

DROB1/9		
29-MAR-1982		
ICE		
F		

RA 29/3

Mathias
we are
possibly looking
over him -
It is pretty
clear

This was
up and up
job.
RJR
29/3

PS

SOUTH GEORGIA

1. I submit, as requested, notes on:

- (a) our recent contacts with Mr Davidoff and with the Argentine Government prior to the present incident (supplementing the note covered by my minute of 25 March);
- (b) our assessment of the Argentine Government's involvement.

A

P. R. Fearn

P R Fearn
South America Dept

26 March 1982

- cc PS/LPS
- PS/Mr Luce
- PS/PUS
- Mr Giffard
- Mr Ure
- Defence Dept

ILLEGAL LANDING IN SOUTH GEORGIA: MR DAVIDOFF'S INTENTIONS

1. The historical background is set out in the note covered by my minute of 25 March.
2. Following the sighting of the Argentine ice-breaker, Irizar, at Stromness and Leith in December 1981 on Davidoff's behalf, the Embassy on instructions lodged a formal protest with the Argentine authorities at the ship's failure to obtain prior clearance. The Argentines rejected this on the grounds that South Georgia was Argentine territory. The Embassy made clear that if any future attempt to land in South Georgia without proper authority were made, HMG reserved the right to take whatever action was necessary.
3. The most recent meeting between the Embassy in Buenos Aires and Mr Davidoff was on 23 February, when he apologised for the trouble over the Irizar and said that as he had been ashore at Leith only briefly he had felt no need to contact the BAS base commander. He gave notice of his intention to return in March with a party to salvage the equipment. The Embassy stressed to him the need to comply with the appropriate formalities, ie he must obtain clearance from the British authorities at Grytviken. Mr Davidoff took note and assured the Embassy of his wish to avoid any further difficulties.
4. On 10 March, the Embassy received a letter from Mr Davidoff announcing his intention of sailing for South Georgia on the Bahia Buen Suceso on the next day. They alerted the Governor in Port Stanley. The Embassy sought to contact Mr Davidoff before departure to remind him again of his obligations. But this was not possible. He was not heard of again until the Bahia Buen Suceso was sighted in Leith harbour on 19 March.
5. It would have been open to the Embassy ~~at that stage~~ to have repeated our earlier warnings to the Argentine MFA. The latter would have rejected this: they would either have taken no action or have alerted the Navy. Any possibility of the Argentine ship or Davidoff complying with the necessary formalities at Grytviken would then have been foreclosed. The most sensible course appeared to be to take Davidoff's previous assurances at face value and to take no action which would bring the matter deliberately to the attention of the Argentine Government. Once the contract in South Georgia had been given to an Argentine, the only way of avoiding a political row was to persuade Davidoff himself of the advisability in his own commercial interest to adhere to the correct procedures.

(while
claiming
to be
hitherto
unaware
of it)

ILLEGAL LANDING IN SOUTH GEORGIA: INVOLVEMENT OF THE
ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT

1. There is still no evidence that the Argentine MFA had prior knowledge of Davidoff's present plans.

2. It is however at least open to question whether the Argentine Navy, who have traditionally taken an aggressive line on the Falklands issue, were manipulating Davidoff for their own ends. The Irizar, used in the December landing on South Georgia, was an ice-breaker of the Argentine Navy. The Bahia Buen Suceso is an Argentine naval cargo vessel (RFA equivalent) on charter to Davidoff: and its destination must therefore have been known to the Navy.

3. 

4. The question remains whether Davidoff is, as the Argentines maintain, a simple commercial operator of a front for the Argentine Government. Whatever suspicions we may have, we have no conclusive evidence.

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