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CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF

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Memorandum

From: PSO/CDS

To: Sec/CINCFLEET

Date: 9 June 1982

SURRENDER OF THE ARGENTINE GARRISON ON
THE FALKLANDS

1. CDS has asked that CINCFLEET sees the attached on a personal basis. It is, in fact, a thinly disguised OD(SA) paper which we are not supposed to distribute even within the MOD.
2. CDS has broadly kept CINCFLEET informed of what has been going on in OD(SA) on this subject, but he thinks it would be useful for the CinC to see what sort of wording Ministers have approved for any surrender message which General Moore might send.

J.B.

Att.

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SURRENDER OF THE ARGENTINE GARRISON ON THE FALKLANDS

Note by Ministry of Defence officials

INTRODUCTION

1. British ground forces are now well established on East Falkland and the Task Force as a whole has local sea and air superiority. Our ground forces have taken Darwin and Goose Green as well as Teal Inlet and Douglas Settlement. Some are now within striking distance of Port Stanley where the great majority of Argentine forces are located, as is the Argentine commander, General Menendez.

2. This paper considers whether the Argentine garrison on the Falkland Islands should be called upon to lay down their arms; the form such a message should take and how and when that call might be transmitted. This would be on a military to military basis - most appropriately from Major-General Moore to Brigadier-General Menendez.

3. There would be no intention of involving the Argentine Government and it is not intended to inhibit local initiatives by British commanders to accept surrenders as the opportunity arises.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES

4. Ideally the timing should be decided locally. The commander on the spot is best placed to decide the right moment. From the military point of view, the disposition of British Forces; the arrival of 5 Brigade; and his assessment of the state of the Argentine forces and their will to fight are all important factors. A call to surrender should not be made prematurely. If the Argentine garrison is not under sufficient pressure to comply it is likely to be rejected out of hand. If rejected it would be difficult to re-start the process and there could be more rather than less fighting.

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5. Domestic and international politics need also to be taken into account. There may be circumstances in which it would be politically advantageous to propose a surrender: if pressure builds up in the UN Security Council for a ceasefire and the UK finds herself totally isolated there, the British case might find wider support if we had evidence (in the shape of a call for surrender) of our efforts to avoid further hostilities. But the Force Commander should not be required to make a call if he judged it militarily inadvisable.

THE MESSAGE

6. A possible form of words for a message from Major-General Moore to Brigadier-General Menendez is attached at Annex. It proposes a laying down of Argentine arms and a military meeting to settle the conditions. These conditions, to be set out in a military document, would depend to some extent on local circumstances and would cover the means of notifying outlying troops, the laying down of weapons and equipment and the corralling of Argentine troops. The subsequent arrangements for prisoners of war require further study.

TRANSMISSION OF THE MESSAGE

7. This is best left initially to the commander on the spot after Ministerial authority has been given to him to proceed. In the first instance - to avoid a direct approach to the Junta - there is much to be said for a private message. We should be ready, if necessary, to follow it up by all means available to us including making it public.

THE PRISONERS

8. If the Argentine forces in both East and West Falkland lay down their arms, there will be a very large number, probably over 10,000, Argentine prisoners of war for whom we will be responsible - especially in respect of their well being, medical attention and guarding. ICRC involvement would be essential. There are strong reasons for removing them from the Falkland Islands as quickly as possible. They will have to be moved by ship. The critical issue is whether to return them to the Argentine - quickly or slowly - or to hold them until a general ceasefire has been accepted politically in Buenos Aires. Urgent discussion will be required on this issue.

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9. Ministers are invited to:

- a. approve a message on the lines of that in the Annex;
- b. take a view on its timing, recognising that final timing and handling should be left to the commander on the spot;
- c. note that the future handling of prisoners of war needs further consideration.

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ANNEX /

From Major-General Moore, Commander Land Forces, Falkland Islands to Brigadier-General Menendez, Commanding Argentine Forces on the Falkland Islands.

British Forces now have control over the greater part of the Falkland Islands and dominate the sea and air around you. Port Stanley is surrounded and cut off. Your forces have fought bravely but their further resistance can only result in a substantial number of Argentine casualties and will not prevent a British victory.

I call on you, therefore, as one military man to another, to lay down your arms now, with honour to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. This action will be understood by your countrymen and would not lessen the high regard in which the Argentine Armed Forces are held or the military reputation which you have maintained throughout the present conflict.

I urge you most sincerely to accept my proposal in the spirit in which it is intended and thus to avoid purposeless loss of life. I ask you to agree that practical steps are taken at once to make the necessary arrangements under a local flag of truce.

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