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SECRETARY OF STATE

FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. The military options for defending the Falkland Islands and Dependencies were detailed in the Note (1) circulated by your office on 26 March. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Minister (AF), in their minute (2) of 30 March, reported on the actions already taken or contemplated in response to the situation in South Georgia. Before the meeting of OD tomorrow you may like a note of the Chiefs of Staffs views on where we now stand and the possibilities for further action.
2. The action we have already taken is significant:
  - a. HMS ENDURANCE has been at South Georgia since 24 March with an enhanced detachment of 22 Royal Marines;
  - b. The relief Royal Marine garrison has arrived at Port Stanley and the return of the outgoing garrison has been delayed. There are now 75 Royal Marines in the Port Stanley area whose task and capability would be limited to defending the seat of Government;

Notes:

1. MO 5/21 dated 26 March 1982.
2. D/MIN(AF)/PB/5/1/5 dated 30 March 1982.

c. RFA FORT AUSTIN, a RN stores support ship, left Gibraltar on 29 March and will rendezvous with HMS ENDURANCE on 13 April to enable ENDURANCE to remain on station for a further two months;

d. A nuclear powered submarine (SSN) HMS SPARTAN will sail from Gibraltar on 31 March to arrive in the Falklands area by 13 April;

e. A second SSN, HMS SPLENDID, will sail from the UK on 2 April to arrive about 18 April.

### SSN Deployments

3. The SSN deployments clearly have several advantages. They can be undertaken covertly without prejudice to the continuance of the diplomatic dialogue with the Argentine. Despite speculation on their deployment, details of their movements and intentions can remain undisclosed. In addition to their capability against submarines, they have a good anti-surface ship capability each armed with sufficient torpedoes to sink about 4 ships. They can also gather covertly intelligence of Argentinian naval movements in the area of concern which is not available to us from any other source. If we were to declare their presence in the South Atlantic, they would be a powerful deterrent to any attack on HMS ENDURANCE or to a seaborne invasion of any of the islands. Even though they could not prevent all the Argentine military options identified in the JIC assessment (3) they could exact a heavy retribution on the Argentine Navy. Two SSNs are highly desirable in order to cover the approaches both to the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and also give a greater assurance of operational availability.

4. Since there are only 7 SSNs operational at the moment, we must accept certain operational penalties as a result of the deployment of 2 SSNs to the South Atlantic. SSNs have a crucial role both in the conduct of anti-Soviet intelligence gathering tasks, which are important for our intelligence relationship with the United States, and in safeguarding the deployment of our strategic deterrent.

5. The deployment of a third SSN would considerably exacerbate the operational penalties, although it would obviously increase our ability to exact retribution against the Argentine Navy, and enable us to cover a wider area. We doubt, however, that it is essential for the purposes of deterrence and we therefore do not recommend that a third SSN should be deployed for the present.

#### Note:

3. JIC (81)(N)34 dated 9 July 1981.

Task Group Deployment

6. We have already made clear (1) that to be certain that we could counter the full range of military options available to the Argentine, including an invasion of the Falklands themselves, we should need to have a full naval task group in the area before the Argentinians take action. This task group should include a carrier with Sea Harriers embarked, at least a Commando Group, surface escorts and fleet support. We stand ready to make such a precautionary deployment. It would take about 24 days before such a force would be available for operations in the Falklands area, and preparations for it would inevitably become public.

Destroyer/Frigate Deployment

7. The deployment of a smaller force of surface ships would suffer from the same disadvantages and would in addition be inadequate to deal with Argentine military action at the upper end of the spectrum even if it arrived in time. Lack of air capability would be a crucial disability. We therefore recommend against such a deployment.

Air Reinforcement

8. The FCO have advised that it is most unlikely that any airfields in South America would be available to us for military operations. If the timescale for reinforcement became critical, it would be possible to deploy 90 troops to Port Stanley in 3 Hercules without routeing through a South American airfield. However, there would be risks involved: there are no approach aids at Port Stanley, the weather is unpredictable and the aircraft would be operating at the extremes of their range. Thus if there was a sudden weather deterioration they could be faced with no option other than to divert to an Argentinian airfield. Additionally, Port Stanley's refuelling capability is severely limited and the aircraft would be forced to remain there until fuel supplies were delivered to the Falkland Islands.

