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LETTER DATED 24 JUNE 1982 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I.  
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF ARGENTINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour, on express instructions from my Government, to refer to the note addressed to you by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, dated 21 June 1982 (S/15246), concerning the South Sandwich Islands.

In this connexion, I wish to state the following:

1. The United Kingdom again invokes an alleged pre-existing title of sovereignty to justify the armed attack by its forces on an Argentine scientific establishment, the "Corbeta Uruguay" station, on Southern Thule Island. We have characterized the nature of this act of colonial force in our previous notes and shall not, therefore, repeat what has already been said.

Argentina does not accept the British claim to sovereignty over these islands based on the mere fact of discovery and on a fictitious administration of the islands, nor does it recognize as having any effect the military occupation on 20 June 1982 resulting from a further use of force against the territorial integrity of my country.

2. The United Kingdom note asserts that the islands were administered by the United Kingdom and that that administration was accepted by the Argentine Republic.

This is incorrect. The United Kingdom has purported to "administer" the South Sandwich Islands as dependencies of the Malvinas Islands, whose occupation and subjection to colonial rule have been constantly contested by the Argentine Republic.

Strictly speaking, there has been no effective United Kingdom administration over the South Sandwich Islands, but only isolated references in British documents and other papers, some of them vague, the purport of which was that British jurisdiction extended to territories that were under the unquestionable sovereignty of other States. Consequently, there was no peaceful, effective and continuous administration sufficient to give the United Kingdom a valid title.

3. The South Sandwich Islands were uninhabited - as I pointed out in my previous note and as the latest United Kingdom note implicitly recognizes - and had no permanent settlement until the end of 1976, when the Argentine Republic started work on establishing the "Corbeta Uruguay" station.

It should also be pointed out that, prior to the establishment of this station, Argentina had carried out scientific work in previous campaigns, placing beacons on a number of islands in the archipelago and setting up a temporary shelter.

4. Not only has my country never accepted the British claim to the archipelago, but the United Kingdom must have been very clearly aware of that fact, because in April 1977 it agreed with the Argentine Government, in a joint communiqué, to establish as terms of reference for the negotiations on the Malvinas question that the negotiations would relate to sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. This was reported by the Permanent Representatives of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom in communications to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (A/32/110 and A/32/111). The same conclusion must be drawn from the joint communiqué of the two Governments of 20 December 1978, which also refers to negotiations concerning the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (A/34/66 of 22 January 1979) and from documents A/34/342 of 29 June 1979 and A/34/343 of the same date, containing identical letters from the Permanent Representatives of Argentina and the United Kingdom in which both of them refer to "a fourth round of negotiations on the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands".

5. The Argentine Republic has no doubt whatsoever concerning its title to the South Sandwich Islands and the illegitimacy of the British colonial claims. The Argentine presence in those islands, not preceded by any other permanent occupation, was exercised up to 20 June 1982 in a peaceful manner, through the establishment of the "Corbeta Uruguay" station. It should be noted that that presence was tacitly consented to by the United Kingdom, which sent its ships on normal visits to the Argentine scientific station.

Moreover, in late 1978, during a round of negotiations in Geneva, the United Kingdom delegation, headed by the then Minister of State in the Foreign Office, concluded with his Argentine opposite number an agreement on scientific co-operation which provided for the establishment of Argentine bases not only in the South Sandwich Islands but also in South Georgia. Months later, however, the British Government announced that it could not ratify the agreement because of objections by the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands, although in practice it allowed the agreement to be put into effect.

6. It should also be made clear that the "Corbeta Uruguay" station was operated throughout its existence by scientific personnel of the Argentine armed forces, the reason being that the armed forces are responsible for all Antarctic and sub-Antarctic logistical operations. The personnel in question were not in possession of any armaments at all.

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7. Lastly, it is important to emphasize that the "Corbeta Uruguay" station is a surface synoptic meteorological station making three-hourly observations and also an altitude meteorological station (radiosonde-radiowind). Its establishment was reported to the World Meteorological Organization, without any objection, on 6 December 1977, by a note to the Secretary-General of the Organization giving its co-ordinates and geographical location. In accordance with the international rules in force, the station was given the designation No. 88946, and in June 1978 it was included in the publication volume 9 of the World Meteorological Organization, thus being officially recognized as an Argentine station belonging to Regional Association III (South America); this was not contested and gave rise to no British complaint whatever.

I request that this note should be circulated as a Security Council document.

(Signed) Arnoldo M. LlSTRE  
Ambassador

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