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ARGENTINE REACTION TO UK MILITARY OPERATIONS

1. To complement my paper on the ability of the Falkland Islands Garrison to withstand a blockade, I now attach an assessment of the time they might take to withdraw their men and equipment from the Islands.

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~~DCDS(1)~~

23rd April 1982

ARGENTINE WITHDRAWAL FROM FALKLAND ISLANDSINTRODUCTION

1. It is possible that the Argentines could offer to withdraw from the Falkland Islands during the negotiations to find a solution to the present crisis. This would have military implications and the COS need to know how long it would take Argentina to withdraw her armed forces.

AIM

2. The aim of this paper is to determine the time it would take the Argentines to withdraw their troops and equipment from the Falkland Islands.

ASSUMPTION

3. We assume that the port and airfield would not have suffered damage prior to the order to withdraw and would be fully usable. We also assume that the withdrawal occurs before the Argentines had depleted their stocks therefore incurring a maximum return lift.

MOVEMENT CAPABILITY

4. Size of Garrison. In our earlier reports⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾ we have given our estimates of the size of the Argentine Garrison. These indicated that the Force would probably consist of some 6 battalions and support troops (7,000 men) but in the extreme case could amount to about 9 battalions and support (10,000 men). We assessed the total logistic requirement was 3,000 tons and 4,000 tons respectively

Note (1) DCDS(I) 26 dated 21 April 1982

Note (2) DCDS(I) 26 dated 14 April 1982

for the smaller and larger Garrison.

5. Air Lift. Argentines have used the C130, F27/28 and the Boeing 737 to lift troops and supplies to the Falklands. We believe that by operating at night they have managed about 15 sorties each 24 hours. To lift a battalion with its vehicles, equipments, 2 days ammunition and combat supplies would require 20 sorties (15 x C130, 4 x F27 and 1 x Boeing 737). It would take a further 12 x C130 sorties to lift the scale of ammunition and combat supplies we have allowed. The complete lift of a battalion at the apparently intensive rates used in April during the build-up of the Garrison would take 3 days. The 1,000 or so support troops, since they have less equipment, could probably be moved in two days. Thus it would take 20 and 29 days respectively to move the small and large force by air. The troops alone could be moved in 5 and 7 days respectively.

6. Sea Lift. The Argentines used 7 naval transports, an LST and 2 merchant ships in the initial build-up on the Falkland Islands. These ships provide a combined lift of 3,300 tons and 1,300 men. This capacity could be increased by the Argentine Navy's other LST, its LPD and by taking up more ships from Trade. But a limiting factor could be the operating capability of the port which is 400 tons a day. This could only be partially off-set by using LSTs and possibly helicopters.

7. At present one LST and 3 other vessels are in Port Stanley with a lift capacity of 900 tons and 600 men. The remaining vessels are in Argentina some 3 days sailing time away. Assuming loading of the ships docked in Port Stanley could start within a day of the decision being made and at least some of the ships in Argentina could depart immediately, it would take about 7 days to complete the loading of 3,000 tons and 10 days to load 4,000 tons. Some

7,500 men could also be carried by these ships.

ASSESSMENT

8. We believe that the Argentines would move most, if not all, of their heavy logistic supplies by sea. They have a relatively small air transport force which will have been hard pressed during the build-up of the Garrison. We also believe that they would avoid operating at night from the airfield at Port Stanley. The air field does not have permanent lighting and we doubt whether they would wish to continue using the emergency 'goose-neck' lighting. Thus we consider that their likely sortie rate would be reduced to about 10 a day. This gives them the ability to move 200 tons or 1,000 troops each day.

9. In the case of the 7,000 strong Garrison, the sea lift could clear all the equipment and 1,500 men in 6 days leaving 5,500 for air movement. This would require some 60 x C130 sorties which could be mounted in 6 days. With the larger force some 8,500 men to be airlifted which would take 10 days, the same time as it would be to complete the sea lift.

10. These times give very little latitude and assume a very efficient organisation to collect all the supplies and men to the right place at the right time. There are bound to be mistakes and equipment failure which will slow down the operation. The weather could also cause significant delays. Much will also depend on the determination with which the Argentines tackle the re-deployment. This in the event may not be high.

11. Furthermore, our assessment of the quantities to be moved is imprecise and the amounts could be larger. The Argentines might also wish to make good damage inevitably caused during their occupation. Given all the variables we believe it sensible to add

4. s to our timings for the re-deployment.

CONCLUSION

12. We conclude that, although it is probably practicable for the Argentines to withdraw their Garrison and its equipment from the Falkland Islands in about 9 days, we should assume that it will take them nearer 12-14 days to do so.

Dear John,

The Falkland Islands and Dependencies

Thank you for your letter of 21 April about the three telegrams sent to Washington in preparation for Mr Pym's current visit there.

A paper will be distributed today which probably will contain other copies for the US in the Falkland Islands, in accordance with your second paragraph. The FCO legal advisers have discussed the text of the draft agreement with the Attorney General. In accordance with your penultimate paragraph, the Attorney General concluded that there was no point which it was necessary for him to raise on the basis of the draft. He would, however, like to be kept in touch with developments on this and to have the opportunity to present, if necessary, at subsequent stages. We shall

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... which, in relation to the three telegrams to Washington, whether the proposed Special Interest Authority in the Falklands would take decisions by unanimity or by majority. It is desirable that the United States representative should, in most matters, take a view closer to Ministers than to Ministers. It is also desirable that decisions by majority should normally produce results that would accord with our interests. It would be desirable if the other side would give Argentina a vote. It is therefore preferable to unanimity. It is also possible that you may have been in Washington since 21st April. It may be worth noting that this should be the arrangement.

Most of the second page of your letter was about the Dependencies and their position under the draft agreement. I enclose a short paper prepared by FCO officials in consultation with the MOD and Cabinet Office about British interests in the Dependencies. This does not refer to an earlier paper about hydro-carbon, mineral and fisheries resources in the South Atlantic - COMINT/US 23 of 23 April.