

39. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassies in Argentina and the United Kingdom¹

Washington, April 2, 1982, 0304Z

87865. Subject: UK-Argentine Confrontation: Secretary Calls In Argentine Ambassador.

1. (S-Entire text).

2. The Secretary called in Argentine Ambassador Takacs at 7:45 p.m., April 1. They met for 15 minutes, with ARA DAS Bosworth also present. The Secretary told Takacs that the President and he are deeply concerned about the situation in the South Atlantic. Our assessment suggests that the use of force is contemplated on the Falkland Islands and in South Georgia as well. We know that the UK will take a counter

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

action if this happens. The situation would become a tragedy. Nothing would be more self defeating for Argentina's interest in good relations with the United States. The Secretary described our present relations as those of unprecedented cordiality after many years of languishing. GOA use of force would reverse our cooperation in Central America and the hemisphere. The reaction of the American people will be overwhelming, we will have to side with the British, and US-Argentine relations will be back to the worst days.

3. The Secretary said he had been in touch with Lord Carrington and received the clear impression the British will react. He said he had urged the President to call Galtieri. He was shocked to learn that the Argentine President would not take the call.² Subsequently, an Argentine official (Gustavo Figueroa) had called to say that Galtieri would be available for a call shortly. The Secretary told Takacs that he had called him in before this subsequent information.

4. The Secretary concluded his opening presentation by saying it would be a supreme irony when we are confronting the threat from Castro for our friends to come to blows. To avoid that, the President is prepared to send Vice President Bush to Buenos Aires immediately if that would be helpful.

5. Takacs asked if our Ambassador in Buenos Aires had told Galtieri this afternoon that the British were prepared to use force. The Secretary did not know but he affirmed that it was his clear judgment after talking to Carrington. He added he knows enough about British politics to be pretty sure how Prime Minister Thatcher will react. Time has about run out. If the information we have is correct, it will be a *casus belli*.

6. The Secretary repeated that we are willing to do all we can, adding, however, that we cannot get into the dispute itself.

7. Takacs wanted the Secretary to know some of the history of this problem from the Argentine side. He said that Galtieri is in much the same situation as Thatcher, that next year will be the 150th anniversary of the start of the dispute, and no (Argentine) Government can exist with the situation remaining as it is. The incident in South Georgia has added fuel to the fire. Takacs added, however, that we must hope we can keep the situation manageable.

8. Takacs said he would inform his government immediately of the conversation.

Haig

² In his memoirs, Haig wrote that Reagan had attempted to telephone Galtieri at 6:30 p.m., but had been informed by Galtieri's aide that he was "unavailable" to take Reagan's call. (Haig, *Caveat*, p. 264)