

**143. Information Memorandum From the Director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs (Burt) to Acting Secretary of State Eagleburger<sup>1</sup>**

Washington, April 17, 1982

SUBJECT

The Falklands: Beyond Buenos Aires

This memorandum lays out considerations and examines the options for U.S. policy should the Secretary's meetings in Buenos Aires not produce a breakthrough in the negotiations sufficient to stem the gathering momentum towards confrontation. After addressing U.S. interests and the dilemmas we face in protecting them, the memorandum suggests an approach to guide U.S. policy both before hostilities erupt and after.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, Falklands Crisis Historical Files, Lot 86D157, Unlabelled Folder. Secret; Sensitive; Nodis. Drafted by Haass. At the top of the memorandum, Burt wrote: "Larry: I think this is a good first cut. Let's talk. RB."

You are well aware of the U.S. interests involved: preserving our relationship with the UK and its role in the defense of the West; maintaining the Thatcher Government in power; nurturing our new relationship with Argentina; insulating our hemispheric policy, particularly in the Caribbean, from this crisis; and minimizing opportunities for increased Soviet influence in the region.

Each of these interests is obviously important. The temptation, of course, will be to continue to attempt to protect all of them simultaneously and in particular to balance any support for the UK with efforts to maintain good relations with Argentina. This temptation must be resisted. Our interest in deterring confrontation is not as important as having the British emerge victorious should confrontation occur. At some point we will have to judge when our objective to prevent conflict (which requires a good deal of even-handedness) has been overridden by our requirement to manage a conflict (which requires major support of the UK).

An unsuccessful UK would gravely weaken the integrity of the Atlantic Alliance at the same time it distanced Britain from its EC partners who would be unwilling to retain sanctions against Argentina after a UK failure. Trident would be abandoned but not to increase conventional defense spending; the BAOR would lose much of its credibility; INF deployment could be fatally undermined; the Thatcher Government would fall. Little Englandism would be given a major push and Tony Benn a major victory. Alliance cooperation in Europe and out-of-area alike would have been dealt severe setbacks, which the USSR would successfully exploit. In short, we could well lose the special relationship and Britain's unique ability to bridge and at times heal differences across the Atlantic. The U.S. must be prepared to do what is necessary to see the UK prevail, and must be seen to be doing so at the appropriate time.

There would be risks and costs associated with a pro-British policy. The Soviets would try to exploit the situation to increase their influence, U.S. attempts to build an anti-Cuban consensus would be weakened, and our long-term relationship with Argentina jeopardized. There would be risks as well in a decision to associate ourselves with the UK if it then lost.

At the same time, none of these outcomes, bad as they might be, should be decisive in our decision-making. The Hemisphere is not a homogeneous political entity. Brazil, Chile and the English-speaking countries would be unlikely to mourn an Argentine defeat. Caribbean states will continue to need our backing if they are to survive the Cuban and Nicaraguan challenge.

Nor is it clear the Soviets would prosper. Historical factors which have limited their influence and presence in Latin America will remain

in effect after any crisis. Moreover, if Argentina loses, the fact that the Soviets supported it would not reflect well on Moscow as a patron. It is not even certain that a post-crisis Argentine Government would turn to the Soviets; indeed, given Argentina's history and mistrust of radicalism any such reorientation would be most surprising. Lastly, we do not believe the interests of the United States would suffer from a clear demonstration of our will and ability to stand unambiguously by our friends; indeed, even if Britain were to fail, by having supported it we would be better placed to guide its political and military recovery than had we acted evenhanded throughout.

*Before the Battle:* The period between the Secretary's departure from BA and the actual initiation of hostilities could be as long as two to three weeks. This calculation is partly political—the British clearly hope that as time passes their concentration of force nearing the Falklands will induce the GOA to compromise. There are military factors too which suggest a pause—it will take the British some two to three weeks before they can bring a fully integrated task force to bear on the Falklands.

