

**292. Telegram From the Mission to the United Nations to the Department of State<sup>1</sup>**

New York, May 26, 1982, 0200Z

1470. For Asst. Sec. Enders from Amb. Kirkpatrick. Subj: Falkland Islands Situation: Amb. Kirkpatrick's Meeting with Gen. Miret.

1. (Secret-Entire text)

2. At his request, Amb. Kirkpatrick and Amb. Sorzano met with Argentinian Air Force General Jose Miret evening of May 24. Alberto Manen, Air Attache's aide with Argentina's Embassy in Washington, accompanied Gen. Miret but did not attend meeting.

3. Gen. Miret began by acknowledging that Argentina had committed "original sin" in invading the Falklands and continued by repeating the well-known Argentinian views on the history of the Falklands over the last 150 years, British inflexibility and the failure of more than a decade of negotiations which eventually culminated in the invasion. Miret then gave Argentinian version of the respective mediating efforts of Secretary Haig and SYG Perez de Cuellar. The failure of these efforts had led to the present situation and raised the concerns which he wanted to discuss.

4. According to Gen. Miret the military situation was developing favorably for Argentina. Just that morning 21 Argentinian warplanes had attacked British ships and had inflicted severe damage to the Canberra troop carrier. Yesterday they had sunk a frigate.<sup>2</sup> British were not accurately portraying their losses and he was skeptical that their San Carlos beachhead was as well established as they claimed. Although presently the military situation favored Argentina, Argentina was aware that ultimately Britain would prevail because Argentina could not expect to defeat a world power. Argentina naturally did not want to lose but neither did it find comfort in the thought of winning in a manner that would humiliate Britain.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File 05/26/1982. Secret; Sensitive; Immediate; Nodis. Printed from a copy that was received in the White House Situation Room.

<sup>2</sup> Argentine air attacks on May 24 struck numerous British vessels in San Carlos Water, although *Canberra* was not among those hit. (Freedman, *Official History*, vol. II, pp. 477-479) On May 23, the British frigate HMS *Antelope* was attacked by Argentine aircraft in San Carlos Water and struck by two bombs which failed to explode. One bomb exploded during an attempt to disarm it, forcing the ship's abandonment and ultimate sinking the following day. Situation Report Number 68 (as of 1700 hours, May 24), transmitted in telegram 142578 to all diplomatic and consular posts, May 25, described the ship as "abandoned." (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820271-0728)

5. Yet the prolongation of the war had its own danger. It provided opportunity for the Cubans and Soviets to increase their meddling in Hemispheric affairs. Britain's expansion of the war zone to include the River Plate estuary necessarily dragged Uruguay and probably Brazil into the conflict. Uruguayan Foreign Minister was coming to New York to raise the issue. As the conflict expands and its intensity increases, it will become increasingly difficult to foresee its consequences or to find an acceptable solution.

6. Gen. Miret said the Argentinian Government is convinced that the U.S. must play a mediating role in the conflict. This role could be either a public or a behind-the-scenes one, but either way U.S. mediation is necessary because only the U.S. can influence the U.K. to adopt a position conducive to the termination of hostilities. Without an American restraining influence, Britain will insist on pursuing its military objectives until the bitter end. The bitter end will be bitter indeed for all except the Communists.

7. Within Argentine Government, the U.S. has friends as well as foes. There are those—the hardliners—who are advocating an escalation of diplomatic measures starting with the withdrawal of Argentinian representatives to the Inter-American Defense Board and culminating with the withdrawal of Ambassadors. This rupture of relations was opposed by another faction of military chiefs that see this as necessarily leading to an Argentinian embrace of the Soviet Union. After the violent struggle against domestic guerrillas and terrorists it would be ironic to hand to the Soviets what they had been denied by effective counter-terrorist action.

8. Finally, turning to the U.N. Security Council situation, Miret indicated that Brazilian draft was acceptable to the chiefs of the Argentina Junta.

**Kirkpatrick**