

261. Telegram From the Department of State to Secretary of State Haig in Ankara¹

Washington, May 14, 1982, 0310Z

Tosec 70054/130929. For the Secretary from Enders. Subject: Next Steps in the Falklands.

1. We are not sure what the British deadline is for starting landing operations on the Falklands, but it is probably no later than May 17.² By then (barring a storm) all amphibious units in the South Atlantic will have closed on the islands, and the May 15 EC meeting should have extended the sanctions for a month.

2. The costs go up drastically for us when the British land on the Islands. Some action against mainland airfields is almost bound to precede landing, but may not be very effective. Once landed, it is likely to be some time before the outcome is known. There will be casualties, possibly on a large scale, and a storm of anti-American feeling in the Hemisphere. It is possible that Britain will not succeed—the worst of all possible outcomes for us, confronting us with the choice of doing what is necessary for Britain to succeed—and going down to defeat with the “colonialist” power. If the British do succeed, on the other hand, we are locked into a long term “anti-colonial” struggle on (in Latin terms) the wrong side. We lose either way.

3. The current negotiating position does not look promising. Thatcher on the phone to the President today was pessimistic.³ So apparently was Pym to you.⁴ Guerreiro also is not very hopeful, based on his contacts today.⁵

¹ Source: Department of State, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Miscellaneous Files, March 1981–February 1983, Lot 83D210, Falklands [Folder 1]. Secret; Niact Immediate; Nodis. In the right-hand margin of the telegram, Gompert wrote: “Enders thoughts on Falkland: Next Steps. *Enders* recommends you contact Pym; *Eagleburger* believes we should wait it out.” Haig wrote at the top and in the right-hand margin of the telegram: “*Dave*: It might be possible. However, I fear neither side is ready for final big steps required—what do you think? Larry should meet w/Henderson ASAP—review bidding and provide me refined thinking by mid-afternoon. *Larry only* w/Henderson.—He should discuss cautiously Option A (substance) thru modalities but only as (what if?).”

² Gompert wrote “(Monday)” in the space above the date. A report sent by USDAO in London to the DIA, dated May 13 and forwarded to Weinberger by General Brown the same day, concluded: “British task force is now nearing readiness for assault on Falklands and, barring diplomatic breakthrough and/or unfavorable weather conditions, probably will strike within seven to ten days of 820517.” (Washington National Records Center, OSD Files, FRC 330–84–0003, Argentina (Jan–15 May) 1982)

³ See Document 257.

⁴ No record of this exchange between Haig and Pym has been found.

⁵ Presumably May 13. See Document 255.

4. Walters reports⁶ the Junta unified on the current Argentine position of exclusive UN administration, freedom of movement and land purchase. By implication the neutral sovereignty paragraph may be acceptable. Walters did not directly bring up the South Georgia issue, because of its sensitivity.

5. You have Henderson report by septel.⁷ It is coordinate with the others.

6. It seems clear that without massive outside pressure, the Secretary General's effort will fail. That leaves us with three alternatives:

A.⁸ To attempt, with Brazil, to push the two parties into agreement—on the basis of one set of Islands, an essentially UN administration (the inevitable counterpart of a neutral negotiations paragraph), and freedom of movement to be made one of the subjects of negotiation.⁹ The problem is that the Secretary General's effort may already have lost credibility, and we may be throwing good money after bad. On the other hand, Brazil would no doubt prefer.¹⁰

B. To encourage Britain to tell the Secretary General that its flexibility is at an end (as I understand Argentina already has), without waiting for Perez to put forward a single piece of paper, thereby provoking an end to the mediation effort and a new Security Council meeting. Way would then be open for an immediate new negotiating proposal, which¹¹ might be Brazil-US telling the two sides what they can support. You and Guerreiro would meet in New York on Sunday¹² for the purpose; the two Presidents would approach Thatcher and Galtieri. Galtieri idea of a summit meeting could be dangled as bait, provided agreement can be reached beforehand.

C. Let nature take its course. Perez fails, Thatcher must land. And something like (B) emerges next week. The problem then is that Hemispheric opinion is even more violently opposed to US, we have a new

⁶ Not further identified and not found.

⁷ Gompert drew a line from this word and wrote: "(not yet rec'd)." See Document 259.

⁸ Haig circled A, B, and C in this and the following two paragraphs.

⁹ In this sentence, Haig underlined "one set of Islands" and numbered it "1," underlined "an essentially UN administration" and numbered it "2," numbered "the inevitable counterpart of a neutral negotiations paragraph" with "3," and numbered "freedom of movement" with a "4."

¹⁰ In the last two sentences, Haig underlined "have lost credibility" and "On the other hand, Brazil would no doubt prefer." In the right-hand margin, he placed a bracket next to the whole paragraph and wrote "this will be formula but not this way."

¹¹ Beginning with this word, Haig underlined the rest of the paragraph. Gompert wrote "?" in the right-hand margin next to this paragraph.

¹² May 16.

separation of forces problem, and we would be open to Suez-like charges of having stopped a winning operation at the critical point.

7. My own recommendation is that you seriously consider (A) or (B).¹³ In that case, you should call Pym immediately to set up the play. We would approach Figueiredo in Cleveland.¹⁴ I am not able (too late) to report to you Walt's¹⁵ view. My basic reasoning is that we should nail B.A. with the neutral negotiating paragraph now it is on the table.

8. Undersecretary Eagleburger's comment: Tom's description of the possible consequences of failure to reach a settlement may prove correct, but we have known of those possible costs for some time. Apparently Mrs. Thatcher reacted badly to today's call¹⁶ (so Henderson says). Unless we are prepared to put whatever pressure is necessary on HMG to settle, I see little reason to believe any US-Brazilian move can succeed. Maggie is not going to budge. Suez cuts two ways. I recommend we wait it out.¹⁷

Stoessel

¹³ Gompert underlined "seriously consider (A) or (B)" and wrote "*Enders*" in the right-hand margin.

¹⁴ Figueiredo left Washington on May 13 and traveled to Cleveland for a private visit.

¹⁵ Stoessel.

¹⁶ See Document 257.

¹⁷ Gompert placed a bracket in the right-hand margin next to the paragraph and wrote "*Eagleburger*" next to it.