

## 92. Telegram From Secretary of State Haig to the White House<sup>1</sup>

Buenos Aires, April 11, 1982, 1124Z

Secto 5047. Please pass to President from the Secretary. Dept also pass Secretary's aircraft. Subject: Memorandum for the President.

1. (S)–Entire text.

2. I have concluded nearly twelve hours of gruelling and emotion-filled talks with President Galtieri and his Foreign Minister,<sup>2</sup> amidst a public mood approaching frenzy.

3. The proposals I introduced here were accepted in large part, except with regard to the pivotal question of interim governing arrangements (which we knew would be a problem) and Argentine insistence on an early date certain for completion of negotiations on a final settlement. These two issues will have to be resolved in order to trigger Argentine withdrawal and thus avert war.

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Latin America/Central, Argentina (04/11/1982–04/14/1982). Secret; Niact Immediate; Nodis. Sent for information Niact Immediate to the Department of State. Printed from a copy that was received in the White House Situation Room.

<sup>2</sup> See Document 91.

4. We made some progress on these issues, though very probably not enough to secure British agreement. The Argentines began by demanding that they, in effect, administer the island in the interim period, and that the British agree a priori that the outcome of the ensuing negotiations would provide for a transfer of sovereignty. In the end, we came up with a formula that would involve interim U.S.-UK-Argentine tripartite supervision of local administration, and we have blurred the question of whether the negotiations would result in Argentine sovereignty. We have specified December 31, 1982, as the date for completion of negotiations. The thought of negotiating under this deadline may cause Mrs. Thatcher as much of a problem as will the formula for interim administration. Nevertheless, what we have is definitely worth taking to London.

5. The day was filled with ups and downs. At one point late in the day the Argentines returned to their demand for sovereignty, and I was faced with what looked like the end of the road. But the situation broke between midnight and 1:30 a.m., when Galtieri, face-to-face with the prospect of war, levelled with me. He said he could not withdraw both his military and administrative presence and last a week. If the British attacked, he explained, he would have to accept the offer of full support made by the Cuban Ambassador, who just returned after more than a year's absence. The Cubans implied they were speaking for the Russians, and even insinuated that the Soviets had offered to sink the British carrier (with Prince Andrew aboard) with the British and the world believing an Argentine submarine had done it. I doubt that such an offer was actually made by the Soviets, but we cannot discount it altogether.

6. Galtieri said that he could not abandon Argentina's destiny with us, and even with the British, except in the most extreme circumstances. He and the others here are clearly shaken and approaching panic as war grows near. At the end of the day, he took me aside and said that only soldiers could appreciate how critical it is to avoid conflict. (I did not correct him). He is trying desperately to ease the pressure of impending hostilities and thus provide a better climate for negotiations. (I suspect the British prefer the present climate).

7. I am not optimistic that Mrs. Thatcher will think she can accept the current proposals. As my last message said, it is not in our interest that she inflict herself with a political defeat.<sup>3</sup> But there is a basis for the process to continue. I plan to leave for London at 10:00 a.m. I told Galtieri I would do my best to gain British agreement and then return here. I have also informed Mrs. Thatcher that I will be returning with

---

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 6, Document 82.

some proposals, and urged her to avoid military engagement until I complete my talks there.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, any hostilities would obliterate what has been accomplished so far.

8. The time for a possible personal intervention by you with Mrs. Thatcher has not arrived. We must first see how she reacts to the proposed interim solution and the date certain for a final settlement, as well as my appeal for British military restraint. I will not hesitate to ask when I feel time is right for you to approach her.

9. I will tell the press only that my discussions here were open and meaningful, and that I am returning to London with some ideas for further discussion. While we can now build pressure on the British by conveying a sense of movement on the part of the Argentines, I do not want to characterize the current proposals or describe them as U.S. proposals, since that would put the blame for war on Mrs. Thatcher if she cannot accept them. Even as we press for diplomatic success, we must not shift the onus to our closest ally if war occurs.<sup>5</sup>

**Haig**

---

<sup>4</sup> See Document 91.

<sup>5</sup> In his memoirs, Haig recounted a meeting with Costa Mendez at the Buenos Aires airport, held before the Secretary's departure for London: "At the airport, Costa Mendez, showing the fatigue of our long session of the night before, awaited me. We had parted at one o'clock, and it was only a little after eight. Costa Mendez handed me a paper. It contained some personal thoughts of his own, he said. He hoped that I would read them on the plane. Aloft, I scanned the paper Costa Mendez had given me. It constituted a retreat from everything we had accomplished at the Casa Rosada the night before. The Argentinians were demanding either de facto authority over the islands through administrative arrangements that would give them immediate control of its government, or a British promise that sovereignty would be transferred to Argentina no later than December 31, 1982, regardless of the outcome of negotiations. This was a formula for war." (Haig, *Caveat*, pp. 282-283) A copy of Costa Mendez's paper has not been found.