

17. Telegram From the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State¹

London, March 25, 1982, 1748Z

6687. Subject: HMG Requests U.S. Help in South Georgia Dispute. Ref: London 06653.²

1. C—Entire text.

2. Summary: U.K. wants U.S. support soonest with Argentina to achieve Argentine withdrawal from South Georgia of party of Argentines who landed on the Island ostensibly to collect scrap metal and hoisted Argentine flag. End summary.

3. Deputy Under-Secretary John Giffard called in Charge March 25 to inform him that Carrington is sending a message to the Secretary³ requesting that the U.S. use its influence with Argentina in the current impasse over the Argentines encamped on South Georgia Island. Argentina has conveyed its displeasure over the dispatching of the

¹ Source: Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820159-0368. Secret; Immediate. Sent for information to Buenos Aires, Santiago, and Montevideo.

² In telegram 6653 from London, March 25, the Embassy reported on the British political atmosphere following the Argentine landing on South Georgia. Streater informed the Department that while the landing was "a pretty small affair, even within the context of the Falklands/Malvinas" dispute, "feeling runs deep in some quarters," as illustrated by comments made by both political parties critical of the Thatcher government's decision to withdraw the Royal Navy ship HMS *Endurance* from the South Atlantic. The FCO, he continued, "is trying to tread as carefully as possible and believes that the Government of Argentina will do so, too." Noted Streater: "They [the British] fear that too precipitate action might be perceived as an insult to Argentine national honor and provoke an exaggerated response. This in turn could lead to a confrontation that neither side wants, but from which neither could withdraw." He concluded: "Despite the comic-opera quality of the incident itself, FCO officials believe that the pressure for quick action will be 'enormous.'" (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820159-0310)

³ See Document 22.

British ice patrol vessel *Endurance* to South Georgia.⁴ HMG also has had reports that the Argentine Navy may be planning to intercept the *Endurance* if it removes Argentine party and provoke a naval confrontation, possibly with a view to bringing the entire Falklands dispute to a head. Should that happen, the British would have to respond, and a situation will have arisen that neither Foreign Ministry wants. HMG consequently plans to hold off taking any action, but considers it essential that the intruders be removed. The *Endurance* is presently waiting about ten miles away from the Argentine party.

4. British also said an Argentine vessel is lying off South Georgia that could be used to evacuate landing party. No landing strip is available on the Island for aircraft.

5. Comment: British concern over this affair has clearly intensified since the earlier briefing reported reftel.

Streator

⁴ The *Endurance*, normally stationed at Port Stanley, had been on patrol when the Argentine party landed on South Georgia on March 19.