

SECRET

Prime Directive

Sensitive passages are in square brackets.

AM 6/3

3

t.a.
AM 27/4

ILLEGAL LANDING ON SOUTH GEORGIA: CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

FRIDAY 19 MARCH: A BRITISH ANTARCTIC SURVEY FIELD PARTY REPORT THAT AN ARGENTINE NAVY CARGO VESSEL IS ANCHORED IN LEITH HARBOUR. A PARTY OF ABOUT 60 ARGENTINES HAVE SET UP CAMP AND AN ARGENTINE FLAG HAS BEEN HOISTED.

SATURDAY 20 MARCH: THE BAS FIELD PARTY INFORMS THE ARGENTINES THAT THEY HAVE LANDED ILLEGALLY AND THAT THEY MUST LEAVE.

THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE INSTRUCT HMS ENDURANCE TO PREPARE TO SAIL TO SOUTH GEORGIA WITH A DETACHMENT OF MARINES FROM PORT STANLEY.

HM AMBASSADOR BUENOS AIRES INFORMS THE ARGENTINE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS THAT WE ARE TREATING THE INFRINGEMENT OF OUR SOVEREIGNTY VERY SERIOUSLY. THE ARGENTINE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IS CALLED IN TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND TOLD THE SAME. THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT PROFESS IGNORANCE BUT AGREE TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER URGENTLY.

SUNDAY 21 MARCH: HMS ENDURANCE DEPARTS FOR SOUTH GEORGIA. ARGENTINE MFA INFORM US THAT THE SHIP WILL LEAVE SOUTH GEORGIA SHORTLY AND THAT NO SERVICE PERSONNEL ARE INVOLVED.

MONDAY 22 MARCH: WE RECEIVE CONFIRMATION THAT THE SHIP HAS LEFT BUT THERE ARE DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER ALL THE MEN HAVE GONE.

IN THE EVENING, BRITISH ANTARCTIC SURVEY CONFIRM THAT ABOUT SIX MEN AND SOME EQUIPMENT REMAIN.

/ TUESDAY 23 MARCH

SECRET

TUESDAY 23 MARCH:

HMS ENDURANCE IS INSTRUCTED TO SAIL ON FOR SOUTH GEORGIA AND REMOVE THE MEN, IF POSSIBLE WITHOUT USING FORCE.

MR. LUCE MAKES A STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT LATER WARNS THAT USE OF HMS ENDURANCE WOULD BE GRAVELY PROVOCATIVE. THEY ARE TOLD WE WISH TO AVOID THIS IF POSSIBLE: IF THEY CAN PROPOSE AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE METHOD OF REMOVING THE MEN, WE ARE PREPARED TO LET THEM DO SO.

WEDNESDAY 24 MARCH:

HMS ENDURANCE ORDERED TO ANCHOR IN GRYTVIKEN HARBOUR, BUT NOT TO PROCEED TO LEITH.

ARGENTINE MFA SAY THEY WISH TO PREVENT THE SITUATION ESCALATING IF POSSIBLE, BUT NEED TIME TO CONSIDER.

THURSDAY 25 MARCH:

ARGENTINE NAVAL VESSEL IS SIGHTED AT LEITH DELIVERING FURTHER SUPPLIES.

WE ASK THE ARGENTINES FOR AN EARLY RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST THAT THEY REMOVE THE MEN.

ARGENTINE MFA THEN SAY THAT BY DEPLOYING HMS ENDURANCE WE HAVE MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO CONTAIN THEIR POSITION.

WE REPLY THAT WE WISH TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO AVOID CONFRONTATION AND PROPOSE THAT IF THE PARTY REQUEST THE PROPER AUTHORISATION FROM GRYTVIKEN, IT WILL BE GIVEN.

FRIDAY 26 /
SATURDAY 27 MARCH:

NO FORMAL REPLY FROM THE ARGENTINE MFA. BUT THEY ISSUE A PRESS STATEMENT ANNOUNCING THAT THE MEN WILL BE GIVEN ALL NECESSARY PROTECTION AND THE PRESS REPORTS THAT SEVERAL ARGENTINE NAVY VESSELS HAVE BEEN ORDERED INTO THE AREA.

