

302. Report Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency¹

Washington, May 27, 1982

SPOT COMMENTARY: Falklands Situation—British Commence Attack Against Darwin/Goose Green

British paratroopers are attacking Darwin/Goose Green this morning, [1 line not declassified]. UK forces apparently were waiting to construct a Harrier runway at their East Falklands beachhead at Port San Carlos before beginning the operation. [less than 1 line not declassified] the container ship *Atlantic Conveyor* is still afloat and that salvage operations are underway.² [portion marking not declassified]

Comment: The British have been suggesting for the past two days that large-scale combat operations would begin shortly on the Falklands. The Argentines had an estimated 600 troops at Darwin/Goose Green when the British landed last Friday³ and some limited reinforcement has probably occurred since then. Darwin/Goose Green sits astride a motorable trail that provides the single best access from the western part of the island to Port Stanley. The major portion of the British force probably will use this route, although some British troops may be airlifted across country by helicopter. [portion marking not declassified]

Harrier jets probably will be quickly moved to the island now that the San Carlos airfield has been completed. These aircraft will have several missions, but they probably will be used principally to protect

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, Files of Alexander M. Haig, Jr., 1981–1982, Lot 82D370, (3) Falklands Crisis 1982. Secret; [handling restriction not declassified]. Prepared in the Directorate of Intelligence.

² On May 25, Argentine aircraft attacked and sank the British container ship *Atlantic Conveyor* with an Exocet anti-ship missile. For a detailed account of the battle for Darwin and Goose Green from the British perspective, see Freedman, *Official History*, vol. II, pp. 546–576.

³ May 21. See Document 285.

the beachhead and support the movement of the land forces. [*portion marking not declassified*]

The *Atlantic Conveyor* brought Harrier jets to the Falklands but we believe they were transferred to the aircraft carriers before the ship was struck by an Exocet missile. The *Atlantic Conveyor* apparently still contains helicopters and ammunition—some of which may be recoverable. [*portion marking not declassified*]