Penalties

9. Whichever of the options are pursued, the maintenance of a presence in the Falkland Islands for a prolonged period will necessarily make heavy demands on our resources and this will be aggravated by the distance from the UK. Our ability to meet our other commitments worldwide will also be restricted.

## Note:

1. MO 5/21 dated 26 March 1982.

Weather and Mobility

10. There are two other factors which will affect our ability effectively to reinforce the Falkland Islands during the southern winter. The first is the weather which is predominantly adverse characterised by high winds, frequent fog and persistent heavy cloud. In the case of South Georgia these conditions are compounded by freezing temperatures and the presence of icebergs which make navigation hazardous for ships which are not ice strengthened. The second is the difficulty of moving from one island to another, and of moving around the islands themselves.

Non-Military Action

11. As well as reviewing the range of military options listed above, it would clearly be prudent to consider the possibility of further actions of a political nature. This is primarily a matter for the FCO, although military assistance could be required.

Longer Term Proposals

12. The military options which we have considered are those which could be effected in the situation and with the facilities which exist now. We must hope that the present difficulties will be swiftly and peacefully resolved. But against the possibility of them being prolonged - or recurring - we have set in hand the examination of longer term measures which could improve our military posture and speed of response in the area. These include improvements to Port Stanley airfield and aviation fuelling facilities to enable limited air reinforcements to be carried out. We realise, however, any major improvement, such as lengthening the runway to accommodate VC10s and other long-range aircraft could cost between £10 and £15M. Another option we are considering for the longer term is the provision of patrol craft to give the garrison more flexibility in their operations.



31st March 1982

ACTING CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF

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VCDS(P&amp;L)/127/3

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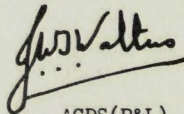
FALKLAND ISLANDS

Reference A. DOE 1st Mtg/82

1. There is no doubt that there would be considerable difficulties in maintaining a presence in the Falkland Islands for a prolonged period but I consider that the logistic and other difficulties as set out in para 9 of the attachment to the Minutes have been considerably overstated. I would stress the point made by AUS(D Staff) at yesterday's meeting that the Ministry of Defence does itself no credit by magnifying administrative and exercise difficulties when asked by Ministers to mount a modest operation. We must not drive Ministers into the position where they say to themselves what value are we getting for £13,000M per year.

2. I would therefore recommend that para 9 be redrafted as follows:

- a. "Which ever of the options are pursued, the maintenance of a presence in the Falkland Islands for a prolonged period will necessarily make heavy demands on our resources and this will be aggravated by the distance from the UK. Our ability to meet our other commitments worldwide will also be restricted."



31 Mar 82

ACDS(P&amp;L)

DRAFT

ATTACHMENT TO  
MINUTES OF  
DOE 1ST MEETING/82  
30 MARCH 1982

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 SECCOS

SECRETARY OF STATEFALKLAND ISLANDS

1. The military options for defending the Falkland Islands and Dependencies were detailed in the Note circulated by your office on 26 March. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Minister (AF), in their minute of 30 March, reported on the actions already taken or contemplated in response to the situation in South Georgia. Before the meeting of OD tomorrow you may like a note of my views on where we now stand and the possibilities for further action.
2. The action we have already taken is significant:
  - a. HMS ENDURANCE has been on station at South Georgia since 24 March with an enhanced platoon of 21 Royal Marines;

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- b. The Royal Marine garrison at Port Stanley has been doubled (strength 70) by delaying the return of the outgoing garrison since 29 March;
- c. RFA FORT AUSTIN, a RN stores support ship, left Gibraltar on 29 March and will rendezvous with HMS ENDURANCE on ~~12~~ April to enable ENDURANCE to remain on station for a further two months;
- d. A nuclear powered submarine (SSN) HMS SPARTAN will sail from Gibraltar for the South Atlantic on 31 March to arrive by 13 April;
- e. A second SSN, HMS SPLENDID, will sail from the UK at the end of this week to arrive about 18 April.

