

ALQ 050/304/1		
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CONFIDENTIAL

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Secretary of State 73

SEE 92

Mr Pearce (Enig Unit)

Thompson

19/4

Private Secretary ✓

ARGENTINE REQUEST FOR SATELLITE COVERAGE OF FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. The Secretary of State will wish to be aware that the Argentines have sought from the Americans coverage of the Falkland Islands by LANDSAT (Washington telno 1308). LANDSAT has a purely civilian role. The information it produces is public, and Argentina - like the UK - is a subscriber to the LANDSAT programme. Washington telno 1316 describes LANDSAT's capability. The Defence Intelligence experts in the MOD 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. Coverage of the task force could, however, if weather conditions were perfect (unlikely), be damaging. The Americans have said that they feel obliged to agree to the Argentine request.
 - A
 - B
2. The story has broken in the press (Washington telno 1323), and Mr Silkin has been reported as saying that he will raise the matter in the House this week.
 - C
3. Despite the arguments of our Embassy, it seems clear that the Americans will go ahead. Since our defence intelligence advice is that the pass over the Falklands requested by the Argentines would not reveal any significant military intelligence, it does not seem worth having a row with the Americans on this point. But clearly we will need to keep a close eye on any future request.
 - D
4. The Americans have prepared a public line (Washington telno 1329) which emphasises the civilian nature of LANDSAT and denies that they are providing the Argentines with any satellite intelligence. We have since received from the American Embassy the complete text of their guidance telegram.
 - E
5. I attach ^(Annex 1) a draft line for use with the press and in Parliament if necessary. This has been cleared with the MOD

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- 2 -

and the US Embassy, and we have sent the text to our Embassy
in Washington.

H J S Pearce

18 April 1982

H J S Pearce
Emergency Unit

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 Dept

The media stories may spring from the fact that Argentina - like the UK and many other countries - participates in civilian satellite programmes run ^{by} ~~on~~ the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). These programmes are not intelligence programmes and are not military in nature. Information collected by these programmes is unclassified and is available to the public. The Government ^{does not} believe ~~s~~ that the Argentines ^{likely will} ~~would be unable~~ to derive any significant military intelligence from these programmes.

2. The US Administration have made it clear that they are not providing Argentina with ~~the satellite intelligence or with~~ military intelligence about British actions in the Falkland Islands dispute. Secretary of State Haig said on 14 April that 'since the onset of the crisis, the United States has not acceded to requests that would go beyond the scope of customary patterns of cooperation based on existing ^{agreements.} bilateral ~~claims.~~ That will continue to be our stand while our efforts are under way'.

(amended

per version
CASH

RSD

19/4