

136. Memorandum From Dennis C. Blair and Roger Fontaine of
the National Security Council Staff to the President's
Assistant for National Security Affairs (Clark)¹

Washington, April 16, 1982

SUBJECT

Suspension of the Haig Mission on the Falklands

Issue. Should the President suspend Secretary Haig's shuttle diplomacy after the current consultations in Buenos Aires?

Judgments:

—That the Argentines will offer no major concessions today to justify Haig going on to London;

—That Presidential pressure on Mrs. Thatcher for a major concession would both be unsuccessful, and would seriously damage U.S.-U.K. relations;

—That Haig therefore stands little chance of negotiating an agreement before the British fleet arrives (approximately 20 April).

Discussion:

—Suspension of what increasingly appears to be a futile mission prevents undermining of American diplomacy, and preserves the personal reputations of the Secretary and the President;

—Suspension may well *decrease* chances of conflict by removing illusions (particularly Argentina's) that U.S. can "deliver" the other side;

¹ Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Latin America/Central, Argentina (04/15/1982-04/17/1982). Secret. A stamped notation in the upper right-hand corner of the memorandum indicates that Clark saw it. A second notation in an unknown hand reads: "President has seen."

—Suspension will force UK and Argentina to face squarely the consequences of possible military defeat or stalemate, now that both gunboat diplomacy and third-party mediation have run their course.

However:

—Suspension of the mission will spark criticism that the U.S. “Failed to go the extra mile” for peace;

—Suspension removes restraint on Argentines who have said they publicly will not challenge U.K. military while Haig mediation efforts continue;

—The U.S. will be under greater pressure to take sides, either damaging relations with its closest ally, Great Britain, or ending cooperation with Argentina, and damaging relations with other Latin America countries which support Argentina.

How to Disengage the Haig Mission

—Without announcing the end of the mission, President today calls Haig back to Washington from B.A. for consultations;

—After consultations tomorrow with Haig, President announces (probably on TV) that Haig will remain in Washington until the two sides show more flexibility and a forthcoming approach;

—Haig explains in more detail that we have exercised our good offices, we have narrowed and identified the differences between the sides, but have failed to bridge them, after two visits to each capital, further visits are not warranted, but he is prepared to resume visits if conditions warrant it

And Then

—We must decide what public, diplomatic and military policies to adopt if conflict breaks out when the British fleet arrives.