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DESKBY 240800Z
FM WASHINGTON 240025Z APR 82
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 1428 OF 23 APRIL

MY TELEGRAM NO 1416: FALKLANDS : SATELLITE COVERAGE

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1. HAIG RAISED THIS WITH SECRETARY OF STATE THIS AFTERNOON THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAD BEEN INFORMED BY NASA OF THE ARGENTINIAN REQUEST SHORTLY AFTER WE HAD DRAWN IT TO THEIR ATTENTION. OUR EARLIER INFORMATION WAS SLIGHTLY INACCURATE. THE ARGENTINES HAD ASKED FOR COVERAGE OF SOUTH GEORGIA ITSELF ON 24 AND 25 APRIL AND OF THE OPEN OCEAN TO THE WEST OF THE ISLAND ON 25 AND 26 APRIL. THE REQUEST HAD BEEN RECEIVED LATE LAST NIGHT. NASA HEADQUARTERS HAD BEEN INFORMED AT 0830 THIS MORNING.

2. HAIG SAID THAT THIS REQUEST PLACED THE US IN A QUANDARY. IT WAS ENTIRELY WITHIN THE NORMAL CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT AND NASA. NORMALLY THE US WOULD HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO HONOUR IT. HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY THIS SATELLITE WERE NOT CAPABLE OF PROVIDING ANY INTELLIGENCE OF MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE. HE SOUGHT THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT SHOULD BE DONE.

3. AFTER A SHORT BREAK FOR CONSULTATION, THE SECRETARY OF STATE SAID THAT THIS HAD TO BE A US DECISION. BUT HE HOPED VERY STRONGLY THAT BY SOME MEANS OR ANOTHER IT COULD BE ARRANGED THAT THIS MATERIAL WAS NOT PASSED TO ARGENTINA. HE DID NOT FEEL COMPETENT HIMSELF TO JUDGE THE POSSIBLE MILITARY VALUE OR SUCH PICTURES BUT IT WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE INFINITELY BETTER IF THEY WERE NOT PROVIDED.

4. HAIG SAID HE WOULD HAVE BEEN SURPRISED IF THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S REACTION HAD BEEN ANY DIFFERENT. HE NOW FACED A DIFFICULT DECISION, ON WHICH HE WOULD NEED TO CONSULT THE PRESIDENT. BUT HE WANTED MR PYM TO KNOW THAT WHATEVER THE DECISION WAS IT HAD TO BE MEASURED AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF WHAT THE US WAS TRYING TO ACHIEVE. HE REPEATED THAT NO EXPERT ON THE US SIDE BELIEVED THAT THE SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHY CONCERNED HAD ANY MILITARY VALUE, GIVEN ITS VERY LOW RESOLUTION.

HENDERSON
LIMITED
HD/SAM
HD/DEFENCE
HD/PUS
RS
PS/PUS
MR GIFFARI

MR WRIGHT
MR URE
MR GILMORE

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