

146. Telegram From Secretary of State Haig to the Embassy in the United Kingdom¹

Buenos Aires, April 18, 1982, 0436Z

Secto 6034. Subject: Falkland Islands Crisis.

1. Secret—Entire text.

2. Please pass the following message from the Secretary to the Foreign Secretary.² Begin text:

Dear Francis:

Based on the unacceptable language which I received, and sent to you last night (Friday),³ I threatened to break off this process. As a result, I was invited to meet with the Junta, and spent two hours with them this morning (Saturday).⁴ The character of the group is essentially as I imagined: Galtieri is the least bright and given to bluster; the Admiral is ultra-hard-line; the Air Force General is bright, political, reasonable—relatively speaking—but clearly third in influence.

3. I impressed on these men in the strongest terms that British resolve was beyond doubt, and that they were on a collision course with military humiliation and economic ruin. With the possible exception of the Admiral—whose definition of glory has little to do with the concept of military success—I would say these men are worried. They

¹ Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File 04/18/1982 (1). Secret; Niact Immediate; Nodis. Sent for information Niact Immediate to the Department of State.

² Haig sent a shorter, less descriptive version of this message to the Department in telegram Secto 6032 from Buenos Aires, April 18. (Ibid.)

³ April 16. See Document 141.

⁴ April 17. See Document 142.

are feeling the pressure of your fleet, though it would be a serious mistake for you to assume they are not prepared to fight.

4. The Junta urged me to stay and try to “solve the problem” with the Foreign Minister. In hopes that they would impart flexibility to their negotiators, I agreed to do so. The ten-hour session that ensued was excruciatingly difficult.⁵ We spent most of that time on the language dealing with the terms of reference for the negotiations on the definitive status of the Islands. Your language was rejected out of hand. I pressed upon them language that avoids prejudging the sovereignty issue while preserving what you must have with regard to the rights of the Islanders. The Argentines are now developing a new formulation, but I expect it will be pregnant with the concept of assured Argentine sovereignty.

5. The issue of travel, trade, etc., in the interim period was also hotly contested. There will be no agreement unless it involves a clear prospect of genuine promotion of various forms of interaction, with the necessary safeguards to prevent what the Prime Minister fears could occur.

6. We are also encountering difficulty on the question of interim administration, though the integrity of the idea we discussed in London has been maintained.

7. Finally, though we did not discuss it at length, there was a definite foreshadowing of serious problems on the question of military disengagement—i.e. stopping the fleet and removing the submarines. I think this matter can be settled in terms acceptable to the UK, though not without more flexibility than I encountered in London. All in all, as of now the situation is grim. I will receive a new Argentine text⁶ during the night and then decide whether or not to break off.

8. I will only consider coming to London if the Argentines give me a text that goes well beyond their position today. I do not want to shift the spotlight onto you if it is clear that the Argentine proposal is

⁵ No memorandum of conversation of this drafting session has been found. Following his morning meeting with the Junta, Haig wrote: “We adjourned to draft yet another new set of proposals. Again the result was impasse. When, late at night, it seemed that progress was impossible, I played a wild card. Although the British in fact told us nothing of their military plans, the Argentinians plainly believed that we knew everything they did. Possibly this misconception could be useful. I called Bill Clark at the White House on an open line, knowing the Argentinians would monitor the call, and told him in a tone of confidentiality that British military action was imminent. At 2:00 A.M. on April 18, new proposals were delivered to me at the hotel together with an invitation to resume the negotiations at the Casa Rosada at two o’clock in the afternoon.” (Haig, *Caveat*, p. 288) Haig later sent a message to Clark explaining his reasoning for the telephone call and commented that Clark “handled it on the phone precisely as I had hoped.” (Telegram Secto 6047 from Buenos Aires, April 18; Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File 04/18/1982 (3))

⁶ See footnote 2, Document 147.

unacceptable. Even if I do not come to London, I will of course send you the Argentine text.

9. If I suspend my mission tomorrow morning, I will leave no doubt where lies responsibility for the impasse.⁷

Warm regards,

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End text.

Haig

⁷ On the morning of April 18, Pym replied: "You are clearly making super-human efforts to achieve a reasonable result. We in London are most grateful." "If," he continued, "you were to conclude that you could not continue your mission for the time being, we should need a little time to consider what to do next. If you announced a decision to suspend your efforts before we had decided with you on next steps, the diplomatic initiative might pass to others. We should therefore be most grateful to know your intentions in good time before any announcement. One way of holding the position might be for you to say on leaving Buenos Aires that the Argentines had not tried seriously to negotiate a reasonable outcome and that you would be reporting on the situation to the President and discussing further steps with him." A typewritten copy of the message was delivered by the British Embassy to Eagleburger, under a covering letter from Henderson, April 18. (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, P880104-1239). The text of the message was cabled to Haig in telegram 8371 from London, April 18. (Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, United Kingdom (04/01/1982-07/31/1982) (2))