

## 11. Telegram From the Embassy in Argentina to the Department of State<sup>1</sup>

Buenos Aires, March 4, 1982, 1855Z

1250. Subject: (U) Malvinas Dispute. Refs: (A) Buenos Aires 1197,<sup>2</sup> (B) Buenos Aires 1112.<sup>3</sup>

1. (C) Summary: The focus of the Feb. 26–27 UK–GOA talks on the Falkland Islands was on the pace of the negotiations rather than the substantive issues. The Argentine delegation proposed monthly meetings which it hopes will accelerate resolution of the dispute or at least give the appearance of movement to the domestic audience. A combination of carrots and sticks which the GOA revealed on its drawing boards is not new and the GOA breach of confidentiality of the talks was an irritant to HMG. The ball is now in HMG's court, but UK official here is not optimistic, since HMG rejects GOA premise that negotiations are predicated on HMG acceptance of Argentine sovereignty over the Islands. End summary.

2. (U) The unilateral GOA FonMin statement of March 1 (reftel A) marks a renewed effort by the Argentines to force the pace of the

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820117–0752. Confidential. Sent for information to London, Montevideo, Rome, and Santiago.

<sup>2</sup> Telegram 1197 from Buenos Aires, March 2, conveyed an informal translation of the text of a "tough" statement on the outcome of the February 26–27 talks, which Figueroa issued the evening of March 1. After discussing the Argentine proposal for monthly Anglo-Argentine meetings on the Falklands/Malvinas, the objective of which "will be to genuinely accelerate negotiations underway toward obtaining recognition of Argentine sovereignty over the Malvinas, South Georgia, and South Sandwich Islands," the statement continued: "Argentina has for fifteen years negotiated patiently, loyally and in good faith with Great Britain for a solution of the dispute over sovereignty on those islands within the framework of the U.N. resolutions. The new system is a positive step toward an early solution to the issue. In the event this (early solution) does not occur, Argentina retains the right to put an end to that mechanism and to choose freely the procedure which best suits her interests." (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820112–0040)

<sup>3</sup> In telegram 1112 from Buenos Aires, February 26, the Embassy conveyed its comments on Ros's remarks to the press after the February talks and the views of a British Embassy official on U.K. impressions of Argentina's approach to the bilateral talks. In response to Luce's February 24 request (see Document 10) for the United States to "quietly urge restraint on the Argentines," the Embassy advised that the United States should "avoid involvement" in the dispute. "As Department recalls, the Argentine Navy has tried to draw us into the dispute on Argentina's side. In any case, the cost to us here of being perceived as leaning toward the British in this dispute, which arouses Argentine passions, could be high and the Argentines would find ways of indicating their displeasure." In a final comment, the Embassy noted: "Some of our contacts in the GOA have sought to convey a sense of urgency about the current round of negotiations" and "we have also heard references to an Argentine desire to accelerate the pace of the negotiations but it is hard for us to tell what precisely the Argentines hope to accomplish." (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820105–0567)

Falkland Islands negotiations. GOA statement reveals part of what transpired at the New York talks, in violation of an understanding with HMG to treat the substance of the negotiations confidential. Furthermore, in a press backgrounder, a FonMin source, probably Costa Mendez himself, "revealed" how the GOA is prepared to take Islanders' interests into account, but also how GOA would bring pressure to bear if no solution develops soon.

3. (U) The GOA is preparing several proposals to be tabled at the next meeting, according to the FonMin source. These include "statutes" that Argentina would implement guaranteeing respect for the economic interests, religious freedom, political structures and a system for compensating those inhabitants of the Islands who might choose to leave once Argentine sovereignty comes into force. On the other hand, according to the source, if the negotiations remain stalemated, the GOA is prepared to carry out a "well-defined plan" of increasing pressure on HMG, including UN denunciations, "international juridical measures" (presumably the World Court), economic pressure on the Islanders, and a step-by-step cooling of bilateral relations, all the way to a complete break. Some of the measures the GOA would consider against the Islanders, according to the press, include suspension of the Islands' only airplane connections and air postal service to the outside world, and suspension of Argentine fuel shipments. However, the source noted that, contrary to some jingoistic press speculation, the GOA is not contemplating the use of force to seize the Islands.

4. (C) A British Embassy official who handles Falkland affairs told EmbOff on March 3 that Argentine FonMin statement took HMG by surprise and is likely to annoy HMG because of the breach of confidentiality. We note BA dailies March 4 carry wire service reports that HMG negotiator Richard Luce said the GOA statement is "not positive and it concerns us." He confirmed that in the New York talks Argentina proposed high-level monthly meetings with pre-determined agendas, but it is by no means certain that HMG will accept, in view of the complexity of the issues to be discussed and impracticality of such frequent meetings. Moreover, the premise implied in the Argentine statement that the objective of the monthly talks would be to determine when the UK will recognize Argentine sovereignty is totally unacceptable to HMG.

5. (C) As to the "concessions" Argentina is prepared to make to win "the hearts and minds of the Islanders" and the threat of sanctions in the event of an impasse, as UK EmbOff put it, there is nothing new in the Argentine proposal. Former Foreign Minister Camilion made the same offers and threats last year, he pointed out (81 Buenos Aires 5542).<sup>4</sup> He was not willing to speculate on whether the GOA means it

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<sup>4</sup> See Document 6.

this time, although he said that there have been too many rumors recently of a hardening GOA position to dismiss them entirely.

6. (C) Comment: The unilateral Argentine communique was released before the GOA negotiator returned to Buenos Aires, indicating that the GOA planned to issue it regardless of the outcome of the talks, which the British entered with instructions to listen only. In any event, the Foreign Ministry has limited influence on GOA decisions regarding the Malvinas, which, like the Beagle, is managed at the Junta level. The unexpected, threatening GOA communique suggests a hardening attitude, which was also reflected in a bellicose speech on March 3, attended by tough-minded Navy CINC Anaya, on the anniversary of the death of Argentina's most famous naval hero. The GOA may also have wanted to assume a popular posture at a time when any distraction from the nation's economic woes is welcome.

**Shlaudeman**