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Mr Ure *Prints*
c.c. Mr Wright

HMG 'GIVEN THE INVASION PLANS' IN ADVANCE

1. I attach copies of the despatches from Simon Winchester and Kenneth Clarke which appeared in The Times and The Daily Telegraph respectively on 6 April, datelined Buenos Aires. These stories were profoundly embarrassing to HMG and quite clearly emanate from a British intelligence source in Argentina.

2. I should be grateful if you could arrange for H M Ambassador to be consulted about this at a high level when he gets back to Britain. No journalist would disclose his sources in a matter of this kind, but I do not know a journalist who does not believe that the source of these stories was an intelligence officer (military or civilian) attached to the Embassy.

3. This was raised this morning at a coordination meeting held by the Chief Press Secretary at Number Ten, and I was asked to look into it. (As you know, I had already mentioned it to you on my own account.)

4. If the culprit can be identified, in my view he should be sharply reprimanded.

N M Fenn
News Department

8 April 1982

PS
Also attached article from the Daily Express

- 6 APR 1982

Britain 'given the invasion plans' 11 days ago

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From Simon Winchester, Buenos Aires, April 5

Top secret Argentine plans for last Friday's invasion of the Falkland Islands were transmitted to London 10 days ago, it was revealed here today.

Intelligence sources in Buenos Aires had received and studied secret Argentine naval operational options some two weeks ago, and had passed extensive summaries in coded messages to the Foreign Office.

Whitehall was fully appraised of the probability of an attack during the last week of March "and yet," as an intelligence specialist asserted here today, "they chose to ignore it totally. It was a complete error of judgement of London's part".

It was not made clear today how the Argentine plans fell into British hands — whether British agents inside the Argentine Defence Ministry, or sources available to the United States got hold of them.

It is clear, however, that in addition American satellite intelligence was passed from Washington to London last Monday after space instru-

ments identified a carrier task force headed by the 25 De Mayo, steaming in the direction of the Falklands.

"London was told of the existence of the force on Monday night, though not of its intent, since no one knew that. The force could have been intercepted with the submarine that is on resident mid-Atlantic station," a source claimed. "But they chose to do nothing".

Other sources — who declined to be identified either by name or nationality — warned yesterday that Argentina was reinforcing her garrison on the Falklands "so fast and so comprehensively" that any British attempt to retake the islands by frontal assault "would cause a bloodbath. There would be 50 per cent troop casualties minimum, and a huge loss of life among the civilian Falkland population" the source said.

But there is speculation here that the Royal Navy is now seriously studying two battle plans for regaining sovereignty over the Falklands. The first is to recapture the island where this latest

trouble first started — South Georgia — and, incidentally, by so doing claim a reassertion of the principle of sovereignty.

Once South Georgia was taken, one source said, "the British draw the Argentine Navy out onto the high seas and sink it. A British atomic submarine could make mincemeat of their carrier, and this would remove a substantial portion of the air cover that is essential to secure the Falklands. Then an amphibious landing could be organized, but this would be extremely bloody.

"It is known there will be between seven and eight thousand Argentine troops on the islands by April 28 (a possible date for the first naval engagement).

"They will undoubtedly have tanks and artillery. They will have anti-aircraft missiles. They will have Mirage cover from their coastal bases. They have Super Entendardes carrier-based fighter aircraft and Pucaras and they can deploy up to 80 A4 Skyraiders. It

would be very tough to dislodge them, especially now they have the population of (Port) Stanley (the Falklands capital) as hostage."

The other plan is for the blockade of the ports of Buenos Aires and Bahia Blanca — a move which, in the words of another intelligence specialist "could bring Argentina to her knees in a fortnight".

This plan calls for the mining of the navigation channel on the Argentine side of the River Plate, and a naval blockade outside the estuary which would only permit shipping to pass along the northern channel to the Uruguyan port of Montevideo.

This move is reckoned to have one advantage in not requiring air attacks on the southern Argentine staging bases — attacks which would be essential should a total assault on the Falklands be ordered. British military action against mainland Argentina would be a deliberate act of war; a blockade would fall short of that.

Meanwhile, the estimated 17,000 subjects living in Argentina are being advised to leave if they have no pressing reason to stay. Mr Anthony Williams, the British Ambassador, was himself due to leave for London on Wednesday or Thursday. Most of his staff will shift across the river to Montevideo for the duration of the

crisis, though a consular official will remain in the British Embassy here in the company of two Swiss diplomats who will have *de facto* control of the building.

□ Our Defence Correspondent writes: The Ministry of Defence would not confirm the allegation that a nuclear-powered submarine was on permanent station in the mid-Atlantic — let alone the suggestion that one was in position to have intercepted the Argentine invasion fleet had the order been given.

The Royal Navy has certainly deployed hunter-killer boats in the South Atlantic in recent years, although the bulk of the fleet remains in Nato waters north of the Tropic of Cancer.

□ The Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs is to ask for intelligence reports on the threat posed to the Falklands in recent months, it was revealed last night. (Our political staff writes).

That committee and an other Commons committee on defence, are to investigate the invasion and the state of readiness

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London 'knew of attack plan 10 days ago'

By KENNETH CLARKE in Buenos Aires

I HAVE learned from unimpeachable sources that London knew "something big" was going to happen on the Falklands 10 or 11 days ago.

And the nuclear-powered submarine, Superb, was almost certainly close enough to have sunk some of the Argentinian invasion fleet long before it hove into sight off the Falklands early last Friday.

My sources, who cannot be identified, told me it was known that Argentina was not just engaging in a "special operation," but that a carefully-planned, full-scale military invasion of the Falklands was under way.

It is felt the information, probably obtained from American satellite pictures, could have been acted on but was ignored.

Britain got to know details of the Argentine invasion plan probably from a spy planted deep in some sensitive office in Buenos Aires.

This information together with the satellite material was, I understand, in the hands of the defence chiefs and presumably Mrs Thatcher by March 27.

Now, with the British task force outnumbering the Argentine navy two to one, the fear among observers in Buenos Aires is that it could be sailing headlong into scenes of dreadful carnage.

'50 p.c. casualties'

I understand there is a growing body of opinion within the Royal Navy that if a forcible recovery of the Falklands is on, then first a landing should be made on the remote island of South Georgia, 800 miles south-east of the main Falklands group.

The scenario runs that this would be the first step in a plan to draw the Argentine warships into the open sea where they could be attacked and sunk by superior forces.

An alternative being urged in some quarters is the blockading of the port of Buenos Aires, vital lifeline of the country. This could be done by mining the approaches.

Western intelligence sources in the Argentine capital have warned Britain to be under no illusions about what awaits the Royal Naval task force.

If there is to be a battle for the Falklands, casualties may be as high as 50 per cent.

The 800 residents of the island's capital, stand no chance in the face of a frontal storming of the islands.

Their white-painted timber

houses would burn to nothing and provide no protection against air strikes or naval bombardment. They are in fact, sitting ducks.

The intelligence information already relayed to London says a massive Argentine military build-up is under way with troops and equipment "pouring in" so that by the 28th of this month, it is estimated there could be 8,000 troops on the islands.

There will also be tanks, heavy artillery and surface-to-surface missiles.

The equipment is arriving at Port Stanley by sea and by air in Hercules transport aircraft flying from Comodoro Rivadavia in Patagonia.

In addition the Argentine navy has its aircraft carrier, the Veinticinco de Mayo (25th of May), a couple of British-built guided missile destroyers, three modern corvettes, and three "good" submarines.