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TOP SECRET UMBRA

FLASH FCO, TEL AVIV (FOR PRIVATE SECRETARY)

TOP SECRET

UMBRA

YOUR TELNO 614: FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. I HAVE SEEN HAIG. I REFERRED TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT WHICH HE SAID HE HAD SEEN. HE TOLD ME THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT YOU HAD BEEN DISSATISFIED WITH THE AMERICAN ATTITUDE AS CONVEYED BY STOESSEL TO ME ON 29 MARCH. I SAID THAT THIS WAS CERTAINLY SO. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT UNDERSTOOD THE AMERICAN WISH NOT TO TAKE SIDES IN A POLITICAL DISPUTE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS: BUT WHAT WE WERE INVOLVED WITH NOW WAS SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT, A POTENTIALLY FORCEFUL THREAT TO BRITISH SOVEREIGNTY. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAD HELPED AMERICA IN DIFFICULT TIMES EVEN THOUGH IT WAS HARD FOR US TO DO SO AND WE THOUGHT WE WERE NOT BEING UNREASONABLE IN ASKING THE US FOR BACKING WHEN A THREAT TO TERRITORY OCCURRED, PARTICULARLY IN THE AMERICAN HEMISPHERE.

2. HAIG INTERJECTED IMMEDIATELY THAT THE BRITISH HAD INDEED STOOD BY THE AMERICANS. HE WOULD NEVER FORGET WHAT YOU HAD DONE. THEY HAD EVERY RIGHT TO EXPECT SOMETHING IN RETURN.

3. I WENT ON TO GIVE HIM AN ACCOUNT OF THE CURRENT MILITARY THREAT TO THE FALKLAND ISLANDS OUTLINING SOME OF THE INTELLIGENCE UPON WHICH OUR FEARS ABOUT ARGENTINIAN INTENTIONS WERE BASED. IN PARTICULAR I MENTIONED THE ARGENTINE ASSAULT FORCE COMPRISING SEVERAL UNITS INCLUDING A LANDING FORCE, THAT WE KNEW WAS INTENDED TO REACH ITS DESTINATION BY EARLY ON THE MORNING OF 2 APRIL, THIS WOULD BE COMPATIBLE WITH ARRIVAL AT PORT STANLEY. A SUBMARINE WITH ORDERS TO CARRY OUT BEACH RECONNAISSANCE FOR AN AMPHIBIOUS LANDING WAS ALSO IN THE AREA AS WAS A NAVAL TRANSPORT VESSEL. I MENTIONED FURTHER INDICATIONS OF ARGENTINE PREPARATIONS FOR MILITARY ACTION INCLUDING INCREASED INTELLIGENCE GATHERING AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE ARGENTINE SUBMARINE FLEET. I ALSO REFERRED TO THE ARGENTINE AIR FORCE FLIGHTS OVER THE FALKLAND ISLANDS YESTERDAY.

4. THIS WAS BACKED UP BY EXTREMELY DELICATE INTELLIGENCE SUGGESTING THAT THE ARGENTINE MILITARY JUNTA WERE CONTEMPLATING ACTION.

5. THE FACT THAT THE ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD BEEN OVERRULED BY THE JUNTA WHEN HE WAS PURSUING A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION ALSO POINTED IN A DANGEROUS DIRECTION. HAIG JUMPED IN TO SAY THAT THIS WAS ALL HORRIFYING AND TOTALLY NEW TO HIM. NO WONDER WE WERE CONCERNED BY THE AMERICAN RESPONSE. ALL HE HAD KNOWN WAS THE STORY ABOUT THE LAND OF A SMALL NUMBER OF ARGENTINIANS IN SOUTH GEORGIA. BUT WHAT I HAD JUST TOLD HIM WAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT MATTER AND REQUIRED THE MOST URGENT ACTION. HE REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT HE HAD BEEN GIVEN NO INTELLIGENCE OF THIS KIND. THE MEMBERS OF HIS STAFF WHO WERE PRESENT, SOME OF WHOM I KNOW WERE AWARE OF THE SAME MATERIAL, REMAINED SILENT.

6. ENDERS, WHO WAS WITH US, SAID THAT THEY HAD RECEIVED AN ASSURANCE FROM THE ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER THAT THE ARGENTINIANS WERE NOT CONTEMPLATING CONFRONTATION: INDEED THEY HAD HAD THIS ASSURANCE CONFIRMED.

7. I SAID THAT OUR REPORTS OF THE LINE BEING TAKEN BY THE ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER WERE VERY DIFFERENT. HE WAS FINDING ALL SORTS OF REASONS WHY THE FAR-REACHING OFFERS WE HAD MADE FOR DIPLOMATIC SOLUTIONS OF THE PROBLEM WERE NOT FEASIBLE. WE HAD GONE SO FAR AS TO TELL HIM OF OUR READINESS



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8. THE ONLY PERSON WHO, I TOLD HAIG, COULD AT THIS HOUR AVERT A VERY DANGEROUS COURSE BY THE ARGENTINE MILITARY AUTHORITIES WOULD BE THE ARGENTINE PRESIDENT HIMSELF. FOR THAT TO HAPPEN IT WOULD BE ESSENTIAL FOR THE PRESIDENT TO SEND A VERY FIRM MESSAGE VERY SOON. I UNDERLINED TO HAIG HOW EARLY THE ARGENTINIANS MIGHT BE INTENDING TO ACT.

9. HAIG SAID THAT HE MUST GET INTO ACTION IMMEDIATELY ON THIS SUBJECT. THERE WAS NO QUESTION ABOUT THE NEED TO SUPPORT THE BRITISH ON THIS MATTER OF STOPPING THE USE OF ARGENTINIAN FORCE. HE REPEATED AGAIN HIS UNAWARENESS OF WHAT HAD BEEN HAPPENING. HE WOULD DO EVERYTHING HE COULD TO ENSURE THAT A MESSAGE WENT OFF TO THE ARGENTINE PRESIDENT FORTHWITH.

10. IT IS WORTH BEARING IN MIND HOW INTENSELY THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAVE BEEN FOCUSSING ON EL SALVADOR. I WAS TOLD HOW HELPFUL THE ARGENTINIANS HAD BEEN OVER EL SALVADOR WHICH MAY PARTLY EXPLAIN THE RELUCTANCE OF THE AMERICANS TO TAKE OFF THE GLOVES WITH THEM OVER THE FALKLANDS. BUT I AM SURE HAIG WILL DO SO NOW