

DS11/10/6

6/3/83

MILITARY OPTIONS FOR REPOSSESSION OF THE
FALKLAND ISLANDS- 4 MAY 1982
NAVAL P.W.'S

Note by the Defence Secretariat

1. At their meeting on 28 April, the Chiefs of Staff invited the Defence Secretariat to bring up to date the Falkland Islands' 'Military Appreciation' paper circulated under cover of COS(MISC) dated April 1982.

2. The attached papers, which have been prepared on the basis of advice from the DPS, reflect a re-appraisal of the military options for repossessing the Falkland Islands in the light of the successful recapture of South Georgia and the declaration of a 'Total Exclusion Zone' to come into effect from 30 April. The options have been arranged in ascending order of severity and are presented in a form designed to bring their respective advantages and disadvantages more sharply into focus. They are not mutually exclusive.

3. The attachments are circulated for two-star clearance prior to submission to the Chiefs of Staff at their meeting on 1 May. You are invited to attend, or be represented at a meeting to be chaired by the Head of DS11 at 2.00 pm on 30 April in Room 9326,

29 April 1982

DS 11

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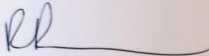
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MILITARY OPTIONS FOR REPOSSESSION OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDSEstimated Order of Severity

1. Psychological operations.
2. Issue ultimatum.
3. Reinforce UK Air Presence in Falkland area.
4. Retaking South Sandwich.
5. Extended cutting of Argentine lines of communication to Falkland Islands.
6. Harassment Operations against Argentine garrison by Special Forces/Commando raids.
7. Harassment Operations against the Argentine Garrison by Air Attacks.
8. OP SUTTON with modified aim of establishing a secure military presence on part of the Falklands without attempting to evict Argentines.
9. Mining/blockading mainland Argentine ports.
10. Unrestricted offensive operations against Argentine Naval units.
11. Landing in the Falkland Islands Op SUTTON.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.

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OPTION - Psychological Operations.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Special.

3. TIMING - From now.

PROS

Low cost.

Preparations already in hand.

Demoralize forces

- u - civilian population

Could enhance Brit case in international circles if properly handled.

CONS

Limited effectiveness.

Prejudices integrity of UK.

(act of the dishonouring of the Argentines is played upon)

1. OPTION - Issue ultimatum that war will be declared in two weeks unless Argentines withdraw from Falkland Islands.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Current dispositions.

3. TIMING - Any time.

PROS

CONS

- Severe pressure on Argentine government to reach settlement.

- Unequivocal demonstration of serious intent

- Would eventually legitimise warlike acts if negotiations did not succeed

- Probable impounding of UK expatriates and assets in Argentine.

- UK cast in role of aggressor.

I should have thought that this is totally contrary to HMG policy in that we are ~~engaged~~ engaged in limited operations (Article 51 of UN Charter) in self-defence which includes regaining what is ours — not war on Argentina.

OPTION - Reinforce UK Air Presence in Falklands area.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Various possibilities including lease/lend of an Additional Carrier from United States or Australia; bringing forward ILLUSTRIOUS or recovering BULWARK.

3. TIMING - Varies: ILLUSTRIOUS by 1 August; lease/lend probably some months. BULWARK - 6 months.

PROS

CONS

Could decisively improve prospects for sustaining air superiority over Falkland Islands and prolonging Exclusion Zone.

Enhances prospect for sustained intensive air operations.

Unequivocal demonstration of allied support for UK.

In US case, heightened risk of involving Soviet Union in direct military assistance for Argentina

US moderating influence on OAS states would diminish.

Australians likely to be reluctant to risk their sole carrier, which is in any case ageing.

Australians may seek offset.

ILLUSTRIOUS not a worked-up or operational unit and therefore at increased risk.

Ship/facilities not fully proven.

BULWARK unlikely to prove reliable once deployed.

RN expertise inadequate to operate US CV without intensive instruction and work up.

Possible incompatibility between UK and US equipment.

Ship remains dependent on US support backing.

Not possible without US as ally in full sense.

OPTION - Repossession of South Sandwich.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Current dispositions.

3. TIMING -

PROS

- Relatively simple operation.
- Quick and unambiguous military success.
- Recovery of UK territory.
- Maintains pressure on Argentina.

CONS

Diverts forces from higher priority tasks.

! weather?

! what for?

OPTION - Extended cutting of Argentine lines of communication to Falkland Islands.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Task Force as deployed.
3. TIMING - From 2 May.

PROS

Isolation of Argentine Force on Falkland Islands would erode will and capacity to counter subsequent landing.

Graduated increase in pressure on Argentine.

Maintains political objective with minimum use of force.

Obviates risk of civilian casualties among Falkland Islanders.

Attrition could be imposed in Argentine naval and air forces.

Might in time be sufficient to create favourable climate for negotiated withdrawal.

Could be sustained for considerably longer than a wide geographical exclusion zone.

Minimises risk of potential action against neutral shipping and aircraft.

CONS

Could impose hardship on Falkland Islanders.

Implies acceptance of prolonged crisis.

Long term degradation of UK commitment to NATO.

Would highlight inability to enforce Exclusion Zone for prolonged period.

OPTION - Harassment Operations against Argentine garrison by Special Forces/Commando raids.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - SAS/SBS/Commando Forces embarked in Task Force and Amphibious Task Force.

3. TIMING - Limited capability from 30 Apr. Greater capability from 13 May.

PROS

Useful preparation for subsequent landing operation.

