

Ref. A08113

PRIME MINISTER

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Cabinet: Falkland Islands

Your colleagues will be expecting reports (a) on Mr Haig's visit and the diplomatic prospects and (b) on the present military situation and the military prospects.

2. You could deal briefly with (a) yourself, and perhaps invite the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to outline the essential elements of the Haig Plan, even though it may by tomorrow be looking a bit academic. You could then invite the Secretary of State for Defence to speak on (b), supplementing as necessary yourself; points which should be covered are whether any naval action seems likely to occur in the exclusion zone, your refusal to halt the task force while the Argentines are withdrawing (if they do) under the Haig Plan, and your agreement that if withdrawal is completed the task force should be redeployed to normal duties (which would not preclude patrolling in the South Atlantic).

3. A reminder that disclosure of any of these matters could prejudice either the prospects of a diplomatic solution or the chances of military success might not come amiss. In talking to the press or to backbench colleagues, they should rest on the material being put out by the Presentation Unit.

4. Two points of procedure may arise in the ensuing discussion:

- (i) Are there ways in which the usefulness of the material being put out by the Presentation Unit could be increased?
- (ii) Your summing up at the Cabinet meeting on 6 April said that after Easter the Secretary of State for Defence would arrange for them to be given a briefing on the detailed capability of the British task force. Plans for the Chiefs of Staff to do this (eg just before the Cabinet meeting originally planned for 15 April) are at present in abeyance. But your colleagues may want them revived.



- (iii) A draft Emergency Powers Bill will be available tomorrow. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary will be briefed to tell the Cabinet that most of the Departments concerned would want it introduced and passed (though not brought into operation) quickly, once it was clear that no quick diplomatic settlement was available. This would ensure that, if hostilities broke out or Argentina declared war on us, we should have powers to take the appropriate actions immediately (by order), and would not have to wait for the time it would take to get a Bill passed.

5. Your summing up need do no more than record that OD's special Sub-Committee under your Chairmanship will continue to keep the crisis under close review, and will report as necessary to OD and the Cabinet.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

13 April 1982

condemned

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