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Se refiere a:

20MAY82 0900Z(1000GB) – OD(SA)(82). Minuta de la reunión # 39 del Subcomité.

(CAB 148/211) (desclasificado DIC 2012)

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OD(SA)(82) 39th Meeting

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CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND
THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

MINUTES of a Meeting held at
10 Downing Street on
THURSDAY 20 MAY 1982 at 10.00 am

PRESENT

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw MP
Secretary of State for the
Home Department

The Rt Hon John Nott MP
Secretary of State for Defence

The Rt Hon Francis Pym MP
Secretary of State for Foreign
and Commonwealth Affairs

The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of
Lancaster and Paymaster General

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon Sir Michael Havers QC MP
Attorney General

Sir Antony Acland
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Admiral of the Fleet
Sir Terence Lewin
Chief of the Defence Staff

Sir Ian Sinclair
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Sir Michael Palliser
Cabinet Office

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr R L Wade-Gery
Mr R L L Facer
Brigadier J A C G Eyre

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1. MILITARY ISSUES

THE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF briefed the Sub-Committee on the latest military situation.

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that, though the weather remained an uncertain factor, the Force Commander had not altered his view on the timing of military operations. The authorisation he had been given still stood.

The Sub-Committee -

Took note.

2. DIPLOMATIC ISSUES

The Sub-Committee had before them a letter to the Prime Minister's Private Secretary from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's enclosing a draft paper to be tabled in Parliament which described the negotiations through the United Nations in New York and was entitled "The Falkland Islands - Negotiations for a Peaceful Settlement"; a minute of 20 May to the Prime Minister from the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, on developments in New York and the latest initiative by the United Nations Secretary General, Senor Perez de Cuellar; telegrams nos. 783-4 and 789-94 from the British Representative at the United Nations, Sir Antony Parsons, covering the same developments in greater detail; and telegram no. 1823 from Her Majesty's Ambassador in Washington describing United States reactions.

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that there were considerable similarities between Britain's final proposals and those now put forward by the Secretary General. World opinion as well as some sections of domestic opinion would not understand if Britain seemed to be basing her case for further military measures on the differences between the two. It was therefore an important British interest not to appear to reject the Secretary General's proposals. It was equally important to frustrate Argentine delaying tactics, which might now be based on purporting to accept the proposals as a basis for negotiation.

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THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that there could be no question of holding up the military timetable. The Secretary General's proposals were incomplete and obscure in several respects. The British reaction to them should therefore be based on the recommendation by Sir Andrew Parsons in his telegram no. 793. It should be made clear that the proposals were not fully worked out; that they presented positive aspects as well as important differences from Britain's final offer; that they differed much more markedly from Argentina's latest position; that any purported Argentine willingness to consider them was therefore certain to be aimed only at procrastination; that exploring the proposals further was bound to take a considerable time; that Britain had made clear proposals with a clear deadline; and that any British military plans could not now be affected. A suitably adapted version of the paper put forward by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's Private Secretary should be tabled in Parliament in advance of the debate due to be held later that day.

The Sub-Committee -

Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to be guided by the Prime Minister's summing up in tabling his paper in Parliament and in sending instructions to Sir Antony Parsons.

Cabinet Office

20 May 1982

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