Successful attacks on high value targets would be consistent with minimum use of force, and would demonstrate HMG's resolve to take action against the Garrison without putting the civilian population at risk.

CONS

The destruction of targets such as water and power supplies could cause hardship to civilian population.

The failure of a Special Forces/ commando operation could present the Argentines with a significant propaganda weapon.

Limited influence on negotiations.

OPTION - Harassment Operations against the Argentine Garrison
by Air Attacks.

2. FORCES REQUIREE/AVAILABLE - Vulcans, Harriers.

3. TIMING - From 30 Apr.

PROS

Would enhance impact of Total Exclusion Zone by neutralisation of Stanley airfield.

Selective attacks would weaken garrison capability and resolve.

CONS

Could prejudice international support for HMG.

Some risk of civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure.

Limited influence on negotiations. ?

1. OPTION - OP SUTTON with modified aim of establishing a secure military presence on part of the Falklands without attempting to evict Argentines.
2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Task Force and Amphibious Landing Force as presently constituted.
3. TIMING - 15-31 May.

PROSCONS

Maintain political initiative
consistent with minimum use of force.

Scale of operations more susceptible
to control.

Civilian casualties and damage kept
to minimum.

Control of major part of Falklands
could be established.

It might be possible to establish base
on shore for Harrier/support helicopter
operations: Hence less dependent on
embarked air capability.

A siege easier to provide for support
of force and protection from elements.

Negotiation might be possible free
from the extreme emotions which
might be generated by more direct
confrontation.

UN might intervene and secure mutual
withdrawal.

International support might be for-
feited without applying sufficient
pressure on Argentine garrison.

UN intervention might not result
in resolution of sovereignty issue
to HMG's satisfaction.

Invites long term stalemate.

Difficult to sustain while continuing
to maintain exclusion zone.

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OPTION - Mining/blockading mainland Argentine ports.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Air Mining: Vulcans, Victors, Nimrods;
Sea Mining SSNs; Scuttle block ships;
Blockade: SSN/SSK.
3. TIMING - Most assets immediately available apart from scuttle block ships.

PROS

Immediately increase in economic pressure.

Denies fleet support.

Direct impact on mainland without risking land battle.

Would expose frailty of Argentine forces.

CONS

Increased motive for Soviet involvement because of disruption to grain supplies.

Scuttle only effective in narrow channels and costly.

Would disperse UK naval capabilities.

Added risk of engaging neutral shipping.

Slow impact.

SSN capability limited in shallow waters.

OPTION = Unrestricted Offensive operations against Argentine Naval units

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - SSN/SSK Sea Harrier Vulcan/Victor Nimrod/Harpoon DD/FF

3. TIMING - Vulcan/Victor available Ascension 29 April. SSN/SSK when maritime TEZ secured. DD/FF? Nimrod/Harpoon

PROS

CONS

potential for clear and early success.

linkings might bring Argentine to negotiate more seriously.

linkings, particularly "25 of May", will enhance chances of success of TEZ or landing.

demoralising to Argentine public opinion and garrison.

lessens risk to UK assets.

smaller UK garrison of FI needed in the event of re-occupation.

High visibility of success could endanger strong OAS/World reaction against UK; alienate our friends.

Spread of conflict area could endanger adverse international reaction.

OPTION - Landing in the Falkland Islands Op SUTTON.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Task Force and Amphibious Landing Force as presently constituted with possible addition of Brigade Group.

3. TIMING - 13 - 31 May.

PROS

Direct and unambiguous demonstration of HMG's resolve.

Concentration of force would put early and maximum pressure on Argentine garrison.

Climate could be created for early negotiated settlement.

Possibility of evicting Argentines militarily.

Most direct means of attempting to restore British control.

Operational planning already well underway.

CONS

Might be impossible to avoid bloody confrontation with resultant heavy casualties and battle damage.

International (and domestic) support could be undermined.

Achievement of objective could be frustrated by need to minimise civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure.

Military stalemate could ensue.

A siege would not necessarily be to UK advantage given weather conditions and extended supply lines.

Would place severe strain on ability to provide sustained sea and air support while maintaining Total Exclusion Zone.

Capability to maintain intensive operations could decline rapidly from end May.

Loss of carrier, particularly air assets, would jeopardise landing and/or subsequent operations.

OPTION - Attack Argentine mainland targets.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Vulcans and/or special forces.
3. TIMING - Vulcans - Available at Ascension Island 29 Apr 82.
Special Force - Embarked on Task Force and Amphibious Landing force. Available shortly.

PROS

Surprise.

Bombing of airfields would reduce effectiveness of Argentine air force.

Military targets could be chosen to minimise casualties.

Attacks would be highly visible manoeuvre of HMG's resolve.

Impact on Argentine domestic opinion would be immediate. Not certain whether this would strengthen or weaken their resolve to hold the Falkland Islands.

Special forces operations could be carefully controlled.

CONS

Legitimacy might be challenged in context of Article 51 of UN charter.

International support for HMG could be eroded.

Action might generate active military support for Argentine British forces could be greatly outnumbered.

Direct incentive for reprisals against British ex-patriate in Argentine.

Only a limited capability for air attack in view of range and AAR support needed.

Insertion and extraction of special forces would be difficult and could put at risk the delivery vehicles/SSM helicopter platforms etc.

Could give rise to large number of civilian casualties.