

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

Buenos Aires, May 3, 1982, 1522Z

2708. Military handle as Specat Exclusive. Subj: Evacuation Contingency Planning. Ref: Buenos Aires 2248.²

1. (S-Entire text.)

2. As I told Ambassador Enders on the telephone, we have a report from a reliable source in the Presidential Palace that the mood in the top levels of the military has turned very ugly against the U.S. The story is that the cruiser "Belgrano" was "pulverized" with heavy loss of life. Allegedly, the U.S. located the ship for the British and gave its permission for the use of a "special weapon" against the "Belgrano" (the implication being a nuclear weapon). The source advised one of our attaches "to get out of town."

3. We are making appropriate representations to remind the GOA of its responsibility for the security of this mission and its personnel. However, in view of the "Belgrano" incident and what seems to me the likelihood of new naval engagements in the South Atlantic, I request the Department's authorization to declare the post in Phase II of the relevant emergency levels. I ask for authorization for the departure of dependents of our military personnel, both DAO and MILGP, given the understandable anxiety among these officers. I also request authorization to prepare for the reduction in non-essential personnel and their dependents as indicated in para two reftel. The dependents of our military will depart by road or ferry for Montevideo once the Department has given its approval. We shall be in touch with the Department on the method and timing for the larger evacuation.³

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¹ Source: Washington National Records Center, OSD Files, FRC 330-84-0003, Argentina (Jan-15 May) 1982. Secret; Specat; Immediate; Exdis. Sent for information Immediate to Montevideo, Panama City, and USSOUTHCOM. Printed from a copy that was received in the Joint Chiefs of Staff message center.

² In telegram 2248 from Buenos Aires, April 15, the Embassy described the staffing pattern it would adopt should a reduction in personnel be required. (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820196-0571)

³ In telegram 2727 from Buenos Aires, May 3, the Embassy transmitted its plan for the initial evacuation of dependents of Embassy military personnel, followed by an "across-the-board reduction of personnel." (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820231-0432) In telegram 120585 to Buenos Aires, May 4, the Department authorized the Embassy "to proceed with evacuation of all dependents and non-essential personnel. We recommend, however, that departure be expedited preferably over a period of three days." (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D820233-0885)