/ SUNDAY 28 MARCH

SECRET

TO REFRAIN FROM THE USE OF FORCE IN THE AREA.
THE UK PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE AGREES; THE
ARGENTINE SAYS NOTHING.

WE UNDERTAKE INTENSIVE LOBBYING OF US AND EC
COUNTRIES ASKING THEM TO INTERVENE ON OUR BEHALF.
THE AMERICANS HAVE TAKEN ACTION AT THE HIGHEST
LEVEL BUT THE ARGENTINES REMAIN UNRESPONSIVE.

LAST MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM FALKLANDS (2155 HRS.
OUR TIME).

FRIDAY 2 APRIL:

0833 - TELEGRAM SENT TO FALKLANDS.

0845 - COMMUNICATIONS CEASE.

0945 - CABINET INFORMED THAT ARGENTINE INVASION
IMMINENT. DECIDE THAT NAVAL AND MILITARY
PREPARATIONS SHOULD CONTINUE AS PLANNED.

1100 - THE LORD PRIVY SEAL MAKES STATEMENT IN
THE HOUSE EXPRESSING HMG'S GRAVE CONCERN AT
SITUATION.

*Passage deleted and retained under
Section 3(4). @Wayland
13 April 2012*

FOLLOWING FURTHER REPORTS FROM MEDIA AND OTHERS,
CABINET DECIDES THAT NAVAL TASK FORCE SHOULD
SAIL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UK AND
ARGENTINA BROKEN OFF.

BRITISH OFFICIALS AND MARINES FLOWN FROM FALKLANDS
TO MONTEVIDEO.

MESSAGE FROM COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY GENERAL TO
ALL COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT URGING
CONDEMNATION OF ARGENTINE ACTION.

/ MESSAGES

S E C R E T

MESSAGES ALSO FROM PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN SECRETARY TO WIDE RANGE OF GOVERNMENTS.

UK CALLS IMMEDIATE MEETING OF SECURITY COUNCIL.

SATURDAY 3 APRIL:

DEBATE IN BOTH HOUSES. PRIME MINISTER ANNOUNCES THAT TASK FORCE WILL SAIL, ARGENTINE BALANCES IN THE UK HAVE BEEN FROZEN, AND ECGD COVER SUSPENDED.

PRESIDENT MITTERRAND TELEPHONES PRIME MINISTER. UN SECURITY COUNCIL CALLS BY 10 VOTES TO 1 WITH 4 ABSTENTIONS FOR ARGENTINE WITHDRAWAL.

SUNDAY 4 APRIL:

BRITISH OFFICIALS AND MARINES EXPELLED FROM FALKLAND ISLANDS LEAVE MONTEVIDEO FOR UK.

WE RECEIVE CONFIRMATION THAT SOUTH GEORGIA HAS ALSO BEEN ATTACKED AND IS NOW IN ARGENTINE HANDS.

REPORTS THAT THE MARINES DEFENDING GRYTVIKEN HAVE INFLICTED CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE ON THE ARGENTINES.

WIDE RANGING DIPLOMATIC ACTION TO SECURE CONDEMNATION BY OTHER COUNTRIES OF ARGENTINE ACTION AND ALSO TO DISSUADE OTHER GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE ECONOMIC ACTION SIMILAR TO OUR OWN.

ORDER IN COUNCIL PROVIDING FOR REQUISITIONING OF SHIPPING.

MONDAY 5 APRIL:

GOVERNOR, STAFF AND MARINES ARRIVE BACK IN THE UK. DEBRIEFINGS AND PRESS CONFERENCE.

TASK FORCE DEPARTS FROM THE UK.

WIDE RANGING TRADE SANCTIONS ANNOUNCED.

BRITISH CITIZENS ADVISED TO CONSIDER LEAVING ARGENTINA (BBC WORLD SERVICE BROADCAST).