

GRS 310

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FM WASHINGTON 292200Z JUN 82

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 2285 OF 29 JUNE

ARGENTINE PRISONERS.

1. HAIG, WHO IS STILL CARRYING OUT THE FUNCTIONS OF SECRETARY OF STATE, HAS TELEPHONED ME TO ASK, OFF THE RECORD, WHAT IN THE LONGER TERM WE ARE THINKING OF DOING WITH THE ARGENTINIAN PRISONERS. HE SAID THAT THE NEW ARGENTINIAN PRESIDENT HAS MADE AN APPROACH TO THE US GOVERNMENT ASKING FOR HELP IN GETTING THE PRISONERS RELEASED.

2. I SAID THAT OUR ATTITUDE WAS QUITE CLEAR. WE WERE NOT HANDING BACK PRISONERS WHO MIGHT CONCEIVABLY BE OF MILITARY USE AGAINST US IN THE ABSENCE OF AN OVERALL CEASEFIRE. SO FAR AS I KNEW NO COUNTRY HANDED PRISONERS OF WAR BACK BEFORE A CEASEFIRE. WE WOULD LOOK PRETTY ABSURD IF, IN THE ABSENCE OF A CEASEFIRE, WE HANDED THESE PEOPLE BACK AND THEY THEN LAUNCHED SOME AIR ATTACK UPON US.

3. HAIG SAID THAT HE WAS QUITE SURE THAT THEY WERE NOT GOING TO GO IN FOR FURTHER HOSTILITIES AGAINST US FOR A VERY, VERY LONG TIME. NEVERTHELESS HE SAW OUR ARGUMENT. HE WAS NOT WANTING TO GIVE US ADVICE OR EXERT PRESSURE. HE JUST THOUGHT THAT THERE WAS A DANGER OF US BEING SADDLED WITH A LONG-TERM PROBLEM, NOT TO SAY A CAUSE CELEBRE IN THE HEMISPHERE.

4. HE REPEATED THAT HE WAS NOT WANTING TO MAKE ANY RECOMMENDATION. BUT HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE NEED TO GET BACK TO NORMAL RELATIONS WITH ARGENTINA. HE KNEW THAT I REALISED THAT HE, HAIG, HAD NO BRIEF FOR THE PRESENT ARGENTINIAN LEADERS AND HE WAS NOT TRYING TO MAKE EXCUSES ON THEIR BEHALF. IT WAS JUST THAT SOMETHING WORSE COULD TURN UP THERE AND WE COULD BE STUCK WITH AN AWKWARD PROBLEM.

HENDERSON

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