

## 82. Telegram From Secretary of State Haig to the Department of State<sup>1</sup>

London, April 9, 1982, 0131Z

Secto 5010. Dept pass Bridgetown Flash. For the President from the Secretary. Subject: Memo to the President: Discussions in London.<sup>2</sup>

1. (Top Secret–Entire text).

2. I spent five hours with Prime Minister Thatcher, the first hour with her and the Foreign Secretary, Pym, alone, followed by a working

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Latin America/Central, Falklands War [Cables 090131, 091000, 091154, 091640, 181715, 191650, 191754, 192115]. Top Secret; Flash; Nodis. Printed from a copy that was received in the White House Situation Room. A stamped notation in the upper right-hand corner of the telegram indicates that Clark saw it.

<sup>2</sup> In a telegram to McFarlane, which was also seen by Clark, sent April 9, Rentschler wrote of Haig's report: "You should know that his views accurately summarize the mood and mind-set of HMG at this critical point in the South Atlantic caper and delineate our rather limited room for maneuver on the Buenos Aires leg (whither we are now bound.) I believe the substance of that report should be shared with Roger Fontaine and Dennis Blair, since it will undoubtedly condition our next immediate steps. However the present situation turns out, it will clearly be a 'close-run thing'—in fact Mrs. Thatcher herself may have recognized when she pointedly showed us portraits in Number 10 not only of Nelson but also Wellington." (Telegram Secto 5017 to the White House, April 9; *ibid.*)

dinner which included the Defense Minister, Nott, and senior officials.<sup>3</sup> Before meeting with her, I spent an hour alone with Pym.<sup>4</sup>

3. The Prime Minister has the bit in her teeth, owing to the politics of a unified nation and an angry Parliament, as well as her own convictions about the principles at stake. She is clearly prepared to use force, though she admits a preference for a diplomatic solution. She is rigid in her insistence on a return to the status quo ante, and indeed seemingly determined that any solution involve some retribution.

4. Her Defense Secretary is squarely behind her, though less ideological than she. He is confident of military success, based not on a strategy of landing on the Islands but rather by a blockade which, he believes, will eventually make the Argentine presence untenable. Thus, the prospect of imminent hostilities appears less acute—if the Argentines keep their distance—though this does not fundamentally diminish the gravity and urgency of the crisis.

5. Her Foreign Secretary does not share her position, and went surprisingly far in showing this in her presence. Whether this means he will have a restraining influence or instead that there will be a problem within the government is impossible to say.

6. The British tried to avoid the question of the long-term consequences of using force, though they are concerned and, I believe, our discussions sobered them further. They agree with our assessment that the next 72 hours, before the fleet arrives, is crucial.

7. The Prime Minister is convinced she will fall if she concedes on any of three basic points, to which she is committed to Parliament:

A. Immediate withdrawal of Argentine forces;

B. Restoration of British administration on the Islands;

C. Preservation of their position that the Islanders must be able to exercise self-determination.

8. We focussed on three elements of a solution, which I argued would meet her needs:

A. Withdrawal of Argentine forces;

B. An interim arrangement involving an international presence (e.g., US, Canada, and two Latin American countries) to provide an umbrella for the restoration of British administration;

C. Swift resumption of negotiations.

9. The main problems were with point B. She wants nothing that would impinge on British authority; she wants the British Governor

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<sup>3</sup> See Documents 80 and 81.

<sup>4</sup> See Document 79.

back;<sup>5</sup> and she bridled at the thought of any Argentine non-military presence even under an international umbrella. She does not insist that British sovereignty be accepted—she is finessing this by saying that British sovereignty is simply a fact that has not been affected by aggression—but she rules out anything that would be inconsistent with self-determination.

10. All in all, we got no give in the basic British position, and only the glimmering of some possibilities, and that only after much effort by me with considerable help not appreciated by Mrs. Thatcher from Pym. It is clear that they had not thought much about diplomatic possibilities. They will now, but whether they become more imaginative or instead recoil will depend on the political situation and what I hear in Argentina.

11. I will arrive in Buenos Aires late Friday.<sup>6</sup> I will convey a picture of total British resolve, and see what I can draw from the Argentines along lines we discussed in London, without giving any hint that the British are prepared for any give-and-take.

12. If the Argentines give me something to work with, I plan to return to London over the weekend. It may then be necessary for me to ask you to apply unusual pressure on Thatcher. If the Argentines offer very little, I would plan to return to confer with you. In this case, it may be necessary to apply even greater pressure on the British if we are to head off hostilities. I cannot presently offer much optimism, even if I get enough in Buenos Aires to justify a return to London. This is clearly a very steep uphill struggle, but essential, given the enormous stakes.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Immediately after the invasion on April 2, Argentina appointed Brigadier General Mario Benjamin Menéndez as Governor of the Islands. The British Governor and the British Marines were captured and taken to the British Embassy in Montevideo.

<sup>6</sup> April 9. At 0228Z, April 9, Haig sent a message to Costa Mendez requesting that the meetings begin the morning of Saturday, April 10, “in view of the lateness of the hour of my arrival in Argentina.” (Telegram Secto 5013 to Buenos Aires, April 9; Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File 04/09/1982 (1))

<sup>7</sup> From his aircraft en route to Buenos Aires, Haig sent a follow-up telegram to Reagan. In it, he expanded on his assessment of Thatcher’s outlook on the crisis, noting that “it is virtually as important to us” that Thatcher achieve “success” in this situation “for the principle at stake is central to your vision of international order, in addition to being in our strategic interest.” Haig also observed: “The key question is whether I can bring back enough from the Argentines to convince her [Thatcher] that she has within reach a successful, peaceful solution. Obviously, if Galtieri accepts a political defeat it’s the end of him. Just as Mrs. Thatcher must be able to show that Galtieri got nothing from his use of force, he must be able to show that he got something. Whether this rules out a diplomatic solution, or whether there is a narrow band in which some ambiguity will permit both parties a way out of their respective corners, I do not know.” (Unnumbered telegram from Haig to Reagan, April 9; Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File 04/09/1982 (2))

13. Throughout what was a difficult discussion, there was no trace of anything but gratitude for the role we are playing and for your personal concern and commitment to the Prime Minister. She said, in conclusion, that the candor of the discussion reflected the strength of our relationship.

14. As you know I have excluded travelling US press from the plane. All I have said to the local press is that we want to be helpful and support UN Security Council Resolution 502, which calls for withdrawal and a diplomatic solution. For the benefit of Thatcher—and the Argentines—I also said I was impressed with the resolve of the British Government. We must be absolutely disciplined with the press during this critical stage, avoiding at all cost any suggestion that we are encouraged. There is, in fact, little basis for encouragement in any event.

**Haig**