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DESKBY FCO 250910Z

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 6901 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 GRYTVIKEN.

WILLIAMS
STANDARD
SAMD
CABINETOFFICE

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