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FOR CWG

IMMEDIATE 060705Z JUN 82

FROM COMMCEN FCO LONDON  
TO MODUK

SECRET

SIC EAA/19F

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DESKBY 060800Z TO ALL

FM SANTIAGO 060450Z JUN 82

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 280 OF 6 JUNE 1982

INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK (SIC EAA/19F)

YOUR TELNO 254: CHILEAN EXERCISES. (NOT TO MODUK).

1. HOWARD MAY HAVE BEEN INADVERTENTLY MISQUOTED

A) HE DID NOT SPEAK TO HEAD OF CHANCERY-ABOUT THIS.

B) THE EXERCISE IN QUESTION IS NOT MERELY NAVAL BUT PURPORTS TO BE A MAJOR ARMY EXERCISE WITH NAVAL AND AIR SUPPORT.

2. IT IS HOWEVER TRUE THAT OVER PAST FEW DAYS, WE HAVE STARTED TO PICK UP SIGNS THAT SOMETHING UNUSUAL MAY BE AFOOT. WE ARE ONLY NOW IN A POSITION TO PUT A CONSIDERED VIEW TO YOU. THE FOLLOWING ODDITIES ARE WORTH NOTING:

A. ON 2 JUNE, RODRIGUEZ HEAD OF CHILEAN AIR FORCE INTELLIGENCE ANNOUNCED TO EDWARDS AND HOWARD THAT HE HAD LEARNT FOR THE FIRST TIME OF A MAJOR ARMY EXERCISE INVOLVING SOME 10,000 MEN IN SOUTHERN CHILE. THIS ALLEGED EXERCISE WAS TO TAKE PLACE 2 - 15 JUNE (MY TELNO 012120Z JUNE TO MODUK). RODRIGUEZ PRODUCED A NUMBER OF TELEGRAMS WHICH HE CLAIMED CONTAINED THE FIRST INKLINGS HE HAD HAD OF THIS EXERCISE, BUT IT IS ODD THAT AS AIR FORCE CHIEF OF INTELLIGENCE HE SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF AN EXERCISE WHICH, INVOLVING THE RAPID DEPLOYMENT OF SO MANY MEN, WOULD NECESSARILY HAVE CALLED FOR CONSIDERABLE AIR MOVEMENT.

B. ONE OF HOWARD'S MEN WHO HAD BEEN IN THE PUNTA ARENAS AREA SINCE 31 MAY AND HAD BEEN ABLE TO FLY EXTENSIVELY OVER THE AREA REPORTED ON 2 JUNE THAT HE HAD SEEN NO SIGN OF UNUSUAL MILITARY ACTIVITY. RODRIGUEZ HAD EARLIER RAISED OBSTACLES TO HIS VISIT AND HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN WHEN HE LEARNT THAT THE JOURNEY HAD IN FACT TAKEN PLACE.

C. ON 3 JUNE, RODRIGUEZ ABRUPTLY CHANGED HIS LINE OF THE PREVIOUS DAY AND RECOMMENDED THE SWIFT DEPARTURE FROM CHILE OF THE WHOLE OF HOWARD'S TEAM IN CONTRADICTION OF HIS EARLIER VIEW THAT THEY SHOULD DEPART SLOWLY AND IN SMALLER GROUPS.

D. ON 4 JUNE, RODRIGUEZ WAS IN SUDDEN HASTE TO WITHDRAW THE RAF HERCULES FROM CHILE, AGAIN IN CONTRADICTION OF HIS LINE UP TO THE PREVIOUS DAY. THE RAF CREW HAD EARLIER BEEN PREVENTED FROM INSPECTING SOME OF THE LOADS THEY WERE CARRYING ON BEHALF OF THE

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CHILEANS.

E. ON EVENING OF 4 JUNE, THE RAF S259 RADAR TEAM WERE PREMATURELY WITHDRAWN FROM BALMACEDA. IT BECAME APPARENT THAT SOME RELEVANT FACT OFFICERS WERE NOT PRIVY TO THE CHANGE OF PLAN.

F. ON 4/5 JUNE, RODRIGUEZ WAS UNUSUALLY UNAVAILABLE TO SEE EDWARDS. AN URGENT APPOINTMENT FOR EVENING OF 5 JUNE WAS POSTPONED AT LAST MINUTE AND AN UNCONVINCING EXCUSE GIVEN.

3. IN ADDITION, OUR SUSPICIONS HAVE BEEN AROUSED BY FOLLOWING STRAWS IN THE WIND:

A. FROM LATE APRIL TO LATE MAY ADMIRAL POISSON, CHIEF OF STAFF NAVY, WENT ON AN EXTENDED TOUR OF EUROPE. GIVEN HIS KEY POSITION, ONE WOULD NOT HAVE EXPECTED HIM TO UNDERTAKE SUCH A TRIP AT THIS TIME WITHOUT PRESSING REASONS. WE KNOW OF NO SUCH REASONS. ON HIS RETURN, HE SEEMED UNUSUALLY DETACHED WHEN SPEAKING TO MY DA (SEE MY TELNO 022130Z JUNE TO MODUK) AND HAS BEEN STRANGELY UNCOMMUNICATIVE WITH ME.

B. ON 5 JUNE ADMIRAL MERINO, CINC NAVY, CUT SHORT OFFICIAL TRIP TO BRAZIL AND RETURNED TO SANTIAGO.

C. DESPITE CHILE'S ABSTENTION ON THE RECENT TFR RESOLUTION, FOREIGN MINISTER ANNOUNCED ON 1 JUNE (MY TELNO 272) THAT CHILE WOULD BE TAKING CERTAIN MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT THIS. CHILE'S TWO LEADING NEWSPAPERS CARRIED REMARKABLY SIMILAR EDITORIALS JUSTIFYING SUCH MEASURES ON 4 JUNE (MY TELNO 277).

4. IT HAS BEEN OUR FIRM BELIEF UP TO NOW THAT CHILE WAS UNLIKELY TO LAUNCH AN ATTACK AGAINST ARGENTINA FOR THE REASONS GIVEN IN PARA 3 OF YOUR TUR. FURTHERMORE OVER THE PAST 100 YEARS CHILE HAS CONSISTENTLY TRIED TO RESOLVE HER DISPUTES WITH ARGENTINA PEACEFULLY AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW.

5. IN VIEW OF EVIDENCE IN PARA 2 AND 3 ABOVE, HOWEVER, WE ARE NOW NOT SO SURE.

CHILE'S MILITARY LEADERS MAY HAVE DECIDED THAT THEY SHOULD MAKE MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS WHICH WILL PERMIT THEM TO TAKE DEFENSIVE OR (HOWEVER UNLIKELY) OPPORTUNISTICALLY OFFENSIVE ACTION.

6. WE HOPE TO GIVE YOU A FURTHER ASSESSMENT BEFORE 1800Z 6 JUNE.

HEATH

BT

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