

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

Buenos Aires, March 26, 1982, 2225Z

1752. Subject: Argentine-British Dispute in South Georgia. Ref: Buenos Aires 1718.²

1. (S-Entire text).

2. Ambassador Williams told me by telephone late this afternoon (March 26) that he had been discussing with Foreign Minister Costa Mendez throughout the day a possible solution to the impasse at South Georgia and that the proposal was not up for consideration in London and here by the Junta. Williams gave me no details, but I assume the deal would involve withdrawal of the *Endurance* from the scene and an Argentine commitment to take off the working party.

3. In a meeting with me this afternoon (postponed from this morning) Under Secretary Ros argued that the basic problem was British "gunboat diplomacy". He said HMG's demand that the working party withdraw or be removed by force was unacceptable to the GOA. He also said that if the *Endurance* were to retire, a solution "might be possible."

4. Ros gave me the following version of the Argentine case: Davidov³ (the scrap merchant) went out to Stanley last year and explained to the authorities what he intended to do. He then provided the British Embassy with the names of the 40 members of the working party (Ros insists that the correct number of men on the Island is 40) and documented them in accordance with the 1971 British-Argentine treaty governing navigation and air transport in the Falklands.⁴ The party admittedly did not check in at Grytviken, but that is only a scientific station in any case. Now the British assert that the 1971 treaty does not extend to South Georgia, although it had always been understood that the dependencies of the Falklands were included. (I can confirm that this was also Ambassador Williams's understanding until yesterday.)

5. Comment. The British fear, perhaps with reason, that the Argentines intend to establish a permanent presence on South Georgia as they did in 1976 on South Thule in the South Sandwich Islands.⁵ Ros's

¹ Source: Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820162-0574. Secret; Immediate; Exdis. Sent for information Immediate to London.

² See Document 18.

³ Constantino S. Davidoff.

⁴ See Document 1.

⁵ See footnote 5, Document 1.

remark to me that it might take year or more to finish the South Georgia scrap job was not reassuring on that score. In any event, it would appear from here that the *Endurance* is the key to the problem of the moment. If the ship moves in to take off the workmen, there will surely be trouble. If it stays where it is, the impasse and the tensions accompanying it will continue. An agreement on reciprocal withdrawals may be possible but it will not be easy to reach.

Shlaudeman