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CINCFLEET

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TO FLASH FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 327 OF 17 JUNE 1982

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, BERNE, BRASILIA, MONTEVIDEO, UKMIS GENEVA, UKMIS NEW YORK, MCDUK(DS5, DS11, S.C. AND L), CINCFLEET.

YOUR TELNO 124 TO BERNE: REPATRIATION OF ARGENTINE POWS.

1. I SAW ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER GENERAL COVARRUBIAS AT 1930Z, SPOKE AS INSTRUCTED AND HANDED HIM AN AIDE MEMOIRE FULLY REHEARSING OUR ARGUMENTS. HE CONFIRMED AGAIN THAT CHILE WAS WILLING TO OFFER PUNTA ARENAS AS A STAGING POINT FOR THE RETURN OF ARGENTINE POWS, IF ARGENTINA WAS AGREEABLE AND SO INFORMED THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, HE THOUGHT IT UNLIKELY ARGENTINA WOULD AGREE, AS THEY WOULD NOT WANT CHILEANS OR OTHERS TO SEE THE STATE THE ARGENTINE PRISONERS ARE IN.
2. COVARRUBIAS SUGGESTED THAT WE BRING MAXIMUM PRESSURE TO BEAR THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS NOT ONLY TO PERSUADE ARGENTINA OF SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION, BUT ALSO TO PUBLICISE THIS AS WIDELY AS POSSIBLE AND ENLIST HELP OF OTHERS, EG UN SECRETARY-GENERAL, PERU AND VENEZUELA, WHO SHOULD CARRY SOME WEIGHT IN BUENOS AIRES.
3. I ALSO MENTIONED POSSIBILITY OF CHILE SUPPLYING SHIPS TO EVACUATE ARGENTINE POWS (YOUR TELNO 266, NOT TO ALL). COVARRUBIAS SEEMED WELL-DISPOSED TO THIS IDEA, ALWAYS PROVIDED THE ARGENTINES GAVE THEIR AGREEMENT. HE STRESSED THAT THE CHILEAN NAVY'S ANTARCTIC RESEARCH SHIP QUOTE PILOTO PARDO UNQUOTE HAD VERY LIMITED CAPACITY, BUT SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO THIS. MY DA HAS MENTIONED THIS IDEA INDEPENDENTLY TO ADMIRAL POISSON (CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF) WHO REACTED SIMILARLY, AND SAID THAT QUOTE PILOTO PARDO UNQUOTE WAS ONLY SUITABLE SHIP FOR THIS PURPOSE. GRATEFUL TO KNOW WHETHER THIS REQUIREMENT STILL EXISTS IN VIEW OF RECENT REASSESSMENT OF NUMBERS OF ARGENTINE PRISONERS ON THE FALKLANDS.

HICKMAN

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