

cc OPS

~~Econ~~ for ~~political news~~: B&B  
Argentina relations Pt 35

Rec'd 20/30  
3/12/83

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

LONDON

**PRIME MINISTER'S**

**PERSONAL MESSAGE**

December 3, 1983

Spence copy

SERIAL No. T203/83

SECRET

Dear Prime Minister:

I have been asked to deliver to you the enclosed message from the President on the issue of certification of Argentina that was received by the Embassy this evening.

In connection with the President's message, I have been asked to make the following points:

As you know, Argentina has been making steady progress in improving its human rights situation, and will complete its transition to democracy when President-elect Alfonsin takes office on December 10. In recognition of Argentina's significant human rights progress, culminating in its successful transition to democracy, the President has decided to certify Argentina. His decision will be announced on December 7; the determination will take effect on December 10.

It is our view that to deny certification when Argentina clearly meets the criteria set forth in the law would be considered a political act by the new Argentine Government, and would prejudice our efforts to improve relations with the newly-elected civilian government in Argentina at this time.

Certification now also will strengthen our influence with the new government of Argentina, thus enabling us to work more effectively to assure regional stability and to prevent a recurrence of conflict in the South Atlantic.

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M. P.,  
Prime Minister,  
10 Downing Street,  
London, S. W. 1.

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I should note that certification is not equivalent to arms sales, although it removes a legal impediment to such sales. We will evaluate each request on a case-by-case basis, taking into account any threat that might be posed to peace in the region. Under Secretary Eagleburger will personally review all specific proposals for major arms sales to Argentina.

We intend to review very carefully all requests of the Government of Argentina and would not approve sales such as advanced fighter aircraft or missiles that would increase significantly the threat of armed attack against the Falklands or represent a significant destabilization of the Argentina-Chile military balance.

In addition, we will consult with the British on any major arms sales. We will not authorize third country transfers except on the same terms that we would authorize sales from the U. S. In any case, no sizeable, immediate sales are anticipated. The most likely immediate request will be for spare parts for U. S.-origin ships and aircraft. However, there may be some non-lethal requests approved during the first 6-12 months following certification, for example, air traffic control radar systems.

Argentina has replaced most of its losses resulting from the Falklands War from a variety of sources. In addition, President Alfonsin is firmly committed to a significant reduction of the military budget. Argentina is experiencing serious economic problems, and cannot afford to divert major resources to arms purchases.

At the same time, we note a continuation of business and large sales by West Germany, France, Italy, and other NATO allies (including U. K. components ordered previously whose sale was authorized after the Falklands conflict).

We do not intend to enter any form of arms race that would affect the military balance in the area; but we must be aware of important U. S. commercial interests and our competitive position vis a vis other allied suppliers for routine or normal transactions.

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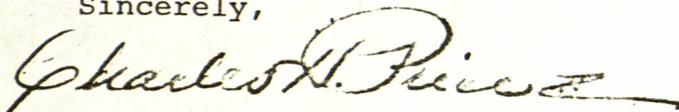
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It is important that confidentiality of consultations on arms sales be maintained in order to insure the effectiveness of the consultative process.

I will welcome receiving reactions to the President's letter and to the foregoing points that I may forward to Washington.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Charles H. Price, II". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Charles H. Price, II  
Ambassador

Enclosure:  
As stated (SECRET).

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Dear Margaret:

As you know, Argentina has made steady progress in strengthening its protection of human rights. The fair, open and honest elections on October 30 are the latest manifestation of this progress. When President-elect Alfonsin takes office on December 10, Argentina will have completed its return to democracy.

In view of this and other relevant factors, I will be certifying to the U. S. Congress that Argentina has made significant progress in human rights and that making Argentina eligible for arms transfers is in the U. S. national interest. Our announcement will be made on December 7, just before the U. S. delegation arrives in Buenos Aires for the inauguration. Certification will be effective upon installation of the new government.

I know this announcement will be a delicate question in Great Britain. However, as I suggested when we last met, and as subsequent consultations between our two governments have indicated, it is now appropriate and accurate to certify that Argentina has made significant progress in human rights.

We will be informing U. S. congressional leaders and Presidents Bignone and Pinochet of our decision on December 6. Because of our special relationship and the importance you personally place on this question, I am notifying you first of our decision.

The decision was based on the following considerations. During the past year, the Government of Argentina has made significant progress in complying with internationally recognized principles of human rights. Argentina's human rights performance now meets the test for certification required by U. S. law.

Certification is not equivalent to arms sales. We will evaluate each request very carefully on a case-by-case basis, taking into account any threat that may be posed to peace in the region. We would consult closely with your government on any major sales.

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Significant sales are not expected. Argentina has replaced most of its losses from a variety of sources and President-elect Alfonsin is committed to a significant reduction of the military budget. Moreover, Argentina's difficult economic situation will not support major arms acquisitions. In any event, should Argentina so desire, arms are readily available from other sources, including the Soviet Union.

In my view, our normalization of relations with Argentina will be in the interests of the United States and Great Britain. Certification will help strengthen U. S. influence with Argentina and enable us to work more effectively to assure regional stability. The climate for dialogue and negotiation will be improved.

I sincerely appreciate your eloquent and timely statement at the Guildhall. I wholeheartedly agree with your assessment of the special relationship between our two nations and the importance of our shared interests and purposes.

Margaret, be assured that I continue to place the highest value on your personal advice, counsel and friendship.

With warm wishes,

Sincerely,

/s/ Ron

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