

111. Telegram From the Department of State to Secretary of State Haig¹

Washington, April 13, 1982, 2243Z

Tosec 50206/99019. For the Secretary from PM Director Burt. Subject: Reactivated UK Request For Emergency Stinger Delivery.

1. Top Secret–Entire text.

2. The British have reactivated their April 11 request for Stinger.² We now need to decide when and how to respond. The British are pressing for an immediate and favorable reply.

3. As you know, the British Embassy approached the Department and DOD on Sunday³ with a request for six Stinger missile launchers

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, Top Secret Hardcopy Telegrams, Lot 12D215, No Folder. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis; Stadis. Drafted by Kanter; cleared by Burt, Bremer, and in S/S–O; approved by Eagleburger. Haig was then en route from London to Washington.

² In telegram Tosec 50172/97528, April 12, the Department reported to Haig in London that the British Embassy approached the Departments of State and Defense to request 12 Stinger missile launchers “equipped for para-delivery” on an emergency basis, adding that “although cleared for NATO sale,” Stinger “has not been transferred to any NATO nation yet.” The following day, the British informed Jones that their request had been put “on ice.” The Department reported to Haig that “no reason was given” for the British reversal. “For now, we have told DOD to go ahead with preparations to ship in event British renew request but to do nothing else without our specific authorization.” (Ibid.)

³ April 11.

and 12 missiles “equipped for para-delivery” on an emergency basis. In response to that request, JCS ordered the Army to appropriately package the Stingers and ready them for shipment. At that time, the British asked that the Stingers be shipped to Mildenhall by noon, April 14.

4. On April 12, Davy Jones was informed by his UK counterpart that the Stinger request was being “put on ice.” Today (April 13), the British reactivated the request with both the Department and DOD, making clear that they would appreciate a prompt reply. DOD believes that it could come close to meeting its April 14 delivery date to Mildenhall if a favorable decision were made immediately.

5. There are risks in going ahead with the Stinger delivery. The JCS is concerned that if the shipment is discovered, it would directly link the US with any British attempt to retake the Falklands and would provoke a serious reaction from Argentina (and perhaps others in Latin America). Nevertheless, Larry and I believe that we simply have no alternative but to respond favorably to the reactivated British request. This is apparently Cap’s⁴ view as well.

6. You, however, are much closer to the situation and are the best judge of how we should respond to the British request, particularly how the timing of our response will affect the delicate diplomatic state of play. You also will want to consider whether White House involvement is necessary at this stage.

7. In order to preserve the option of responding in a timely way to the British request, we will need your guidance soon. Larry will meet you at Andrews AFB when you land to discuss this matter with you.⁵

Eagleburger

⁴ Caspar Weinberger.

⁵ On April 15, Eagleburger informed Henderson that a final answer on U.S. delivery of Stingers was not possible because of the “press leaks concerning US–UK cooperation” (see Document 115). Six hours later, Thomas called on Burt to “renew urgently the UK request for six Stinger launchers and twelve missiles” to be delivered to Ascension by April 19. According to Thomas, the timing of the shipment was “crucial because the missiles would be transferred to the first UK naval contingent which would head south from Ascension on April 19” and “would be carried by initial British landing party.” Eagleburger forwarded this request to Haig in Buenos Aires in telegram Tosec 60031/101880, April 16. (Department of State, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Miscellaneous Files, March 1981–February 1983, Lot 83D210, D. Gompert) A further 24-hour hold was placed on the request on April 18. (Telegram Tosec 60111/104145, April 18; Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, N820003–0667) In telegram Tosec 60123/104180, April 19, the Department transmitted the text of an action memorandum to Haig from Burt which requested the Secretary’s approval of a parachute drop at sea of the requested missiles. On a copy of this telegram, Goldberg wrote: “1440 hrs. 4/19/82 from B.A. AMH approved—told Eagleburger” and “approval of this by AMH w/o further [hesitation?] no doubt because he was just ‘disgusted’ w/the Argent.—” (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Haig Papers, Department of State, Day File, April 19, 1982 Falklands)