

DRAFT

Secretary of State

Copy to:

CNS

CGS

CAS

PUS

VCDS(P&amp;L)

DCDS(I)

DCDS(OR)

DUS(P)

ACDS(Pol)

ACDS(Ops)

ACDS(P&amp;L)

AUS(D Staff)

Head of DS11

FCO Defence Dept - Mr Weston

MILITARY OPTIONS FOR REPOSSESSION OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. In early April I showed you a paper (1) which had been discussed by the Chiefs of Staff on the military options for repossessing the Falkland Islands. The paper has <sup>now</sup> been revised and updated and was considered again by the Chiefs of Staff at their meeting on 6 May. It was agreed that it could usefully be brought to your attention and I therefore attach a copy.

2. The paper contains a broad range of military options, the aim of which, either individually or in conjunction with others, is to repossess the Falkland Islands with the minimum loss of life. Since the paper was first prepared, some of the options (Annex A) have been approved and are now in the process of implementation. Annex B contains those options which have not received political approval but which, in some cases, are at the detailed planning stage.

3. The options in Annex B have been arranged in ascending order of <sup>public-military impact</sup> severity/- which has been assessed as a combination of military <sup>effect</sup> impact on the Argentines and difficulty of implementation for ourselves.

ranges, for example, from the least-impact options at the lower end of the scale; through attacks on military targets and the

(1) COS(Misc) 90/742/1 dated 8 April 1982

Para 38  
Para 4

options for landing on the Falkland Islands; to attacks against Argentine mainland targets, CLOSED FOR 40 YEARS UNDER FOI SECTION 27 and a landing in southern Argentine ~~at the other end of the scale of severity~~. Although such an assessment is somewhat conjectural, it nevertheless provides an indication of the probable impact of each option.

4. Each option includes a description of the forces which would be required for its implementation; an indication of the timescale during which it would be practicable; and an assessment of the political and military considerations which would need to be taken into account. Also included is an indication of their feasibility. Some, such as the repossession of South Sandwich or harassment operations by the special forces against the Argentine garrison are judged to be feasible now, with the forces already available in the Task Force. Other options, although feasible now - such as mining mainland Argentine ports or mounting unrestricted attacks against Argentinian naval units - could only be implemented at a cost to others, by the need for example to reassign forces allocated to existing tasks. A third category would only be feasible with the arrival of additional forces - in the case of the 2 options for landing on the Falkland Islands, from 19 May, with the arrival of 5th Brigade. A last category CLOSED FOR 40 YEARS UNDER FOI SECTION 27 or a landing on Tierra del Fuego - while theoretically feasible is probably unrealistic in present circumstances.

5. I should be happy to discuss any of the options in the attached paper if you would find this useful. My intention is that it should be updated and regularly reviewed; it will provide a useful aide memoire for further consideration of the military options during the coming weeks.

May 1982

(CDS)

FC 900

7

ACDS(Pol)115/82

ACDS(Ops)  
Mr Weston (FCO)  
ACNS(OP)  
DNO  
ACAS(Ops)  
AUS(D Staff)  
Head of DS11

Copy to:

FCO/CDS —  
COSSEC

MILITARY OPTIONS - OPERATION CORPORATE

Reference: COS(Misc)187/742/1 dated 1 May 82.

1. The paper at Annex has been revised to take account of the comments you forwarded yesterday on the reference.
2. I would be grateful if you would be present or represented at a meeting in my office arranged for 1600 this afternoon at which I plan to take a final look at these options before submitting them to the Chiefs of Staff.
3. Head of DS11 will be circulating separately a draft<sup>\*\*</sup> submission, which might be used to cover the attached options (should the Chiefs of Staff decide to put them to Ministers). We would be grateful for your comments on it at my meeting.

\*  
Note: Now attached.

CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF	
DATE	COPIES
5/5/82	1
CDS	CNS
	CSS
	J A GILBERT
	AVM
	ACDS(Pol)

5 May 82

FILE: 103/11

ATTACHMENT TO  
ACDS(Pol)115/82  
DATED 5 MAY 82

option  
12

MILITARY OPTIONS - OPERATION CORPORATE

1. Options in ascending order of politico - military profile are set out below:

At Annex A - Options in Hand:

- Option 1: Psychological Operations
- 2: Prolonged cutting of Argentine lines of communication to the Falkland Islands
- 3: Harassment operations against the Argentine Garrison by Air and Sea attacks.

At Annex B - Future Options:

- Option 4: Repossession of South Sandwich
- 5: Harassment operations against the Argentine Garrison by Special Forces of Commando raids.
- 6: Unrestricted attacks against Argentine naval units at sea.
- 7: Landing with limited aim of establishing a secure military presence on part of the Falkland Islands without attempting to evict Argentinians.
- 8: Landing with aim of full and early repossession of the Falkland Islands.
- 9: Mining/Blockading mainland Argentine ports.
- 10: Attack Argentine mainland targets.
- 11: Landing Southern Argentina (Tierra del Fuego).
- 12:

CLOSED FOR 40 YEARS UNDER  
FOI SECTION 27

OPTION - Psychological Operations.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Special.

3. TIMING - From now.

PROS

Political:

Low Cost.

Military:

Preparation already in hand.

Confuses enemy's Command and weakens morale.

CONS

Political:

Prejudices integrity of UK.

Military:

Limited effectiveness.

Supportive of other measures; not a decisive measure in itself.

Feasibility: (1) Feasible.  
(2) Action in hand.

OPTION - Prolonged cutting of Argentine lines of communication to Falkland Islands - 'Blockade'.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Task Force as deployed up to end July; thereafter it will be necessary to find replacement air platforms with an organic air capability. Options are addressed below.
3. TIMING - From 2 May.

PROSPolitical:

Graduated increase in pressure on Argentine.

Maintains political objective with minimum risk to our forces.

Obviates risk of civilian casualties among Falkland Islanders.

Minimises risk of potential action against neutral shipping and aircraft.

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

Clearly related to self defence

Military:

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

Attrition could be imposed on Argentine naval and air forces (provided that they present targets to our forces).

CONSPolitical:

Could impose some hardship on Falkland Islanders/engender reprisals against UK citizens on mainland.

Could imply acceptance of prolonged crisis.

Military:

Long term degradation of UK commitment to NATO.

Attrition of our own maritime assets could prejudice effective enforcement of blockade.

Feasibility: This option is currently feasible and integral to our objective of wearing down the Argentine Garrison's morale and will to fight. However the air EZ cannot be sustained over a prolonged period without the eventual replacement on station of HERMES and INVINCIBLE. In this context decision is in hand to bring forward HERMES and INVINCIBLE deployment in August, and to assess prospects for reclaiming RCUK to an operational state by about September. Further consideration is necessary to determine whether, as another option, it would be practical to lease a United States CVS for timely deployment. Whichever option is selected, it will be necessary to deploy additional Carrier Group aircraft to the Falklands area.

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

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Vulcans, Harriers, DD/FF.
3. TIMING - From 30 April.

PROSVulcansMilitary:

Neutralisation of Stanley Airfield has enhanced impact of TEZ and denied aerial resupply.

Ability to strike from long range has had immediate impact on sense of domestic security within mainland Argentina. Likely to tie down air defence assets to defend key areas remote from area of conflict.

Harriers/Naval BombardmentMilitary:

Selective attacks likely to weaken garrison capability and resolve.

Other features of military importance eg. airstrips, radar/POL/ammunition sites are being attacked discriminately.

Feasibility: (1) Feasible now.

CONSPolitical:

Strategic bombing could undermine international support for HMG.

Some risk of civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure.

OPTION - Repossession of South Sandwich.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Current dispositions.

3. TIMING - From now.

PROS

Political:

Could have relevance to UK stake in Antarctica.

Clear indication of UK resolve to reclaim all areas of Falkland dependencies.

