

6. Telegram From the Embassy in Argentina to the Department of State¹

Buenos Aires, July 30, 1981, 1225Z

5542. Rome for Vatican. Subject: Argentina Urges Acceleration of Negotiations. Ref: (A) Buenos Aires 5472 (Notal),² (B) memcon of July 8, 1981 with British EmbOff in Buenos Aires (Notal).³

1. (C) Summary. On July 22, Foreign Ministry announced that it was urging HMG to accelerate the pace of negotiations over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). The announcement revealed some details of a strong and detailed reiteration of the GOA's position contained in a note handed to the British Ambassador here. The timing and vigorous tone of the statement took the British here somewhat by surprise, but the substance was not new, according to a source at UK Embassy. FonMin Camilion said that the GOA acted now because the Falklanders will hold municipal elections in September and he plans to meet with

¹ Source: Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D810356-0871. Confidential. Sent for information to London, Montevideo, Rome, Santiago, and Warsaw.

² Telegram 5472 from Buenos Aires, July 27, addressed Argentine press coverage of the question of Argentina's participation in the Multinational Force and Observers mission (MFO), an entity which was to serve in a peacekeeping capacity following Israeli withdrawal from Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D810351-0120)

³ Not found.

Lord Carrington in New York at the UN General Assembly.⁴ We suspect that Camilion's timing may also be related to the Junta's consideration of participation in the Sinai MFO. He may want to divert media attention from that subject or, on the contrary, make a point: Arab support on the Malvinas issue would be jeopardized by Argentine participation in MFO. End summary.

2. (U) Key points of the GOA note are:

(A) No significant progress has occurred since the commencement of Falkland negotiations in 1977.

(B) Better communications between the Islands and South America have not produced the intended results of "improving mutual understanding" and "contributing to a successful negotiation."

(C) The question of Island sovereignty is a subject for bilateral negotiation between GOA and HMG exclusively; Islander attitudes are not a factor.

(D) There are only two alternatives: effective Argentine sovereignty over the Falklands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands or a continuation of the status quo, and the latter is not only intolerable to GOA and world community but also means a constant deterioration in the economy of the Islands.

3. (U) The note goes on to state the longstanding GOA position on sovereignty and willingness to respect the interests of the Falklanders. It adds that Argentina will continue to provide services to the Islanders (among other things, air transport, fuel and some foodstuffs) as long as there is "an evident British political will to advance constructively" in the negotiations. The GOA states that it is prepared to have the United Nations guarantee that the interests of the Islanders will be protected. (References to the role of the UN interlace the statement.) Finally, the communique indicates that "Argentina will consider practical arrangements that take into account the interests of those who could benefit from the development of the Islands' resources."

4. (U) In a separate but related development, on July 24 the Argentine Navy stopped six Polish vessels for fishing "within Argentine jurisdictional waters south of the Malvinas" (precise location not cited), escorted them to an area beyond the claimed jurisdictional waters and lodged a protest with the Polish fleet commander.

5. (C) A British Embassy official who handles Falkland affairs here told EmbOff that GOA statement appears at first reading to contain nothing new. However, he noted that the timing is somewhat odd—the Island elections and meeting in New York with FonSec Carrington

⁴ See Document 7.

are six weeks off—and its tone is more vigorous than in the past. The implied threat to cut back further on services to the Islands (flights were reduced from twice weekly to once weekly some time ago) was cited as an example, but he acknowledged that GOA entities—the state airline and the state oil company—are losing money on these operations, so HMG is not surprised at GOA frustration. British Embassy official was unwilling to speculate on reasons for new, tougher line on the Malvinas. With respect to the six Polish trawlers, he said they had not been able to learn coordinates of vessels' location when they were stopped, and HMG will consider what action to take, if any, once this information is obtained.

6. (C) Comment: FonMin Camilion has wrapped himself tightly in the flag over the Malvinas before (Ref B), no doubt in part to dispel doubts about him among the Argentine military. But the unlikely timing and unusual force of this announcement makes us suspect he has ulterior motives. Camilion is in a difficult spot on the Sinai MFO issue, which is receiving heavy press play, including a strong "La Prensa" editorial on July 28 in support of Argentine participation; Camilion may be trying to divert attention to another issue. On the other hand, he may be trying to remind his readers that Arab support of the Argentine position on the Malvinas should be factored into the Sinai participation equation. In the same vein, we note that last week the Under Secretary for International Economic Relations in the Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Figuerero Antequeda, announced out of the blue that Argentina and a large number of unspecified Arab countries will soon be signing a major commercial agreement, but no other details were offered. Argentina has never had significant trade with the Arab world.

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