet Office

18 May 1982.

Dear David,
PUBLIC PRESENTATION

I attach the draft of an OD (SA) paper for discussion at the 5.00 p.m. meeting this afternoon. Copies go to Andrew Burns and David Brooke, and to Sir Michael Palliser and Robert Wade-Gery.
Yours ever

John

J. WEBB.

Head Defence Dept.

Pres

John saw the O/S version yesterday

NB. Mr Parkinson will hold the first of his public presentation meetings at 5 pm on Wed. Gordon Cunnox & Tenn will join Sir F Coopers & others.

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OD(SA) Paper

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FALKLAND ISLANDS LANDING OPERATIONS - PUBLIC PRESENTATION

1. There would be military and political advantages to be gained if we were able initially to disguise the scale of landing operations. We could do this without affecting the operation itself.
2. Militarily we should aim at creating the maximum uncertainty in the Argentine high command. The potential benefits are the holding back of a concerted Argentine air attack (the major threat in the landing phase) to await 'the main invasion'; and the holding back of Argentine reserves on the Falkland Islands from all out commitment against the landing. The Argentine Aircraft Carrier and other naval forces might continue as now, withdrawn and irresolute.
3. Politically, we should encourage uncertainty in the minds of the Argentine Junta. Their recourse to the Security Council could be delayed. The renewal of EEC sanctions, and the handling of world opinion generally, might be made less difficult.
4. I believe, therefore, that our landing operations should be presented initially as something less than an invasion; a logical development of earlier raiding operations, one more turn of the screw to encourage the Argentines to withdraw. A presence on the Islands, it could be said, will enable us to bring yet more pressure to bear on the Argentine garrison.

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5. If we adopt this course it would be necessary to "manage" reporting of military events in the South Atlantic. This would require either the full co-operation of correspondents with the Task Force or the editing of their material by the MOD. This could create a Public Relations vacuum which would need careful handling.
6. This is only a matter of presentation. Actual fighting operations in and around the Falklands would be unaffected. I believe nothing to be lost, since we have the option at any time of announcing that we are carrying out full scale operations aimed at repossession of the Islands.

Recommendation

7. I invite OD(SA) to agree:
- a. that initial landing operations be presented as outlined in this paper, in order to conceal their actual scale and thus create uncertainty in the Argentine High Command and Government.
 - b. that the necessary action should be taken with the embarked Press.