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MR WHITMORE

Continue to proceed on

We spoke this afternoon about the timing of the briefing for the Prime Minister and the members of OD(SA) on the possibilities for a landing on the Falkland Islands.

- I have discussed this with the Chief of the Defence Staff. possible date for a landing is now the night of 20/21 May. This timing has slipped because of the need to divert the assault group to avoid Argentine reconnaissance.
- A final decision on whether or not to go ahead can be deferred if necessary until the afternoon of 18 May at the latest. The assault group is not due to enter the TEZ until 19 May, and could be diverted up to about midnight on 18/19 May. If a decision were deferred as late as that, preparations would continue up to the last moment for a decision to land, so as not to close any options.
- 4. The Chief of the Defence Staff says that Admiral Fieldhouse cannot be ready for the briefing until the afternoon of Thursday 13 May.
- I think that this timing is just about right. As I see it, the timetable would be as follows:

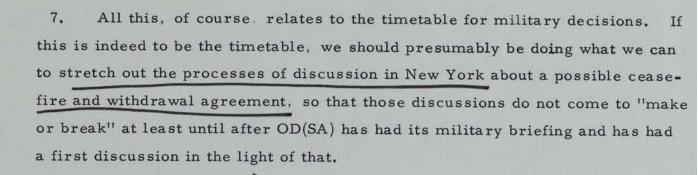
Thursday 13 May, 5.00 pm, military briefing in COBR

Friday 14 May, 9.30 am, meeting of OD(SA)

Monday 17 May, further meeting of OD(SA)

Monday 17 May or Tuesday 18 May, am, Cabinet

The great advantages of this timetable are that it enables us to put the matter to Cabinet on the Tuesday morning, which would seem less like a "crisis meeting; and that it leaves the weekend for any further work that may need to be done following the meeting of OD(SA) on Friday 14 May. Indeed it would be possible, if it seemed desirable, for a meeting to be held on Sunday 16 May.



KA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

10 May 1982