

133. Action Memorandum From the Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States (Middendorf) to Acting Secretary of State Eagleburger<sup>1</sup>

Washington, April 16, 1982

SUBJECT

Falkland Dispute: Separating the Disputants

Larry:

*The lousy situation in the South Atlantic and the disastrous consequences that an actual outbreak of hostilities between the United Kingdom and Argentina would have on the Inter-American system and the interests of the United States in this hemisphere (Rio Treaty pressure to take sides, etc.), prompts this anxious memo.*

Those of us in the Latin American trenches, who in the last week at the OAS have been struggling to keep the delicately balanced Inter-American System from coming apart at the seams, have been thinking hard about any straws which might be helpful to Al in his efforts to extricate the British, the Argentines, and us from this dismal entanglement. As you know, before he left on his first trip, Al asked for any suggestions but I also am aware that his thinking must be far in front of whatever contributions we might make. *If the following thought is of any help whatsoever, I can help do up a cable to the Secretary but if it already is on our drawing boards or discarded please tell me and I'll stand down.*

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, P880104-1183. Secret; Nodis. Sent through Bosworth. Drafted by Johnson and Middendorf. On the first page of the memorandum, Middendorf wrote: "Larry—This is the memo I spoke to [you] about this morning. Bill." Above this note, Bosworth wrote: "Larry, I am also cutting USOAS into the broader contingency paper which we will have for you by COB. Steve."

*My concept is tied to a possibility of a negotiating deadlock, a flashpoint rapidly approaching in the South Atlantic but a remaining wish by both sides to avoid overt hostilities. Under such circumstances both sides might welcome a face saving way to separate their most immediate problem—hostilities—from the range of knotty problems concerning the islands themselves. There are really two issues here: one is immediate disengagement, and the second is negotiation over territory. It seems to me that as long as both sides appear to want to solve both issues at once, an impasse is more likely. Getting them to avert war, for now, is critical to pave the way for later agreements on the other issue.*

As the Great Nightfall approaches there must be growing doubts on both sides. *Both sides might now be persuaded to accept a temporary, at least, disengagement of forces, with face saving provisions, and options left open to re-escalate, if necessary. For us such an arrangement, if workable, would buy time.*

*The bare bones of such a formula could involve:*

*1. Disengagement:*

(a) The British agree for a set period of time to stay well out of the high risk area, perhaps pulling back to port facilities at Ascension or, say, Rio de Janeiro (the Brazilians would be helpful if both sides asked);

(b) The Argentines agree for a set period of time to phased troop withdrawals (perhaps an initial increment of 2,000 as the British fleet pulls back) and further 2,000 increments weekly based upon positive pre-agreed benchmarks in ongoing talks between the two sides.

The British, of course, would have to back off their declaration of a quarantine zone and the Argentines would have to back off their statements about keeping the Falklands fully fortified. Both, therefore, would have to be steered toward making statements that:

(a) pronounce their strong commitment to a peaceful solution;

(b) explain, therefore, this cooling off period to allow for negotiations toward a peaceful settlement; but

(c) make clear that they are not foreclosing their military options.

*2. Talks:*

I recommend we try to get both sides engaged in exhaustive talks at a neutral site such as *Bretton Woods* or another site that would be symbolic of peacemaking but would not increase our exposure, (or even *Camp David*, but only for the final signing of the definitive peaceful settlement) where their best negotiators and lawyers can compare briefs to their hearts' content. From such a meeting I foresee tedium, dwindling media attention (and thus less need to strike public poses) and perhaps even progress toward agreement on the thorny issues of sovereignty and administration.

### 3. *Their military options:*

While talks proceed, the British fleet would, if say at Rio, be in the neighborhood and able to get to the scene if the talks fail. At the same time the Argentines, though troop units had been phased down, would be able to reinsert their forces well before the British could return to the scene. Both sides should perceive that this costs little in terms of logistics.

Maybe this sort of framework for keeping both sides engaged and not fighting is workable. It is, in effect, a Howler Baboon solution (see attachment).<sup>2</sup> At least it is a last gasp possibility if all else fails. Let me know what you think.

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<sup>2</sup> Not printed. The attachment is a quotation taken from the book *African Genesis: A Personal Investigation Into the Animal Origins and Nature of Man* by author Robert Ardrey.