

63. Telegram From the Central Intelligence Agency to Multiple Recipients¹

Washington, April 6, 1982, 0018Z

190325. TDFIRDB-315/07048-82. Dist: 5 Apr 82. Country: Argentina/United Kingdom. Subject: Background on the Argentine Decision To Seize the Falkland Islands; Argentine Misperception of Reaction to the Seizure (DOI: March-5 April 1982). Source: [*2½ lines not declassified*].

1. The decision to seize the Falkland Islands was made by the Argentine Government "several weeks" before the actual seizure on 2 April 1982. However, the arrival of the party of Argentine civilians on the South Georgia Islands on 18 March was not a deliberate provocation. The specific reason for the decision to seize the Islands was the Argentine Government's perception of the need to counter serious internal economic and political problems.

2. When the decision was made to seize the Islands, the certainty that the British would not intervene militarily was shared by President Leopoldo (Galtieri) and by Brigadier Basilio ((Lami Dozo)), Commander in Chief of the Air Force and a member of the governing Junta. (Field Comment: The source has no information on the attitude of the Commander in Chief of the Navy.) The Argentine planning for the seizure was based on the premise that the British would react to the seizure as gentlemen react to a duel: when the first blood was drawn (the Argentine seizure), the winner (Argentina) would be declared, and the loser (the UK) would gracefully retire from the field.

3. The Argentine Government, and specifically President Galtieri, are very concerned over the implications of the failure of developments to take place as anticipated: the British have reacted strongly; other countries, especially the United States, have publicly expressed their opposition to the Argentine action; and the Argentine left has vocally been attacking the "imperialist English". The Argentine Government is very concerned that these sentiments could evolve into a resurgence of extreme nationalism, a generalized public antipathy toward other countries, and a deterioration in the currently good relations between the United States and Argentina. Argentine Government officials are also concerned over the possibility that the final result could be the fall of the Galtieri government.

¹ Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File 04/06/1982. Secret; Noforn; Nocontract; Wrintel. Sent to the National Photographic Interpretation Center, the White House Situation Room, the National Security Council Staff, and the CIA Office of Current Operations.

4. Galtieri and the Argentine Government are assuming that the United States will offer to intercede between Argentina and the United Kingdom because U.S. interests will make such intercession necessary. However, Argentine Government officials do not know whether such intercession will take place before or after British military action against Argentina; they strongly hope U.S. intercession takes place before British military action occurs.

5. [*less than 1 line not declassified*] comment: On 5 April, a series of Argentine officials, using a variety of official channels, have told U.S. Embassy officials of "Argentine Government concern" that the U.S. response to the seizure of the Falklands could lead to a deterioration in relations and even "spontaneous" demonstrations against the U.S. presence in Argentina. The comments in the current report may be another in this series, which appears to be an orchestrated campaign to make the U.S. Government aware of the Argentine displeasure at U.S. actions; it also appears likely that this campaign is designed to encourage the U.S. Government to urge caution on the United Kingdom. A review of the various approaches made by the Argentine Government officials is contained in Embassy Buenos Aires telegram 1982.)²

[*less than 1 line not declassified*]

² In telegram 1982 from Buenos Aires, April 5, the Embassy transmitted a situation report as of 3 p.m. local time. (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820179-0794)