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M 2/14/4

ALQ 050/304/1	
5 AUG 1982	

Mr Weston, Defence Dept

cc: Mr Wright (DUS)
 Mr Gilmore
 Mr Hulse
 Mr Flower, PUSD

ARGENTINE REQUEST FOR SATELLITE COVERAGE OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS ('LANDSAT')

1. We spoke.
2. After much deliberation, the DIS (MOD) have now telephoned to say that they do not believe that the Argentines would be able to derive any significant military intelligence from Landsat coverage of the Falkland Islands, provided that the material obtained was processed at no greater than the normal speed (ie that it was not made available to the Argentines until at least 4/5 days after the pictures were taken). Coverage of the task force however would be highly damaging, as the fleet would show up clearly on Landsat pictures.
3. There would not therefore appear to be a case for going back to the Americans to argue the toss with them on military intelligence grounds as far as the Falkland Islands are concerned.
4. This leaves only the political/military dimension. It would be for Defence department rather than PUSD to lead on this. We agreed therefore that you would take over responsibility for any further briefing/coordinating of a response to Washington/liaison with News Department that may be necessary as a result of the Argentine request. However, if you need any further input from us on matters of PUSD responsibility, we will of course do our best to help.

H. Warren-Gash

H. Warren-Gash, PUSD

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Private Secretary

ARGENTINE REQUEST FOR SATELLITE COVERAGE ON FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. In case this subject should come up tomorrow, Ministers might like to know where we stand.
2. The Embassy have reported fully on the Argentinian request for LANDSAT coverage on subsequent US reactions and on US views as to the usefulness of any information obtained (Washington Tel Numbers Flag A 1308, 1323, 1326, and 1329).
3. The Embassy also reported that the US public line would be to the effect that the story that Argentina had asked for and obtained photographic satellite intelligence from the US Government was totally untrue. If pressed, which they expected to be, the State Department would say that they knew that both Argentina and the UK had relationships with NASA in the civil satellite programmes, that these would have no military intelligence value and that further enquiries should be put to NASA. NASA if approached would say:
 - a) give full technical details of the LANDSAT programme;
 - b) confirm the request from Argentina and explain that it is in conformity with its Memorandum of Understanding with NASA;
 - c) confirm that NASA is meeting the Argentinian request. NASA, like the State Department, will also emphasise the absence of military value in these programmes.
4. In the event the US Embassy in London this afternoon, put out a statement denying that the US was providing any kind of intelligence information about British forces to Argentina and stressed that this would continue to be the American position. The American Embassy, though furnished with guidance about NASA and the civil programme, have not yet used it.
5. The State Department say that they have obtained very poor results with their pictures on the Falklands over the last ten years. Moreover the Argentines will be unable to make a similar request to NASA for another eighteen days. If they do so, NASA will be unable to accede to such an Argentine request without specific US Administration authorisation. According to our Ministry of Defence, the Argentines would not be able to derive any significant military intelligence from LANDSAT coverage of the Falkland Islands, provided that the material obtained was processed at no greater than the normal speed ie. 4-5 days. Coverage of the Royal Navy Task Force however would be highly damaging as the fleet would show up clearly on LANDSAT pictures.

/There

6. There would not therefore appear to be a case for going back to the Americans to argue the toss with them on military intelligence grounds as far as the Falkland Islands are concerned. The American Embassy stress that such information as NASA gives out on a civilian basis is available to any citizen who cares to ask NASA in Washington. The information is totally unclassified, and has no military value. But it is for consideration whether we should not ask the Americans for the same material.

7. Despite the military insignificance of any information obtained by LANDSAT there is still the political and parliamentary situation to be contained. Even though the US Embassy have denied US satellite intelligence help to Argentina and have not mentioned NASA as such, I believe that we should come clean with our House of Commons (if Mr Silkin's proposal is accepted) and admit to NASA's civilian involvement. I therefore propose a statement in the House on the following lines:

See Annex A

Pete S. Hood

17 April 1982

P Gregory-Hood

cc: PS/Mr Hurd
PS/PUS
Mr Wright
Mr Giffard
Mr Gillmore
Mr Ure
Mr Weston
Mr Mallaby
Mr Warren Gash,
PUSD
Mr Fearn
News Department

ANNEX A

These media stories appear to spring from the fact that the US Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA) make available certain facilities on a civilian and totally unclassified basis to various countries including Argentina and the UK. These are non-intelligence programmes & not military in nature. Such information is fully available to the public on request and any citizen of any country can obtain it by contacting NASA in Washington. The Government believes that the Argentines would be unable therefore to derive any significant military intelligence from such coverage of the Falkland Islands.

The Right Honourable Member will no doubt have seen the US Embassy's denial on Saturday 17 April that the US are providing any kind of intelligence information about British forces to Argentina and that this will continue to be the American position.

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Mr Gregory-Hood

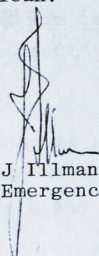
ARGENTINE REQUEST FOR SATELLITE COVERAGE OF FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. I believe that Christopher Hulse may have left you a note on this subject and you will therefore wish to see Washington telegrams Nos.1308 and 1316 which have come in overnight.

2. I am a layman on this subject but it strikes me that the passage sidelined 'X' in paragraph 6 of telegram No.1316 could provide the answer to our problems. If the US are to keep up the semblance of impartiality, it would be right for them to meet a request from us to provide the same information that the Argentines have requested. Receipt of the information should enable us to confirm our belief that it will be of no more than propaganda use to the Argentines. If on the other hand the intelligence is of value, it will be all the more so to us than it would be to the Argentines!

3. It is not altogether clear to me why Eagleburger has reacted quite so sharply (paragraph 2 of telegram No.1308), unless he is suffering under the illusion that we leaked the information which he passed to us in good faith. Clearly we should deny any such accusation and point out that, since the Argentine's objective seems to be a PR one, it seems entirely logical that they were responsible for the leak.

17 April 1982



J Illman
Emergency Unit