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UNCLASSIFIED

FM BUENOS AIRES 27/1724Z MAR 82

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 114 OF 27 MARCH 1982

INFO IMMEDIATE PORT STANLEY

SOUTH GEORGIA : ARGENTINE PRESS TREATMENT

1. ALL TODAY 'S NEWSPAPERS LEAD WITH THE NEWS THAT ARGENTINA HAS SENT A NAVAL VESSEL TO QUOTE PROTECT UNQUOTE THE GROUP OF ARGENTINES AT LEITH. HEADLINES SPEAK OF QUOTE GRAVE SITUATION UNQUOTE AND QUOTE CRISIS UNQUOTE. THERE IS SO FAR LITTLE EDITORIAL COMMENT.
2. ALL QUOTE FOREIGN MINISTER COSTA MENDEZ AS HAVING TOLD THE PRESS LAST NIGHT, FOLLWOING A MEETING OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE, THAT ARGENTINA HAD DECIDED TO GIVE THE GROUP QUOTE ALL DIPLOMATIC PROTECTION UNQUOTE, WHICH INCLUDED THE DESPATCH OF THE ANTARCTIC NAVAL SUPPORT VESSEL QUOTE BAHIA PARAISO UNQUOTE TO SOUTH GEORGIA. PICTURES OF THE VESSEL APPEAR IN MOST NEWSPAPERS, IN SOME CASES ALONGSIDE PICTURES OF QUOTE ENDURANCE UNQUOTE, WHICH IS ALSO STATED TO BE IN SOUTH GEORGIA. SOME REPORTS SAY THE TWO SHIPS ARE WITHIN SIGHT OF EACH OTHER, OTHERS IMPLY THAT THE ARGENTINE SHIP, LIKE QUOTE ENDURANCE UNQUOTE, MAY HAVE MARINES ON BOARD, IN ADDITION TO ITS TWO HELICOPTERS.
3. THERE ARE ALSO AGENCY REPORTS FROM UNSPECIFIED LONDON SOURCES CLAIMING THAT HMG HAD THREATENED TO USE FORCE IN THE LAST RESORT TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM, AND THAT THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT HAD RESPONDED THAT FORCE WOULD BE MET WITH FORCE.
4. A STATEMENT BY DAVIDOFF ON THE BACKGROUND TO HIS CONTRACT IS ALSO GIVEN SOME PUBLICITY (MY TELNO 112 REFERS).
5. LA NACION ALSO ASSERTS ITS FRONT PAGE THAT ALL MEMBERS OF DAVIDOFF'S GROUP HAD BEEN PROVIDED WITH QUOTE THE RELEVANT WHITE CARD UNQUOTE, A DOCUMENT ISSUED UNDER THE TERMS OF AN ANGLO-ARGENTINE AGREEMENT OF 1971 FOR TRAVEL TO THE QUOTE MALVINAS UNQUOTE, AND WHICH IN THE PAST HAD PROVIDED THE MEANS OF AVOIDING DIFFICULTIES OVER PASSPORTS. IT ADDS THAT THE WHITE CARD QUOTE HAS ALSO BEEN A MEANS OF ADVANCING IN OUR SOVEREIGNTY CLAIMS OVER THE ISLANDS UNQUOTE.

WILLIAMS
STANDARD
SAMD
CABINET OFFICE

ADDITIONAL DISTN
FAUKLAND ISLANDS

THIS TELEGRAM
WAS NOT
ADVANCED