Military:

Small scale operation.

CONS

Political:

Looks like a soft option.

Exerts virtually no pressure on Argentina to withdraw troops from Falkland Islands.

Military:

Diverts forces from higher priority tasks.

Supportive of other measures; not a decisive measure in itself.

Virtually impossible to garrison.

Weather conditions could abort operation.

Feasibility: (1) Already of doubtful feasibility on account of deteriorating weather.



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 April. Greater capability from 13 May.

PROSPolitical:

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.

Military:

Scale and nature of attacks can be graduated and controlled to achieve disproportionate and accumulative effect.

Useful preparation for subsequent landing operation.

Confusing command and eroding the will to defend.

CONSPolitical:

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.

Could lead to reprisals against civil population in Falkland Islands.

Military:

In the event of something going wrong, extraction would be difficult.

- Feasibility:
- (1) Feasible now.
  - (2) Feasibility will increase when Hercules are provided with extended range capability.

OPTION - Unrestricted attacks against Argentine Naval Units at sea.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Sea and Air forces deployed.

3. TIMING - As required.

PROS

Political:

Potential for clear and early success if enemy presents targets.

Sinkings might bring Argentine to negotiate more seriously.

Demoralising to Argentine public opinion and garrison.

Military:

Sinkings, particularly "25 of May" and SSK will enhance chances of success of TEZ or landing.

Lessens subsequent risk to UK assets.

Smaller UK garrison of FI needed in wake of re-occupation.

CONS

Political:

High visibility of success could engender strong OAS/World reaction against UK; could alienate our friends and engender increasing political pressures at home.

Spread of conflict area could arouse adverse international reaction.

Possible reprisals, or unrestrained mob attacks, against UK civilians on mainland.

Military:

Not an option if the Argentine fleet remains in port.

May conflict with requirement to enforce TEZ.

Increased risk of attrition to own forces.

- Feasibility:
- (1) Feasible now - but at cost of reassigning forces allocated to enforcing TEZ.
  - (2) Current constraints are self-imposed.

OPTION - Landing with limited 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: - 19 - about 31 May.

PROSPolitical:

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

UN might intervene and secure mutual withdrawal.

Civilian casualties and damage could be kept to minimum.

Maintains political initiative consistent with minimum use of force.

Military:

Control of part of Falklands could be established.

Might be possible to establish base ashore for Harrier/support helicopter operations which, with embarked air assets, could significantly increase our overall air capability.

Feasibility:

- (1) Increased if TEZ fully enforced during the preceding period and softening up operations vigorously conducted.
- (2) Could be attempted without need to commit 5 Bde.

CONSPolitical:

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

Could lead to long term operations and stalemate.

Military:

Danger of a prolonged campaign with additional need to defend fleet and landing force against air attack.

Limited military advantage with many of the risks associated with full repossession. Need to support effort military and logistic - could detract from enforcement of TEZ.

OPTION - Landing with aim of full and early repossession of the Falkland Islands.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Task Force and Amphibious Landing Force as presently constituted with addition of 5 Bde Gp.
3. TIMING - 19 - about 31 May.

PROSPolitical:

Direct and unambiguous demonstration of HMG's resolve.

Climate could be created for negotiated settlement.

Military:

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

Possibility of evicting Argentines militarily.

Most direct means of attempting to restore British control.

Operational planning already well underway.

CONSPolitical:

International (and domestic) support could be undermined.

Military stalemate could ensue.

Military:

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

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

Might be impossible to avoid direct confrontation with possible heavy casualties and battle damage.

Feasibility:

- (1) Feasible with the addition of 5 Bde Gp to the landing force. Potential for success increased if TEZ fully enforced during preceding period and softening up operations vigorously conducted.
- (2) Weather conditions, extended supply lines and need to defend high value merchant shipping and landing area over a potentially lengthy period demand air and maritime supremacy on an area which might be difficult to maintain. Sinking of "ES of May" and NSK would greatly enhance success.
- (3) Loss of carrier or Canberra/QE2 would jeopardise landing and/or subsequent operations.

