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LETTER DATED 17 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

On express instructions from my Government, I have the honour to refer to certain actions taken by the British Government with regard to the scientific station "Corbeta Uruguay", which the Argentine Republic set up in March 1977 on Morell Island, in the South Sandwich group. Previous work on this station had begun at the end of 1976.

It is pertinent to recall that this base was established for purely scientific purposes to serve as a sub-Antarctic station in support of the scientific activities which Argentina is carrying out in the Antarctic and in order to renew the work previously carried out during the Antarctic campaigns of 1954/55 and 1956/57 in the same place. Already in January 1955, the Argentine icebreaker General San Martín had set up a base in Ferguson Bay, on Thule Island, in the same group of islands, which had been temporarily occupied during this summer.

In 1976, the work of rehabilitation and enlargement of the existing installations was renewed with a view to housing a scientific station to carry out geological prospecting, petrography, studies of the continental drift and other special operations such as research in solar radiation, glaciology, oceanography and meteorology, designed to support broader research programmes in Antarctica.

At the end of 1977 and as part of the Antarctic campaign of 1977/78, the scientific station was completed and enlarged so as to increase its ability to participate in other international scientific programmes such as Biomass, Giro Weddel, I.S.O.S. and Polex Sur. It also carried out seismological operations related to the work of the Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research, and investigations in marine biology and geophysics, again as support for Antarctic activities.

It should also be noted that, before the construction of the scientific station, no permanent installation like "Corbeta Uruguay" had been built on the South Sandwich Islands and that consequently there was no permanent settlement on the Islands up to that point. It should also be recalled that on a number of occasions British ships had called at the scientific station and made normal contact with it.

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"Corbeta Uruguay" is now issuing meteorological bulletins of international importance. Its installations consist of the main dwelling-house and an emergency house, a building housing generating equipment and boilers, and a shed for storage and scientific equipment. However, it has no equipment of a military nature.

We have now been informed that the British warship Endurance has informed the personnel of the station that they should abandon it and give themselves up as prisoners; otherwise the ship will open fire. This example shows once again the British Government's obvious attachment to the use of force in order to remove by violent means a scientific station which the Argentine Republic has maintained since 1977 and which constitutes absolutely no military threat.

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

(Signed) Arnoldo M. LISTRE
Ambassador
