

192. Letter From Secretary of State Haig to Argentine Foreign Minister Costa Méndez¹

Washington, April 29, 1982

Dear Nicanor:

Thank you for your letter of April 29.² I deeply regret that your Government is still not able to accept the proposal for a diplomatic solution that we have developed in close consultation with yourself and President Galtieri and with British leaders.

I understand your continuing concerns. I have come to have a deep appreciation for the Argentine commitment to this national cause, and for the frustration you have felt in the long years of negotiations. But it has always been clear that a solution acceptable to both sides could not satisfy the most basic demands of either, at least during the initial period during which forces would be withdrawn and peace reestablished.

I am grateful for your expressions of friendship and satisfaction with the effort I have undertaken at the direction of President Reagan. We did so not only out of our friendship for both countries, but because our own national interest required us to do everything possible to prevent further conflict. We have been guided in this effort by UN Security Council Resolution 502, by our own firm principles regarding the use of force, and by the imperatives of the rule of law.

In carrying out this difficult task, we have attempted to treat both countries on an equitable basis. The proposal we presented to the two governments on Tuesday morning is a fair and reasonable solution.³ We are convinced that it would have brought peace and that its long term results would have been acceptable to your government as well as the Government of the United Kingdom.

While we continue to hope that a peaceful solution will be found, and will do everything that we can to assist such a solution, we have now entered a new phase in this difficult and tragic confrontation. As we discussed yesterday, the United States will have to make clear that

¹ Source: Department of State, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Miscellaneous Files, March 1981–February 1983, Lot 83D210, Falklands [Folder 1]. Secret. Drafted by Service; cleared by Enders and in substance by Gompert. Service initialed for both Enders and Gompert. A typewritten note at the top of the letter states that the original was given to the Argentine Embassy by ARA, April 29. The text of the letter was also transmitted by the Department to Buenos Aires in telegram 116645, April 30. (Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Latin America/Central, Argentina (04/28/1982–05/04/1982))

² See Document 189.

³ April 27. See footnote 3, Document 181.

we do not support the settlement of such disputes by the use of force.⁴ In this respect, it was your Government which precipitated the crisis by its use of force April 2.

Accordingly, I will make a public statement April 30 explaining our efforts to obtain a peaceful solution and noting your Government's failure to accept the proposal we put forward.⁵ I will point out that we had reason to hope that the UK Government could consider a settlement along the lines we proposed. I will also indicate the steps the U.S. believes it must now take in the economic and military fields.

In addition, because of the possibility of hostilities, we are today advising American citizens not to travel to Argentina. In that regard, I am concerned that United States efforts to achieve a peaceful solution may not be fully understood in Argentina and that some elements may take actions that could endanger the safety and well-being of U.S. citizens. If that should happen, the reaction in this country would be swift and overwhelming.

President Galtieri assured me during my most recent trip to Buenos Aires that all precautions would be taken to prevent any such incidents against official or private American citizens.⁶ We depend on that assurance and on the determination of the Government of Argentina to fulfill its obligations under international law.

I must tell you frankly that we will be considering other measures in the coming days which would have even greater impact on your country and our relations. I hope that it will not be necessary to take such additional steps, but you must know that we are considering them and that if the situation continues to deteriorate, they will become a very real possibility.

I pray that your people and those of the United Kingdom can be spared the hardship and human tragedy of renewed conflict. We remain prepared to assist in achieving a diplomatic solution at any time your Government believes we could again serve that role.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Haig, Jr.⁷

⁴ See Document 187.

⁵ See Document 196.

⁶ See Document 131.

⁷ Haig signed the letter "Al" above his typed signature.