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Security Council

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LETTER DATED 10 MAY 1982 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour, with reference to my letters of 28 April (S/15006) and 8 May (S/15058), to transmit the following information.

On the morning of 9 May the British task force attacked military targets in the vicinity of Port Stanley airfield. Certain Argentine military aircraft approached the Falkland Islands, but turned away in the face of action by the task force. An Argentine Puma helicopter was shot down over the islands later in the day.

At 1130 GMT two British aircraft on patrol well within the Total Exclusion Zone sighted an Argentine fishing vessel. The vessel, named Narwal, had been shadowing the task force for some days. We had reason to believe she was engaged in surveillance. Irrefutable evidence of this was subsequently found on board in documents containing the vessel's operational orders. Furthermore, an Argentine naval officer was found among the crew of the vessel. In the United Kingdom Government's announcement of the Total Exclusion Zone on 28 April, we stated that any ship, military or civil, found within the Zone without due authority from the Ministry of Defence in London would be regarded as operating in support of the illegal occupation, would be regarded as hostile, and would be liable to attack by British forces. Additionally, on 7 May, the United Kingdom Government made clear in a statement that all Argentine vessels, including merchant vessels or fishing vessels apparently engaged in surveillance or intelligence-gathering activities against British forces in the South Atlantic, would also be regarded as hostile and were liable to be dealt with accordingly. Our aircraft therefore dropped a small bomb alongside the vessel. This was followed by a short burst of gun-fire from our aircraft. The crew then surrendered and took to their lifeboat. Those who abandoned ship have been recovered by Royal Navy helicopters and are now on one of Her Majesty's ships. The names of the crew have been passed to the Argentines via diplomatic channels today (10 May), and arrangements will be made for their repatriation as soon as possible. The Narwal is now in the custody of the Royal Navy. Of the 25 people on board the Narwal, there were 14 casualties - 1 dead, 1 seriously injured, and 12 with minor injuries. The injured are receiving medical attention.

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In the letter of the Permanent Representative of Argentina of 9 May (S/15061) it is claimed that a British aeroplane machine-gunned the vessel's lifeboats following the initial attack. There is no truth whatsoever in this claim and my Government deplores such totally unfounded allegations.

These operations by British forces have been undertaken in exercise of the United Kingdom's inherent right of self-defence in the face of the continued Argentinian illegal and forcible occupation of the Falkland Islands.

In regard to the letter dated 8 May and the two letters dated 9 May (S/15059, S/15061) from the Permanent Representative of Argentina, I have the honour to state the following by way of reply. On 1 April 1982, the Security Council issued an appeal to Argentina not to use force (S/14944). On 2 April, Argentina did use armed force in order to invade the Falkland Islands in clear violation of its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to settle disputes by peaceful means and to refrain from the use of force (Article 2, paragraphs 3 and 4). On 3 April, the Security Council demanded the immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands (resolution 502 (1982)). Argentina has failed to comply with this demand and has continued to use armed force in order to occupy the Falkland Islands and to attempt to subjugate the inhabitants, a people of British descent and nationality who have expressed the wish not to become Argentinians and to retain their traditional way of life. In these circumstances, the United Kingdom is fully entitled under international law and Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations to exercise its inherent right of self-defence against the illegal use of force by Argentina.

In regard to the letter dated 7 May (S/15057) from the Permanent Representative of Argentina, I would refer to my letter of 4 May (S/15031) which gives a true account of the incident in question. My Government totally rejects the unfounded allegations of the Permanent Representative of Argentina.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for this letter to be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) A. D. PARSONS
