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GRS 331

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FM FCO 030115Z MAY 82

TO FLASH UKMIS NEW YORK

TELEGRAM NUMBER 335 OF 3 MAY

INFO FLASH WASHINGTON

TELECON EMERGENCY UNIT/DUTY OFFICER: FALKLAND ISLANDS: TOTAL EXCLUSION ZONE

1. WE HAVE JUST HEARD FROM THE MOD THAT THE ARGENTINE CRUISER GENERAL BELGRANO HAS BEEN HIT BY TWO TORPEDOES FROM THE SUBMARINE HMS CONQUEROR. THE INCIDENT TOOK PLACE ABOUT 195 MILES SOUTH OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS. THE GENERAL BELGRANO WAS ABOUT 30 MILES OUTSIDE THE TOTAL EXCLUSION ZONE (TEZ) WHEN SHE WAS HIT. THE MOD BELIEVE THAT THE GENERAL BELGRANO HAD JUST LEFT THE TEZ WHEN THE ENGAGEMENT TOOK PLACE. ALTHOUGH THE INCIDENT TOOK PLACE OUTSIDE THE TEZ IT WAS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT AGREED ON 2 MAY.

2. THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE PROPOSE TO ISSUE THE FOLLOWING PRESS RELEASE AS SOON AS YOU HAVE CONFIRMED THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE IS CONTENT WITH IT:

'AT APPROXIMATELY 8 P.M. LONDON TIME THIS EVENING THE ARGENTINE CRUISER GENERAL BELGRANO WAS HIT BY TORPEDOES FIRED FROM A BRITISH SUBMARINE. THE CRUISER IS BELIEVED TO BE SEVERELY DAMAGED.

'ON FRIDAY, 23 APRIL, HMG WARNED THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT THAT ANY APPROACH ON THE PART OF ARGENTINE WARSHIPS, INCLUDING SUBMARINES, NAVAL AUXILIARIES OR MILITARY AIRCRAFT WHICH COULD AMOUNT TO A THREAT TO INTERFERE WITH THE MISSION OF BRITISH FORCES IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC WOULD ENCOUNTER THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE. THE CRUISER POSED A SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO THE BRITISH TASK FORCE MAINTAINING THE TEZ. THE ACTION TAKEN WAS FULLY IN

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ACCORDANCE WITH THE INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO THE TASK FORCE COMMANDER BASED ON THE INHERENT RIGHT OF SELF DEFENCE UNDER ARTICLE 51 OF THE UN CHARTER. THE BRITISH SUBMARINE SUFFERED NO DAMAGE IN THE ENGAGEMENT AND HAS RESUMED HER PATROL. FURTHER DETAILS OF THE ENGAGEMENT WILL BE GIVEN AS SOON AS WE HAVE THEM.'

3. THE MOD HAVE STILL TO CONFIRM THE PASSAGE IN SQUARE BRACKETS AND INCLUSION IN THE PRESS RELEASE WILL DEPEND UPON SUCH CONFIRMATION. THE IDENTITY OF THE SUBMARINE INVOLVED SHOULD OF COURSE REMAIN SECRET

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