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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

DDI #3773-82

7 May 1982

National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA : Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM : Major General Edward B. Atkeson, USA
National Intelligence Officer for
General Purpose Forces

SUBJECT : What's Next in the Falklands? --
(Part III) The Long View

1. The first battles are over; the two sides are licking their wounds and angling for political advantage among cease-fire proposals. The progression of the Falklands crisis from its comic operatic stage into the grim business of killing has sent shock waves throughout both governments and around the world. The immediate future rests on a knife's edge; war and peace seem equally likely.

2. The impressive celerity with which the British launched their response to the Argentinian challenge has proved that the UK is yet a military power with global reach. For their part, the Argentines have shown a readiness to stand up to the superior edge of the more modern force. Britain's strength lies primarily at sea, her opponent's on land; they overlap in the common environment of the air. The Argentines have a sizable air force, but the air is primarily the domain of high technology, and here the British have the edge, particularly in total systems integration. While the Argentines may be capable of mounting a spirited defense and perhaps a few surprises, they must face the very bitter probability of tactical defeat as the British bring additional force to bear in the area.

3. But tactical defeat may not be as conclusive an outcome as some observers suppose. The Falklands still lie a scant 300 miles from Argentina and 8,000 miles from the UK. The Argentines probably assess that the strategic imperatives operate on a different vector than those of the battles. Whatever course the military action may take, they have reason to believe that the key issue of sovereignty has been decided in advance by geography

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7. Over the longer term, the danger is that the war will have lasting unfavorable impact upon Pan-American relations. With the United States abandonment of its neutral stance and open support for the British cause, there is high likelihood that the animosities engendered in the current conflict will extend to English-speaking peoples in decades to come. In Argentinian eyes, and perhaps others' as well, UK tactical success may demonstrate British war-making potency and their ability to humble the Latins, but it is likely to evacuate any serious basis for amicability in international affairs. The full extent of the damage is almost impossible to foresee. Whether the matter will be remembered only in a sullen Argentina, or throughout an outraged South American continent, the totality of the impact will unfold only with time.

8. There are other matters which are likely to be affected by the experience of the Falklands war. Some of these are:

- Third World appetite for sophisticated weaponry.
- The shape and form of power projection weapons systems.
- Intelligence priorities and collection capabilities.

9. For many years an important concern of US foreign policy has been the magnitude of the international arms trade, particularly in sophisticated weaponry. The appetite of many Third World countries for showpieces of high technology is legendary. The effect of the Falklands war may well be interpreted as a vindication of those (in many cases impoverished) states which have opted for such dangerous instruments. We can probably expect an added impetus to the market of modern weapons in coming years.

10. Also for a number of years, major western powers have been debating the elimination of costly old weapons systems from their arsenals. The British carrier Hermes, for example, was scheduled for removal from service before being committed to the South Atlantic expedition. We can expect that the Falklands experience will give many countries reason to reexamine their force structure, perhaps to decide in favor of retaining some of the older systems. The US may find new enthusiasm for reviving the battleships as a result of the apparent shortage and small caliber of naval guns in the British task force. Missiles do not make good substitutes for shore bombardment, and other inadequacies may yet come to light.

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should give us some understanding of the need for balance in our collection programs and a glimpse of the magnitude of the uncertainties which can evolve in a crisis when it occurs in an area which has been chronically left off of the priorities lists.

12. In sum, there is much that will be different when the war is over. Barring a crack in the junta, the Argentines are likely to get the sovereignty they seek over the Falklands in one form or another. Our Latin American affairs will be more complex and difficult, and the Soviets may have gained certain inroads if they have played an active part in assisting the Argentines. The Third World arms market is likely to grow more intense as countries realize their vulnerabilities to major power attack. In advanced countries, requirements for maintenance of a full spectrum of traditional and modern weaponry will probably be more clearly defined. And in the US and UK we are likely to recognize an increased need to balance our intelligence efforts. There will be other changes, some undoubtedly of considerable import. These will be revealed as events take their course.


Edward B. Atkeson



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VIA : C/NIC

FROM : NIO/GPF

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cc: LTG Paul F. Gorman, USA
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