

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

Buenos Aires, April 1, 1982, 2345Z

1912. Subject: Possible Military Action in Falklands. Ref: State 86790.<sup>2</sup>

1. Secret—Entire text.

2. I met this evening with President Galtieri to review the points in reftel. Also present were the Foreign Minister, the President's principal military aide, and our ARMA. Galtieri had been informed of our demarche and had with him a talking paper prepared for his response. I emphasized to him, as I had to the Foreign Minister, that any armed confrontation would do serious damage to the excellent relations we have been developing between our two countries. I asked for the assurances on the use of force as set forth in para five of the reftel. Galtieri did not address that question in his talking paper, but when later I pressed it said bluntly that he was not going to tell us whether or not he intended to use force.

3. The President and the Foreign Minister both made it clear that they believed our demarche was the result of a request from HMG. (Comment: This should be borne in mind in assessing Galtieri's response. He was undoubtedly speaking as much to the British as to us and his intention was clearly to keep from tipping his hand.) With respect to US/Argentine relations, the President insisted that Argentina has the support on this issue of the great majority of nations and that the failure of the U.S. to understand its position would do us damage in the Southern Cone and elsewhere. He referred several times to Argentine support for our position in Central America—support which I acknowledged—and seemed to suggest there should be a quid-pro-quo in this case.

4. The talking paper, which the President handed to me at the end of the meeting, reviews the Argentine complaints about HMG's lack of response to the Argentine proposals of January and February. It describes the current situation as "intolerable and impossible to maintain" in terms of "our national honor." The paper contains the following sentence: "We have not considered for a moment that at a time when the freedom of the American people is seen to be seriously threatened

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Latin America/Central, Argentina (01/01/1982-04/02/1982). Secret; Flash; Nodis. Sent Niact Immediate to London. Printed from a copy that was received in the White House Situation Room.

<sup>2</sup> See Document 31.

your government (USG) would be inclined to defend a colonial system represented by fewer than 2,000 persons thousands of kilometers from the metropol. We believe firmly that such situations belong to the history of past centuries and that it is not rationally possible to ask us to be the last example of a colonial aggression."

5. The last point in the paper responds in a way to our request for assurances. The Foreign Minister commented that this point was the key. It states: "We can offer all the tranquility and security required if public and express recognition of our sovereignty is made real, along with the stipulation, also public, that in a period not to exceed the end of the year 1982 the consequences of said recognition will be made concrete." I told the President that we were not talking about US support or lack of support for the British position, that we were not taking sides, and that we were only speaking of the possibility of military action, a possibility which concerns us greatly. I said that such action could bring unforeseen and very grave consequences. The President said that Argentina was prepared to face such consequences.

6. Comment: Galtieri was emotional and, I believe, quite nervous. I'm still not certain that he means to take action tomorrow. It would be in his nature to run a bluff to the very end. On the other hand, his ego shows signs of serious inflation and I'm afraid that he is capable of doing something stupid.

**Shlaudeman**