

123. Telegram From the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State¹

London, April 15, 1982, 1901Z

8241. For the Secretary. Subj: Message From the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to Secretary Haig: Falkland Islands.

1. S–Entire text.
2. Begin text:

Thank you for your friendly message² which I have just received. As I have said to you, and indeed to the British Parliament and people, we in London are most grateful for the efforts which you are making to resolve the Falkland Islands crisis. We realise that the determination and stamina required are very great. We send you our warmest wishes for your crucial meetings in the coming days in Buenos Aires.

Since your most recent visit and our subsequent talks by telephone, we have been thinking further about the position reached in your efforts to promote a settlement and about the draft memorandum which we have been discussing.³

There is one matter which greatly concerns the Prime Minister and myself and our other colleagues. Recent experience has proved that Argentina is willing to resort to aggression. Having been the victim of one sudden attack, then assuming that your present efforts are successful and Argentine troops are withdrawn, we could not risk the same thing again. We therefore need to ensure that the Islands are protected from further aggression in the future. This is a general requirement, but one particular aspect of it is that Argentina might use the airfield at Port Stanley, only 350 miles from the mainland, to introduce large numbers of troops quickly and conveniently, without our being in a position to prevent this.

We in London believe that the best way of minimising these risks would be a concrete arrangement involving the United States, which would provide an effective deterrent to Argentine use of force. The methods of achieving this can be discussed further. But I must emphasise that an arrangement of this kind is of the utmost importance to the British Government.

¹ Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Cable File, Falkland File 04/15/1982 (3). Secret; Flash; Nodis.

² See footnote 2, Document 120.

³ See Tab A, Document 112.

Before your departure from London on 13 April, you gave me a revised text of paragraph 8 of the draft memorandum.⁴ Not surprisingly, this text as it stands presents considerable difficulties for us. The word 'decolonisation' would in any case be unacceptable to Parliament, given the importance to this country of the wishes of the Islanders which, as you know, remain paramount for us. I enclose a formula for paragraph 8 on lines which we could accept. For us, the important element is to provide a sounding of the opinion of our people on the Islands. If the Argentinians seem reasonably inclined to a solution on the lines envisaged, but argue for more explicit account to be taken of the idea of decolonisation, I hope that you will impress on them the significance of the reference to UNGA Resolution 1514.⁵ If, however, you felt it essential in order to reach full agreement, we would be prepared to consider adding to the text after 'these groups of Islands' the phrase 'within the framework of the provisions of the UN Charter relating to non-self-governing territories.'

New formulation for paragraph 8 of the draft memorandum: December 31, 1982 will conclude the interim period. During this period, the signatories shall negotiate with a view to determining the future definitive status of each of the three groups of Islands consistent with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 1514 (XV) and 2625 (XXV)⁶ and, so far as Islands with a settled population are concerned, in accordance with the wishes and interests of that population, which shall be ascertained by a sounding of their opinion to be supervised by the special commission. If it is not possible to complete the processes envisaged in this paragraph by December 31, 1982, the interim period may be extended for (three) months by agreement between the parties.

End text.

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⁴ See Tab B, Document 112.

⁵ See footnote 4, Document 16.

⁶ Titled the Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation Among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2625 (XXV), adopted October 24, 1970, stipulated that states had the duty to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any other state or in any manner inconsistent with the principles of the United Nations.