OPTICN - Mining/blockading the mainland Argentine ports.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Blockade: SSN/SSK; Scuttle block ships  
Mining: SSN/SSK; Hercules, Vulcan.
3. TIMING - Most assets immediately available apart from scuttle block ships.

PROS

BLOCKADE

Political:

Immediately increases economic pressure.

Some port closures might be achieved for a limited period.

MINING

Political:

Likely to lead to immediate cessation of trade.

Feasibility:

(1) Mining: At detriment to other tasks assets could be made available for mining tasks, uncertain and indiscriminate results currently make this an unattractive option.

(2) Blockade is feasible; might be necessary if Argentine naval units retire into mainland harbour.

CONS

BLOCKADE

Political:

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

Difficult to present internationally; likely to generate international resentment.

Military:

Scuttle ships only effective in narrow channels and very difficult to place in position.

High risk to personnel involved.

MINING

Political:

Difficult to present internationally; relevance to Article 51 unclear; Indiscriminate effect; mining of neutral merchantmen likely to alienate international support, undermine domestic support, jeopardise safety of British business community in Argentine.

Military:

Would entail dispersing UK naval capability; air laying likely to be opposed, difficult and costly of assets.

OPTION - Attack Argentine mainland targets.

2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Vulcans and/or Special Forces.
3. TIMING - Vulcans - Available at Ascension Island 29 April 1982  
Special Force - Embarked on Task Force and Amphibious Landing Force.  
Available shortly.

PROSPolitical:

Military targets could be chosen to minimise casualties.

Attacks would be highly visible manifestation of IING'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.

Military:

Surprise might be achieved.

Bombing of airfields would reduce effectiveness of Argentine air force.

Special forces operations could be carefully controlled.

Feasibility:

- (1) Feasible now - Attacks on Argentine ports and air bases operating in support of Falkland Islands could be justified under terms of Article 51. Such attacks would not be as conspicuous as any directed against less involved harbours and airfields.
- (2) The scale of raids would be limited by need to convert Vulcans to, and provide, AAR.
- (3) Surprise would be a key element of success.

CONSPolitical:

Difficult to justify attacks on military facilities not operating in support of Argentine effort.

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

International and domestic support for IING could be severely affected.

Direct incentive for reprisals against British ex-patriates in Argentina.

Military:

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.

Could give rise to large number of civilian casualties.

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

High risks are involved.

1. OPTION - Landing in Southern Argentine (Tierra del Fuego).
2. FORCES REQUIRED/AVAILABLE - Task Force and Amphibious Landing Force as deployed.
3. TIMING - From May at the earliest.

PROS

Political:

Devastating blow for junta.

Might provide bargaining counter for withdrawal of Argentine forces from Falkland Islands.

Would be positive measure of HMG resolve.

Military:

Demonstrates capability to extend conflict.

Feasibility:

CONS

Political:

Legitimacy under Article 51 of UN Charter would be challenged.

International and domestic support could well be gravely damaged.

CLOSED FOR 40 YEARS UNDER  
FOI SECTION 27

Likely to increase Argentinian resistance.

Military:

Very high risk involved.

Would greatly reduce capacity for subsequent operations against Argentine Forces on Falkland Islands, which is UK aim.

TEZ could not be maintained in parallel.

CLOSED FOR 40 YEARS UNDER  
FOI SECTION 27

DEPARTMENT/SERIES ..... DEFE 25 ..... PIECE/ITEM ..... 474 ..... (one piece/item number)	Date and sign
Extract/Item details: ENCLOSURE SEVEN; ANNEX B; OPTION TWELVE REMOVED (ONE PAGE)	DJH 12/9/12
CLOSED FOR ..... 40 ..... YEARS UNDER FOI EXEMPTION     S27	DJH 12/9/12
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3(4) OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT 1958	
TEMPORARILY RETAINED	
MISSING AT TRANSFER	
MISSING	
NUMBER NOT USED	