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PERSONAL FOR TATHAM, FID

UK/ARGENTINA: STATEMENT BY MARINE INFANTRY CORPS COMMANDER

1. LA PRENSA OF 7 OCTOBER CARRIES AN ARTICLE BY HORACIO PAGANO (FAX TO FID) REPORTING A NAVAL CEREMONY HE HAD ATTENDED AT PUERTO BELGRANO. PAGANO SAYS THAT AT THE CEREMONY HE ASKED THE MARINE INFANTRY CORPS COMMANDER, NAVAL CAPTAIN CARLOS ROBACIO (A FALKLANDS VETERAN), WHAT HE THOUGHT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TOWARDS BRITAIN. ROBACIO REPLIED THAT WHAT HAD BEEN DONE IN APRIL 1982 HAD BEEN DONE WELL BECAUSE OTHERWISE THE BRITISH WOULD NOT NOW BE PREPARED TO TALK. HE WENT ON: 'THEY ARE ALL MEANS OF RETURNING, NOW BY PEACE AND WITH WAR WAITING FOR LATER.'

2. I DREW THIS ARTICLE TO OTEGUI'S ATTENTION ON 9 OCTOBER. I SAID I WAS OBLIGED TO REPORT IT TO LONDON BUT IF I DID SO WITHOUT COMMENTARY UNTOLD DAMAGE COULD BE DONE TO THE DELICATE PROCESS IN WHICH WE WERE ENGAGED. OTEGUI UNDERTOOK TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER AND COME BACK TO ME, WHICH HE DID ON 10 OCTOBER. HE SAID IT WAS EVIDENT THAT ROBACIO'S STATEMENT WAS AN ISOLATED PERSONAL OPINION. THESE THINGS REGRETTABLY HAPPENED. STEPS HAD BEEN TAKEN TO REGISTER OUR CONCERN.

COMMENT

3. THE INTERVIEW WAS BURIED IN THE MIDDLE OF AN ARTICLE WHICH APPEARED ONLY IN LA PRENSA AND WILL HARDLY HAVE BEEN NOTICED BY ANYONE. BUT ASSUMING ROBACIO WAS QUOTED ACCURATELY IT IS A DISTURBING REMINDER OF THE MINDSET OF SOME MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

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