

169. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom¹

Washington, April 24, 1982, 0428Z

110698. Subject: Falkland Islands Crisis—Message to the Prime Minister.

1. Secret—Entire text.
2. Please deliver the following message to the PM from Secretary Haig at opening of business, Saturday, April 24.
3. Begin text:

Dear Madame Prime Minister:

—Francis Pym and I have just concluded our discussions,² which were characterized throughout by the clear sense of common interests that we have had since the very outset of this crisis. He will be bringing back to London a text which I put forward as a basis for a peaceful settlement.³ Francis made it very clear that some of what I suggested presented problems, and that he could not make any promises on whether you could accept the text as presented.

—As you know, we have been guided all along by the same aims and principles as you, both because the United Kingdom is our closest friend and because we have a common view of what is at stake.

¹ Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Europe and Soviet Union, United Kingdom (04/01/1982–07/31/1982) (4). Secret; Niact Immediate; Nodis.

² See Documents 163, 164, 165, and 166. Haig also dispatched a brief message to Costa Méndez summarizing the discussions with Pym, noting “we have made a serious effort and have done our best to make progress.” (Telegram 111147 to Buenos Aires, April 24; Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File 04/24/1982)

³ See footnote 2, Document 170.

—What follows are our views on the text Francis is carrying. I by no means intend to preempt his report to you but simply want you to know how we in Washington see it.

—The text I have asked Francis to bring to London is, I believe, sensitive to your need to be faithful to your pledge to Parliament. Moreover, if it were accepted by both parties, it would most certainly not leave the aggressor in occupation.

—The text provides all the safeguards needed to block, if need be, the sort of Argentine saturation of the Islands that you, quite rightly, consider unacceptable. It lays open the possibility of relinquishment of British sovereignty at the end of negotiations, while neither prejudging this outcome nor setting aside the wishes of the Islanders. It provides for substantial restoration of the previous administration.

—Whether the text we have suggested would be accepted in Buenos Aires I cannot say. It would certainly require the Argentines to move well beyond their positions at the end of my latest visit there. I am sure, however, that any text more unfavorable to the Argentines than what we have suggested would stand no chance of acceptance. We are at the point now where we have only the finest tolerance between a peaceful solution and tragedy.

—We have known all along that at some point the United States would need to offer a view on the substance of an agreement. Consistent with our common aims, as well as our assessment of what is required to avert further hostilities, we believe that an agreement based on the text we have offered would be fair, just, and responsible. We are prepared to send it to the Argentines as a US proposal, to press them to accept it, and to defend it in public come what may. Indeed, we would tell them that there is no possibility of further movement on the UK side and absolutely no inclination on the part of the US to seek further movement. The choice would then be theirs.

—Clearly our actions must be able to withstand public scrutiny. This means that positions we take can be defended as fair and just. In our view, this text meets that test. But we must also be able to show that we went as far as we humanly could, without abandoning our principles or historic responsibilities, in order to avoid loss of life. If we can show this, and also that our two countries held a common position, we will have done all that could be asked of us.

—I am sure you will want to give the text careful study. I would like to be in a position to present it to the Argentine Foreign Minister on Sunday morning.⁴

⁴ April 25.

—We would simultaneously present it formally to the UK, telling you, as we would the Argentines, that we consider this a fair proposal that we think both sides should be able to accept.

—Therefore, we would be grateful for a reaction from you by Saturday evening.⁵

—This crisis, and the way we have worked together during it, have made even clearer to me the great strength of our friendship and the identity of our values.

With warm regards,
Al Haig. End text.

Haig

⁵ See Document 173.