

426. Memorandum From the Deputy Director for Operations, Central Intelligence Agency (Stein) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Enders), the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Burt), the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Montgomery), the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (Williams), and the Senior Staff Member of the National Security Council¹

Washington, March 14, 1983

SUBJECT

Significant New Information Available to the Leadership of the Argentine Army on Alleged U.S. Support to the British During the Falklands War

THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE.

Summary: On 9 March, the Commander of the Argentine Army was given significant new information on alleged U.S. support to the British during the Falklands War. Even before that information was received, the leadership of the Army was coming to the conclusion that the United States had indeed provided substantial support to the British and that the U.S. Government is basically antagonistic to the Argentine Government. The next three weeks are likely to produce renewed anti-American sentiments within Argentina and within the Argentine Army.

Text: 1. [3 lines not declassified]

2. On 8 March 1983, an officer attached to the office of the Argentine Army Attache in Washington returned to Buenos Aires to provide General Cristino Nicolaides, Commander of the Army, with new information he had obtained on alleged U.S. support to the British during the Falklands War. The officer, who briefed Nicolaides on 9 March, said he had obtained his information from U.S. officials in Washington. In his briefing, the officer provided extensive information on the alleged U.S. support to the British, including the provision of major materiel support and the widespread passage of U.S. intelligence information, including signals intelligence, reports from human sources, [*less than 1 line not declassified*]. The officer provided evidence that the alleged U.S. support had been much more extensive than officials of the Argentine Army had previously believed; he also showed that this alleged

¹ Source: Reagan Library, Roger W. Fontaine Files, Falklands/Malvinas 1983. Secret; [*handling restriction not declassified*]. At the top of the memorandum, Clark wrote: "Staff—WPC." The source of the information is noted as FIRDB-312/00760-83.

U.S. support was extensive both during and after the period when the U.S. was involved in trying to arrange a peaceful settlement of the issue.

3. On the basis of information the officer said he had obtained in Washington, he told Nicolaides that the Argentine Government should not underestimate the extent of British influence within the U.S. Government. The officer said the U.S. Government had been tending toward a decision to give Argentina the certification required to permit U.S. military sales to Argentina. However, the officer said, British pressure and influence on the U.S. Executive Branch and the U.S. Congress had lead the U.S. Government to decide that it would not grant certification unless it could obtain a major concession from the Argentine Government. The officer said this concession probably would be in the form of a request that Argentina provide support to counterinsurgency activities in El Salvador. Such support, the officer told Nicolaides, might prove to be a requirement before any U.S. decision to grant certification to Argentina.

4. Nicolaides said he was very impressed by the information and views provided by the officer.

5. (Source Comments:

a. The officer is considered to be very knowledgeable about the U.S. Government because of his extensive contacts among U.S. military and civilian officials in Washington. Thus, his information and views are considered very credible by Argentine military officials.

b. Argentine Navy officials have long believed that the U.S. provided extensive support to the British during the War; the Navy's refusal to join this year's United International Antisubmarine Warfare (UNITAS) exercise, and the public declaration of the reasons for that refusal, clearly show the Navy's attitude. For a long time, this attitude was not shared by the Army leadership, which believed the Navy was exaggerating the levels of U.S. support to the British. Within recent months, however, the Army has moved closer to the Navy position, not only in its understanding of the extent of alleged U.S. support to the British but also in its view that the U.S. Government is basically antagonistic to the Argentine Government. For the Argentine Army leadership, one demonstration of this alleged U.S. antagonism was the distribution by the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires of a study on Cuban subversion, including Cuban assistance to subversion in Argentina in the 1970s. This study was distributed right after Argentine President Reynaldo Bignone had publicly thanked Cuban President Fidel Castro for Cuba's assistance to Argentina during the Falklands War; the distribution of this U.S. study served to undermine Bignone's statement and his image at the meeting of the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) that he was attending in New Delhi. The U.S. Government may believe that there is opposition within the Argentine Army to Argentina's participa-

tion in the NAM and to Bignone's presence at the meeting in New Delhi. This interpretation is erroneous; the Argentine Army supports Argentina's role in the NAM, and the Junta—including the Army—approved Bignone's travel to New Delhi. Thus, the distribution of the U.S. study—which attacked a Cuba that had just been lauded by Argentina—was interpreted by the Argentine Army as a direct affront to Argentina and to the Army itself.

c. The commemoration of the 2 April anniversary of the Argentine landing on the Falkland Islands will be an emotional event for the Argentine Army. This anniversary will also revive bitterness over the alleged U.S. support to the British. The period before and during the anniversary commemorations is likely to produce renewed anti-American sentiments within Argentina and within the Argentine Army.)

6. The above information is being made available to the U.S. Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Defense Attache in Buenos Aires; and to principal officers in London.

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² Printed from a copy that indicates that Duane R. Clarridge signed for Stein.