

305. Memorandum of Conversation¹

Washington, May 27, 1982, 3:30 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

Major Brigadier Miret, Argentine Air Force
Vernon A. Walters, Ambassador-at-Large

SUBJECT

Falklands/Malvinas

During a phone call from Ambassador Gerardo Schamis, Argentine Ambassador to France, whom I have known for many years, he indicated he had received a call from Air Force Commander Lami Dozo

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/S Special Handling Restrictions Memos 1979–1983, Lot 96D262, ES Sensitive May 25–31 1982. Secret; Sensitive. The meeting took place in the office of the Argentine Air Attaché. Copies were sent to Haig and Enders.

in Buenos Aires telling him to ask me to get in touch with Major Brigadier Miret, who was currently in Washington for the OAS meeting. After discussion with the Secretary and Ambassador Enders, I saw Miret at the Argentine Air Attache's office on I Street at 1530. I spoke with him alone.

He confirmed that he had received instructions from Brigadier Lami Dozo to get in touch with me as he was very concerned that the door not be slammed by either Argentina or the United States. We would have to live together after the Falkland conflict was over. He said it was ironic that the Air Force, which was doing all of the fighting, was the service in favor of negotiations, while the Army and Navy, who had done very little fighting, were still blustering. He said that a series of unfortunate events had led to the escalation of this conflict and I pointed out that to us, it was a particular tragedy that every young pilot who was killed, whether he be British or Argentine, was one less to defend values in which we both believed. He said that the first problem was the escalation of rhetoric. Galtieri made intemperate and incendiary statements and had also made a rude reply to President Reagan's message of congratulations on Argentina's independence.² He indicated clearly that the Air Force had tried without success to temper this reply of Galtieri's. He shrugged and said Galtieri was very impulsive. Brigadier Miret then indicated that he had also tried without success to tone down Foreign Minister Costa Mendez' statement to the OAS this morning. This had been triggered by Secretary Haig's statement of his conviction of British victory.³ He supposed that the Secretary would now answer in the OAS with some asperity. I told him I believed that the Secretary would answer with "dignity and elegance". I said we Americans viewed this conflict as an enormous tragedy bringing conflict between two of our most important alliances—NATO and the OAS. We certainly had tried and would continue to try to find a peaceful and honorable solution to the crisis for both our friends. We had no interest in seeing either one humiliated. Miret said almost in despair, "How are we going to put things together after this conflict?" I said we must strive in every way to do so. He then appealed for a moderation of rhetoric on our side and said they would

² See Document 303.

³ See footnote 2, Document 304. Haig asserted the inapplicability of collective security under the Rio Treaty: "With full respect for the views of others, the U.S. position is clear: Since the first use of force did not come from outside the hemisphere, this is not a case of extracontinental aggression against which we are all committed to rally." On May 29, the OAS Foreign Ministers adopted Resolution II, which condemned the U.K. attack and demanded that the United Kingdom cease its "act of war" and withdraw its forces "immediately." The United States abstained in the vote. For the texts of the resolution and Middendorf's statement on the U.S. abstention, see the Department of State *Bulletin*, July 1982, pp. 90-91.

continue to try and moderate the rhetoric on their side. Brigadier Miret then said he wondered if we could do several things:

1. Encourage UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar's efforts. I said that we had never ceased to do so and would continue to do so.

2. He then repeated his request about moderating rhetoric and requested that we bring pressure on the British to moderate their position. I said we had always brought pressure on the British as we had the Argentines. The Secretary told them in Buenos Aires that neither side could get everything they wanted. There would have to be some give.

3. Finally, Brigadier Miret brought up an idea that had been brought up by Lami Dozo and Galtieri in Buenos Aires of a summit between Presidents Reagan and Galtieri and Prime Minister Thatcher.⁴

I said I would convey this message to the Secretary and assured him that the U.S. deeply desired to maintain its good ties with Argentina and on our part we would do nothing if we could help it to damage those ties. He replied that on the Argentine side there were some who were saying that in the present juncture that Argentina should turn to the Soviet Union and receive Soviet assistance. I said very quietly but looking him right in the eyes, "You realize that if that were to happen, it would change everything as far as we are concerned." He said he understood this and would resist. He knew that the situation was difficult, adding, "The British are a tough and warlike race and will not yield to pressure." I replied that the Argentine Air Force had proved the courage and skill of its young pilots and that it was a tragedy that countries which should be friendly were killing one another. The only long term winner in such a situation could be the Soviet Union. He said to me as I left, "Lami Dozo, unlike the other two, looks beyond tomorrow." He thanked me for coming. I said I would be back in touch with him after consultations with the Secretary.

⁴ Miret had earlier suggested this to Kirkpatrick. (Telegram 1479 from USUN, May 26; Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File 05/26/1982 (4))