

139. Telegram From Secretary of State Haig to the Department of State¹

Buenos Aires, April 17, 1982, 0519Z

Secto 6027. Department please pass to White House. Subj: Memorandum From the Secretary to the President.

1. The Argentine Foreign Minister has just come back to me after seeing the Junta.² The language he delivered is unacceptable.³ In essence, it calls for: 1) shared control in the interim period, with provisions that would permit Argentina to saturate the Islands and push out the Falklanders; (2) conditions for negotiations on a final settlement that amount to a prior agreement that the result will be the affirmation of Argentine sovereignty. What little flexibility there is in their position on interim control must be seen in the context of their rigid position that negotiations must lead to an affirmation of their sovereignty.

2. It has become increasingly clear that we are not dealing with people in a position to negotiate in good faith. I have spent hours negotiating with the Foreign Minister, as well as time with Galtieri himself, only to find that what is agreed ad referendum is then toughened substantially each time the Junta gets in the act.

3. I told the Foreign Minister that the latest Argentine proposal would assure war with the United Kingdom, and that I wanted to be

¹ Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Latin America/Central, Argentina (04/15/1982-04/17/1982). Secret; Flash; Nodis. Printed from a copy that was received in the White House Situation Room. Reagan initialed the telegram, indicating that he saw it.

² See Document 138.

³ Haig also informed Pym of the outcome of the meeting with Costa Mendez and of his forthcoming meeting with the entire Junta. In his brief message, Haig described the new Argentine response delivered by Costa Mendez as "very discouraging." (Telegram Secto 6026 to London, April 17; Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File 04/17/1982 (1))

sure that Galtieri and the Junta were in no doubt about this. The Foreign Minister agreed and undertook to arrange a meeting. I have just been told that Galtieri will see me at 10:00 a.m. Frankly, I doubt that my message will register. Even if he and his colleagues can be convinced that the British are deadly serious, I doubt they can be brought really to grasp the tragic consequences for Argentina.

4. If, as I anticipate, I make no headway in the morning, I should depart immediately for Washington. It would be fruitless and unfair to Mrs. Thatcher for me to carry these proposals to London, thereby shifting the spotlight and onus onto her. I plan to make a brief, calm, yet clear departure statement that will leave no doubt that we are at an impasse because of Argentine inflexibility. I will be non-provocative, in hopes of preserving some chance for resuming this process and avoiding a sharp anti-American reaction here. I would propose to say that you have instructed me to return to Washington, and I ask that you cable such an instruction to me without delay. You should know that our Ambassador will now begin taking steps to assure the safety of our people here. In addition, Bill Clark should continue refining the plans that I discussed with him earlier in this crisis.⁴

5. It is of course possible that the Argentines will come to their senses by tomorrow and offer us something more forthcoming. In that unlikely event, we will need to make finer judgments about how to proceed, such as by going on to London or working the problem further here. However, it is important in any event that I have in hand before my meeting with Galtieri your instruction to return home. If the instruction does not fit the circumstances, I will be in touch immediately.

6. Assuming I leave, I will send, on departure, the text of the Argentine proposals to London. I will make clear that the US neither is advocating these proposals nor expects the UK to make the next move. I am quite sure the substance of the Argentine proposals will be made public by the British, and probably here as well. We will need to be prepared to refute any suggestion that we are associated with these proposals.

7. We will find that pressures will mount quickly to provide substantial US support to the UK, and clearly our thinking must now run in this direction. But it is important that I have a chance to return and discuss this with you before anything is done or said along these lines.

8. The need for discipline with the press has never been greater. Until I make my departure statement we should maintain total silence.

Haig

⁴ Not further identified.