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DESKBY 280800Z

FM WASHINGTON 271950Z APR 82

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1460 OF 27 APRIL

27 APR

PS/Mr. Nott

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YOUR TELNO 848; FALKLANDS

1. IT HAS NOT BEEN TOO EASY TO GET OUR WAY WITH THE AMERICANS ON THIS SUBJECT. THE MINISTER HAS DISCUSSED IT WITH EAGLEBURGER AND I WITH HAIG. THE LATTER SAYS THAT IF HE IS TO GET THE MESSAGE ACROSS TO THE ARGENTINIANS EFFECTIVELY AND IF HE IS TO AVOID COMPROMISING THE SOURCE, HE MUST SAY TO THE ARGENTINIANS THAT HE IS ASKING THEM AND US TO AVOID INCIDENTS IN THE MEZ DURING THE PRESENT CRITICAL PERIOD.

2. I HAVE POINTED OUT TO HAIG THAT SUCH AN EVEN-HANDED MESSAGE COULD ENCOURAGE THE ARGENTINIANS TO BELIEVE THAT WE WERE BEING ADVISED NOT TO TAKE ANY ACTION IN THE EXCLUSION ZONE. IT WOULD BE WRONG TO SEND THEM SUCH A SIGNAL WHEN WE WERE WANTING TO MAINTAIN THE MILITARY PRESSURE.

3. HAIG SAID THAT HE WOULD ADD TO THE MESSAGE TO THE ARGENTINIANS THAT HE DID NOT AT ALL KNOW IF THE BRITISH WOULD ACCEDE TO HIS REQUEST FOR RESTRAINT AND THAT IT WOULD BE UNWISE FOR THE ARGENTINIANS TO ASSUME THAT THEY COULD ACT WITH IMPUNITY IN THE ZONE. I ASKED HAIG WHETHER HE COULD NOT BEGIN BY SENDING A STRAIGHTFORWARD MESSAGE TO THE ARGENTINIANS WITHOUT ANY REFERENCE TO A PARALLEL MESSAGE TO US; AND THEN AT A LATER STAGE IF THEY PROTESTED THAT HE WAS BEING ONE-SIDED, COULD SAY THAT HE WAS ALSO SENDING SOMETHING TO US THOUGH HE COULD NOT GIVE ANY ASSURANCE ABOUT HOW WE WOULD RESPOND. BUT HAIG SAID THAT TO BE EFFECTIVE HE WAS SURE THAT HE MUST GIVE THE WHOLE MESSAGE NOW.

4. I SAID THAT IT WOULD BE QUITE DISASTROUS TO ANY PROSPECT OF NEGOTIATIONS IF THE ARGENTINIANS DID SINK ONE OF OUR SHIPS AT THIS STAGE. HAIG SAID HE ENTIRELY AGREED. HE BELIEVED THAT HIS MESSAGE WOULD SERVE AS A CAUTION TO THEM. HE ADDED, SOMEWHAT MYSTERIOUSLY, THAT IN HIS VIEW THE STORY WAS A PIECE OF DISINFORMATION.

HENDERSON