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LETTER DATED 26 APRIL 1982 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE UNITED  
NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour, with reference to the letters dated 24 and 25 April from the Permanent Representative of Argentina (S/14998 and S/14999), to state the following.

On 3 April 1982, notwithstanding current action in the Security Council and the adoption of Security Council resolution 502 (1982), Argentina carried out an armed invasion of the island of South Georgia. The small British garrison resisted but was eventually captured. On 25 April, in exercise of the inherent right of self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, British forces re-established British authority on South Georgia. The Commander of the Argentine forces, which had been there for just over three weeks, surrendered. The only casualty, so far as my Government is aware, was an Argentine seaman who suffered leg injuries.

There is thus no question of the United Kingdom Government having acted aggressively, having in any way breached the terms of Security Council resolution 502 (1982) (implementation of paragraph 2 of which by Argentina is still awaited by the international community) or of having caused a breach of international peace and security. The original breach of the peace determined by the Security Council in the third preambular paragraph of Security Council resolution 502 (1982) will not be brought to an end before Argentina can be seen to have complied with paragraph 2 of that resolution. No amount of selective quotation from statements by British Ministers can obscure the fact that it was Argentina which first used armed force in defiance of the Security Council's urgent call on 1 April (S/14944).

South Georgia is a remote mountainous island in the South Atlantic (800 miles from the Falkland Islands and 1,600 miles south-east of Buenos Aires). It was discovered by a British national, and British sovereignty was first proclaimed in 1775, before which it was *terra nullius*. Since 1908, the United Kingdom has occupied and administered the island openly, continuously and peacefully, maintaining a government station and a resident magistrate, and regulating whaling, fishing and sealing in particular. For many years, Argentina accepted British sovereignty. Argentina appears to have first made claim to South Georgia in 1927.

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In the 1940s and 1950s, the United Kingdom offered to refer the sovereignty dispute over South Georgia to the International Court of Justice. In May 1955, the United Kingdom submitted this dispute to the Court by delivering an application to the Registrar (full text in "ICJ Pleadings, Antarctica Cases (UK v. Argentina)"). Having seen the strength of the British title to South Georgia, Argentina declined to accept the Court's jurisdiction. In recent years, the main use of the island has been as a logistic station supporting the British Antarctic Survey, i.e., peaceful scientific research.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for this letter to be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) A. D. PARSONS

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