

## 26. Telegram From the Central Intelligence Agency to Multiple Recipients<sup>1</sup>

Washington, March 30, 1982, 1612Z

184543. TDFIRDB-315/06529-82. Dist: 30 Mar 82. Country: Argentina/United Kingdom. Subject: Argentine Army and Navy Assessment of the Current Status and Prospects of the Dispute With the United Kingdom Over Islands in the South Atlantic (DOI: About 28 March 1982). Source: [3 lines not declassified].

1. On or shortly before 28 March 1982, the Argentine Army and Navy prepared a joint assessment for President Leopoldo ((Galtieri)) on the current dispute with the United Kingdom over the South Georgia Islands in the South Atlantic. The assessment included the following points:

A. Argentine public opinion strongly approves of the Argentine Government taking a strong stand against UK "threats" to Argentina.

B. The UK Embassy in Buenos Aires was aware of plans to place Argentine workers on the Island and has therefore urged London to keep this in mind and be moderate in its response.

C. The UK appears unwilling to take any action to remove the workers.

D. Successful handling of this incident could help to fortify the Galtieri government and give it an image of being strong, decisive, and highly nationalistic. This will deflect leftist charges against the government. The "crisis" is already serving to deflect public attention from economic problems and from the planned labor demonstration in Buenos Aires on 30 March.

E. If Argentina gives the appearance of having "lost" in this confrontation with the UK, it will serve to strengthen enormously Chile's position in the dispute with Argentina over the Beagle Channel.

2. (Source comment: On 28 March, working-level officers within the Argentine Naval Intelligence Service, who are not necessarily privy to actual operational planning, discounted the possibility of Argentine intervention should the British choose to forcibly remove the Argentine workers from the Island; these naval intelligence officers believed that the Argentine Navy is not ready or able to support any type of armed

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Bureau of European Affairs, United Kingdom Political Files, Lot 89D489, POL-15(h) Country Political 82—Latin America. Secret; Noforn; Nocontract; Wnintel. Sent to the National Security Agency, Department of State, Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of the Treasury, White House Situation Room, National Security Council Staff, CIA Office of Current Operations, and USCINCSO.

conflict in the South Georgias area because of existing limitations on equipment. These naval intelligence officers expected that, if the British should remove the workers, the Argentine Government would certainly speak strongly but would try to cast itself as a peacemaker by avoiding a direct conflict with the UK.)

3. (Field comments:

A. The views attributed to the British Government may not reflect its true position, but these perceptions by the Argentine Army and Navy will help determine the policies it recommends to the President and may help determine the policies he actually adopts.

B. The views of naval intelligence personnel in paragraph 2 should not be read as a definitive statement of Argentine Naval operational plans.)

4. (Ambassador's comment: Former Foreign Minister Oscar ((Camilión)) told me that the Argentine Government has deliberately built up the incident in South Georgia to buy "political space" for Galtieri. This report would suggest that he may be right.)

[Omitted here is dissemination information.]