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DESKBY FCO 250915Z
FM BUENOS AIRES 24/2030Z MAR 82
TO IMMEDIATE MCDUK
TELEGRAM NUMBER 24/2030Z OF 24 MARCH 1982
AND TO IMMEDIATE FCO
INFO IMMEDIATE PORT STANLEY (PERSONAL FOR GOVERNOR)

24/2030Z
CONFID
FROM BRITDEFAT BUENOS AIRES
TO MCDUK
SIC U2C/U2C
FOR DIA

Aw 040/325/9		
25 MAR 1982		

THE ARGENTINE MILITARY THREAT TO THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. YOU MIGHT WELCOME A SHORT UPDATE ON OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE MILITARY THREAT TO THE FALKLAND ISLANDS IN THE LIGHT OF CURRENT EVENTS IN SOUTH GEORGIA. YOU ALREADY HAVE A NOTE ON WHAT WE SEE AS THE ARGENTINE MILITARY OPTIONS; WHAT CAN NOW BE ADDED IS A VIEW AS TO HOW THESE MIGHT BE EXERCISED IN A DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESENT SITUATION.
2. IF THE ARGENTINES FAIL TO REMOVE THE WORK PARTY FROM LEITH HARBOUR AND HMS ENDURANCE WERE TASKED TO DO THE JOB, THERE WOULD BE THE STERNEST OF REACTIONS (ARGENTINE NATIONALS TAKEN ON BOARD BRITISH WARSHIP IN ARGENTINE WATERS, ETC). ONE UPSHOT MIGHT WELL BE AN ENCOUNTER WITH AN ARA WARSHIP. AN ALTERNATIVE WHICH MIGHT WELL ATTRACT THE ARGENTINES COULD BE TO AWAIT THE ARRIVAL OF THE PARTY AT PORT STANLEY AND THEN TO MOUNT QUOTE A RESCUE MISSION UNQUOTE WHICH ON ENCOUNTERING RESISTANCE COULD BE ESCALATED INTO AN OCCUPATION.
3. THERE IS A HAWK FACTION IN THE FFAA WHOM WE CAN SEE PRESSING THE LEADERSHIP THUS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE HEIGHTENED BLOOD PRESSURE OF RECENT DAYS AT A TIME WHEN MILITARY MEASURES MIGHT ATTRACT LESS CENSURE AND BE MORE EASILY JUSTIFIED ABROAD.
4. WE MUST THEREFORE BE AWARE THAT IF HMS ENDURANCE IS COMMITTED WE WOULD BE FACING NOT ONLY THE OBVIOUS RISK OF THE OPERATION ITSELF MEETING RESISTANCE BUT ALSO AN INCREASE IN THE THREAT TO PORT STANLEY - AND THAT AT A TIME WHEN NP 8901 ARE HALF EMBARKED AND HANDOVER IMMINENT.
5. DR HEAP OF SAMD HERE FOR TALKS ON ANTARCTICA ADDITIONALLY POINTS OUT THAT TRADITIONALLY THE RESPONSE TO SUCH AN OPERATION IS FOR THE OTHER SIDE TO REMOVE A LIKE NUMBER OF THE OPPOSITION (EG DECEPTION ISLAND 1952). IN THIS CASE THIS COULD INVOLVE ARA TAKING THE BAS DETACHMENT OFF FROM GRITYVIKEN.

WILLIAMS
STANDARD
SAMD
CABINETOFFICE

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