The question is how we ought to use this time. The Secretary is of course the best judge of how much of his own time to devote to diplomatic efforts, whether to appoint a special emissary, and whether to involve other parties more directly. We are also not in a position to suggest specific negotiating proposals.

Specifics aside, we believe the U.S. profile ought to retain its public traits of evenhandedness and visibility. We should avoid communicating the impression that we have backed away from trying to solve the problem. A sense of movement will also make it easier for nations not to feel compelled to choose sides. Continued U.S. diplomatic efforts will make it easier for us to argue that neither the UN nor the OAS should serve as an important negotiating venue. Such efforts on our part could also provide camouflage to conceal our private backing of the UK, while avoiding presenting the Soviets with easy opportunities to build contacts with the Argentines or make political capital out of a perceived U.S. tilt towards London. Getting Mrs. Thatcher to go along with this two-track policy on our part would require the Secretary's personal intervention to have any chance of success.

During this period, we should meet UK requests for fuel at Ascension, expanded intelligence, weather information, communications and limited logistics support. We should also be more forthcoming on particular material and equipment requests and engage in more detailed planning with the British so we would be in a position to meet quickly additional requests that would be sure to come in once hostilities were imminent or underway. Creating a special channel to manage such support for the British would be essential. It would reduce

the chance of leaks, assist us in coordinating the myriad British requests, and provide us with plausible deniability.

As regards Argentina, we should continue to avoid any punitive action which would undermine our ability to talk to the GOA with any chance of success. No letters thus ought to go to the Hill claiming GOA violation of U.S. law governing use of U.S.-origin equipment. At the same time, we should continue to withhold certification of FMS eligibility and avoid any imposition of sanctions.

*After Shooting Starts:* As has been apparent, we believe our goal once hostilities begin should be to bring about a rapid, clear-cut British military victory. Prolonged hostilities would not only work against British political and military interests, but the longer hostilities continued the more countries would be forced to take sides and the more opportunities the Soviets would receive. Our diplomacy, both as regards any cease-fire or proposed "solution", ought to be tailored to meet British political and military interests, which in turn will be largely determined by the course of the fighting.

UK requirements for U.S. assistance would be considerable. Possible requests include more fuel and supplies, medical and maintenance support, specialized munitions, ECM capabilities, and increased intelligence (mostly current or tactical). We might also receive requests for long-legged cargo and troop transport aircraft, landing craft, mine countermeasures capability, and other combat-related equipment. We do not expect any request for U.S. combat force involvement in hostilities. Other than suspending the pre-1978 pipeline (some \$3.9 million worth of military items, largely spare parts), we do not see much we could do to affect Argentina's military capability.

Our own military options would depend in part upon circumstances within Argentina and decisions taken in Moscow. Large scale E&E would not be a realistic proposition. The protection of U.S. citizens and personnel will be in the hands of the GOA. We could, however, affect GOA behavior by our own diplomatic and military posturing. That said, we cannot repeat the critical error of our predecessors and have American foreign policy paralyzed by concern for U.S. citizens in foreign countries.

What the Soviets would do remains an unknown. Our objective must be to keep the Soviets away from the area and minimize their role in the crisis. We have asked the JCS to look into possible Soviet options and what we might do to meet them. It is conceivable the Soviets would try to bring air and naval units into the vicinity in an attempt to pose as Argentina's protector; if this became the case, we would want to respond, and perhaps preempt, with more capable forces of our own. The forces we are massing in the Caribbean (including carrier battle groups) for Exercise Ocean Venture provide a possible

reservoir to draw on. An imposing U.S. show of force might not only deter any Soviet military moves, but could lead the Argentines to reconsider any decision to accept Soviet military help or threaten U.S. citizens in country.

This is a rough first cut at the problem. Much of what we have had to say may not mesh with the situation the Secretary finds himself in after his talks in BA. Nonetheless, what does emerge from this analysis is the requirement that we not make short-term decisions—public statements, negotiating mechanisms, warnings to the British, etc.—without reference to our long-term undeniable objective of seeing Britain come out of this crisis with its confidence and close ties to the United States intact.