#### SSN Deployments

3. The SSN deployments clearly have several advantages. They can be undertaken covertly without prejudice to the continuance of the diplomatic dialogue with the Argentine. In addition to their capability against submarines, they have a good anti-surface ship capability each armed with sufficient torpedoes to sink about 4 ships. Once we have declared their presence in the South Atlantic, they would become a powerful deterrent to any attack on HMS ENDURANCE or to a seaborne invasion of any of the islands, even though they could not directly prevent any Argentine military option identified in the JIC assessment (1). They could exact a heavy retribution on the Argentine Navy in either event. [Two SSNs ensure the operational availability of 1, and] <sup>it is</sup> 2 operational SSNs are highly desirable in order to cover the approaches both to the Falkland Islands and South Georgia.

#### Note:

1. JIC (81)(N)34 dated 9 July 1981.

4. Since there are only 6 or 7 SSNs available at any one time, must accept certain operational penalties as a result of the deployment of 2 SSNs to the South Atlantic. SSNs have a crucial role both in the conduct of anti-Soviet intelligence gathering tasks, which are important for our intelligence relationship with the United States, and in safeguarding the deployment of our strategic deterrent.

5. The deployment of a third SSN would considerably exacerbate the operational penalties, although it would obviously increase our ability to exact retribution against the Argentine Navy, and enable us to cover a wider area. I doubt, however, that it is essential for the purposes of deterrence and I therefore do not recommend that a third SSN should be deployed for the present.

#### Destroyer/Frigate Deployment

6. Unlike the SSN option, the deployment of surface ships is difficult to conceal and therefore likely to be provocative. Additionally, there would be [no purpose in, and] considerable risks associated with, a deployment of surface ships without suitable air cover, which could only be provided from a carrier. Moreover, the deployment of a small force would leave the initiative with the Argentinians who, once they had news of our deployment, could increase their presence up to the limit of their naval forces, and perhaps take pre-emptive action by invading the Falkland Islands. This militates against the deployment of a small surface force, such as some of the destroyers and frigates now exercising off Gibraltar, and I therefore do not recommend this option.



Reinforcement

7. The FCO have advised that it is most unlikely that any airfields in South America would be available to us for military operations. In these circumstances there is no means of reinforcing the Falkland Islands garrison against an invasion threat other than by sea.

Task Group Deployment

8. If we are to counter the Argentine military options outlined in the JIC assessment, we would need to deploy surface ships, including a carrier with a Commando Group and Sea Harriers embarked. There is, however, the real danger of such a force arriving too late to deter an Argentine invasion, given a passage by sea of 3 weeks and a week's preparation beforehand. [If it is anticipated that further troops, additional to the present garrison, will be required] <sup>However such</sup> <sup>should be</sup> ~~I recommend the deployment of a force~~ sufficient to deal with whatever situation it found on its arrival. (~~Such a force is judged to be a full Commando Group (800 men) with its integral logistic and transport support.~~)

Penalties

9. Whichever of the above options are pursued, it goes without saying that, if a presence has to be maintained in the Falklands area for a prolonged period, it would make enormous demands on our resources - up to 3 or 4 times the number of units actually deployed - due to the distance from the UK. This would have a very serious effect on our ability to meet our other commitments worldwide and incur substantial extra operating costs.

Weather and Mobility

10. There are two other factors which will affect our ability effectively to reinforce the Falkland Islands during the southern winter. The first is the weather which is predominantly adverse characterised by high winds, frequent fog and persistent heavy cloud. In the case of South Georgia these conditions are compounded by freezing temperatures and the presence of icebergs which make navigation hazardous for ships which are not ice strengthened. The second is the difficulty of moving from one island to another in the Falklands group.

Longer Term Proposals

11. [Given the limitations and costs of military options I would urge that the FCO should give urgent consideration to non-military sanctions which might be taken against Argentine interests in this country.]

12. For the longer term we are urgently considering the minimum improvements necessary to Port Stanley airfield and aviation fuelling facilities to enable limited air reinforcements to be carried out. Another option we are considering for the longer term is the provision of patrol craft to give the garrison more flexibility in their operations.

31st March 1982

ACTING CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF