

48. **Telegram From the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State and the Embassy in Argentina¹**

London, April 2, 1982, 1725Z

7406. Subject: Information on U.K. Military Activities Related to Falkland Dispute.

1. Confidential—Entire text.

2. The following repeats for your information [*less than 1 line not declassified*].

Begin text:

8. (C/NoFORN) Summary: Ministry of Defense radio contact with Port Stanley was lost at 0945 London (GMT plus 1) on 820402 and efforts to reestablish communications are being made through HMS *Endurance*, the Royal Navy ice ship, now on patrol nearby in the South Atlantic. Assuming an Argentine invasion from the amphibious force in the area, the MOD is planning to send a task force of at least 7 ships and probably 2 commandos of Royal Marines (1800 approx strength). Early this date, instructions were given to RN and RM units to reassign all foreign personnel to shore establishments. The MOD Command Center has been on a fully manned basis since early morning (820330) and the Chief of the Defence Staff is holding a 1500 session (820402) to discuss contingency operations.

9A. (C/NoFORN) Details: The following info was all that could be obtained from various sources as MOD offices, both civilian and military, are extremely reluctant to talk.

—(1) (C/NoFORN) The Argentine naval force estimated at 5 ships plus 2 brigades of Marines is believed to have landed near/at Port Stanley around 0930 London time 820402. As of 1300 radio contact had not been reestablished and attempts to reestablish communications through HMS *Endurance* had not been successful.

—(2) (C/NoFORN) The UK response is to organize a task force of at least seven (7) ships which may include the HMS *Invincible*, *Hermes*, *Superb* (a nuclear powered submarine), an LDP, and two Royal fleet auxiliaries. From RM and RN sources an SOA of 16 knots was considered maximum obtainable from the force and it would take at least eighteen (18) days to reach the Falklands from the UK.

¹ Source: Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820175–0710. Confidential; Immediate; Exdis. This telegram repeats portions of a telegram sent from [*text not declassified*] April 2, which was then repeated for information by the DIA to the White House at 1759Z. (Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File, 04/02/1982)

—(3) (C/NoFORN) UK forces in the Falklands area include the HMS *Endurance* with two (2) Lynx helicopters armed with (NFI) anti-tank missiles and 97 Royal Marines (RM's), armed with rifles, general purpose machine guns and (NFI) anti-tank weapons. There are 22 RM's on South Georgia and 75 in or near Port Stanley.

—(4) (C/NoFORN) Two Sea Harrier Squadrons (5 aircraft each) at RNAS Yeovilton have been alerted, 800 Squadron is leaving this date to go aboard HMS *Hermes* for a possible departure 820403, and 801 Squadron is preparing to go aboard HMS *Invincible* with an estimated departure 820406.

—(5) (C/NoFORN) The 3rd Commando Brigade with headquarters at Plymouth is on full alert and 45 Commando in Arbroath Scotland is packing its gear with an order to be prepared to depart in 72 hours. All Easter leaves have been cancelled in 45 Commando.

—(6) (C/NoFORN) Royal Air Force involvement at this point seems to be limited to a small number of C-130 sorties to Ascension Island. They will fly POL and comm gear to the island for transfer to a ship for bulk transport to the Falklands. Although the airport at Port Stanley can handle a C-130 (4100 feet long), RAF staffers feel that the distance of the Falklands from the UK and the lack of a staging point in South America will preclude airlift support to the area.

9B. (C/NoFORN) ORG cmts: Two subsequent attempts since 1300 820402 to obtain further details of UK deployment plans for force dispositions have been unsuccessful. Normally open discussions with close RM contacts have been noticeably guarded and although willing to discuss contingency plans they were not allowed to do so by the Defence Secretariat. It was obvious to RO that staff officers have been on alert for at least 48 to 60 hours and a schedule for full-time operations over the weekend was observed. The above information was passed separately to DIA and the DIA rep in NMCC.

End text.

3. We also note newspaper report in daily "Standard" March 2² to the effect that 24-ship U.K. task force which had taken part in NATO exercise "Springtrain" had put to sea again without shore leave. Task force includes two country class guided missile destroyers, 3 other destroyers, thirteen frigates and two submarines including the nuclear submarine *Superb*. Report cites source at Gibraltar as saying only that task force is "no longer in our operational area."

Streator

² Presumably April 2.