

71. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom¹

Washington, April 7, 1982, 0409Z

92488. Subject: Discussions With the UK on Falkland Crisis.

1. Secret-Entire text.

2. Summary: The Secretary discussed with UK Ambassador the present political climate in Britain, a possible US role in trying to resolve the UK-Argentine dispute over the Falklands, and elements of a formula which both sides might consider in order to ease the threat of a military clash.² The Secretary assured the Ambassador of continued US support for Britain, but stressed the need for the US to talk immediately with the Argentines about a possible agreement before US influence in Buenos Aires declines further. End summary.

3. UK Ambassador Nicholas Henderson met with the Secretary early afternoon of April 6 to discuss his government's dispute with Argentina over the military occupation of the Falklands. Henderson appeared deeply troubled by the crisis, and particularly over the resig-

¹ Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Western Europe and Soviet Union, United Kingdom (04/01/1982-07/31/1982 (4)). Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Sent for information Immediate to Buenos Aires and the White House. Printed from a copy that was received in the White House Situation Room.

² No memorandum of conversation of this meeting has been found.

nation of Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington.³ He stressed to the Secretary that Carrington had resigned because of the erroneous views among the British public that he misread Argentine intentions and was responsible for the Argentine military success. The Secretary expressed his sympathy for Carrington, and said that the US firmly supports the Thatcher government. He assured Henderson there would not be a "Suez" situation, where the US pressured the British to back down from taking military action.

4. Henderson repeatedly said it was important for the US to understand that domestic support for military action by the UK had not been stronger since 1939, that the government and the country were determined not to back down, and that they would not mind sinking the Argentine fleet—something which could be done relatively easily. He emphasized that only the US, because of its great influence in Argentina, could bring Buenos Aires to its senses and secure that country's military withdrawal from the Falklands. Henderson added, however, that the US should not appear impartial about aggression; to do so would threaten the survival of Mrs. Thatcher's government.

5. The Secretary replied that we recognize the present mood in Britain and will continue to take a strong public stand against the Argentine invasion. He agreed the US has had good relations with Argentina, and maintains influence with the Galtieri government. Nevertheless, US influence in Buenos Aires is declining, and with every day that passes it will be more difficult to secure Argentinian agreement to some formula for ending the crisis. The Secretary said that while we are confident of British naval superiority, a military clash would be politically disastrous for everyone. Therefore, we must accelerate diplomatic efforts over the next seven days in an attempt to achieve an agreement before the British fleet arrives near Ascension Island, which is close to the regional area covered by the Rio Treaty. Henderson said the fleet would not stop at Ascension and Article One of the Rio Treaty should prevent Argentina from invoking mutual assistance measures in the pact.⁴ He claimed that although his government was not anxious to use the OAS, HMG did not believe the organization would give strong support to Buenos Aires. In fact, many OAS members would like to see the Argentine fleet "clobbered." Assistant Secretary Enders remarked that the US believes most Latin Americans strongly support Argentina and would do so in the OAS.

³ See footnote 2, Document 61.

⁴ In Article 1 of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, also known as the Rio Treaty, the Contracting Parties condemn war and pledge not to resort to the threat or the use of force in any way inconsistent with the provisions of the UN Charter.

When pressed by the Secretary about HMG views on the elements of a possible agreement, Henderson would only reply that the Argentine military must withdraw from the Falklands, even if it meant the fall of the Galtieri government. Anything less would topple Mrs. Thatcher. The Secretary asked if the British fleet might be temporarily slowed if the Argentines agreed to a phased military withdrawal from the Falklands, and if there was an understanding that the task force would not return home until the US or some group of impartial nations assured the complete military evacuation. He added that it would assume no prior agreement on sovereignty, that the customs and way of life of the British Islanders be guaranteed, and that a UK-Argentine condominium-type administration could be arranged. Henderson reacted to the Secretary's suggestions. He noted that the British had poor experiences with condominium arrangements, that after what has happened, in the past weeks, a joint administration would not work, and in any case he could not imagine the Argentines accepting the formula. The Secretary and Enders said that while the mood in Buenos Aires had been euphoric after the invasion, the people and government had been sobered by the dispatch of the British fleet, and they might possibly accept the kind of arrangement outlined. Henderson reacted negatively to the suggestion of an interim force from the US, Canada and two Latin American countries. He seemed to prefer the idea of having only the US maintain a presence on the Falklands to insure that any agreement is carried out.

7. The Secretary said that if Henderson had no objection, he would discuss the possible formula with the Argentine Ambassador, who at that moment was waiting in the outer office to see the Secretary.⁵ Henderson agreed, and said that he would be in touch with the Secretary. Besides the Secretary and Mr. Enders, present at the meeting were Acting Assistant Secretary for Europe John Scanlan and Keith C. Smith, EUR/NE.

8. Pending instructions, Embassy should not discuss details of a possible UK-Argentine agreement with HMG.

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⁵ See Document 72.