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27 May 1982

CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND
THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

ARGENTINE TERRITORIAL WATERS

Note by the Secretaries

The attached note by Ministry of Defence officials, on operations within 12 nautical miles of the Argentine coast, is circulated for the Sub-Committee's consideration at their meeting on 28 May.

Signed ROBERT ARMSTRONG
R L WADE-GERY
R L L FACER

Cabinet Office

27 May 1982

SECRET

ARGENTINE 12 NAUTICAL MILE LIMIT(Note By Ministry of Defence Officials)

1. On 7 May, OD(SA) agreed that any Argentine warship or military aircraft found more than 12 nautical miles (NM) from the Argentine coast would be regarded as hostile and dealt with accordingly. A public announcement and a formal notification to the Argentine Government were made that day.
2. The restriction upon attacks within 12 NM from the Argentine coast was self-imposed. Since then, there has been a considerable change in both political and military circumstances. Negotiations are no longer taking place. The military conflict has escalated dramatically with four of our warships having been sunk. The Argentines have not imposed any parallel restrictions upon their own freedom of action. On the contrary, they continue to occupy much of the Falkland Islands and are attacking from safe bases British forces within the Falkland Islands (ie. British) territorial waters. Two of the warships were sunk there.
3. The Chiefs of Staff believe that the time has come to remove the sanctuary which we have allowed up to now for Argentine forces within 12 NM of their own coast. To do so may not only provide a number of important military targets, but also inhibit Argentine forces from leaving their mainland bases for fear of increasing the vulnerability of the Argentine navy to sea or air attack, thereby reducing the resources available for offensive operations against us in the Falklands area or elsewhere.
4. The attacks which the Argentines continue to mount on our own naval and merchant shipping justify full authority for the Task Force to carry out operations within 12 NM of the Argentine

coast against any positively identified Argentine war ship, submarine or naval auxiliary identified as performing a military function. It is not proposed that any further warning should be given. No action would be taken until after the present OAS meeting.

5. It is necessary to continue to observe the limits upon the Task Force's action which have been notified to the Chilean Government, and to restrict the new area of operations to a latitude south of the River Plate so as to avoid exacerbating Uruguayan concerns. The current arrangements governing Rules of Engagement within 200 NM of the Brazilian, Chilean and Uruguayan coast should also remain in force. The precise geographical limits need to be considered further in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

RECOMMENDATION

6. OD(SA) is invited to consider authorising operations by the Task Force against any positively identified Argentine war ship, submarine or naval auxiliary identified as performing a military function within 12 NM of the Argentine coast, subject to precise geographical limits being agreed by the Ministry of Defence with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Ministry of Defence
27 May 1982