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LETTER DATED 17 JUNE 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, on instructions, to reply as follows to the three letters dated 13 June 1982 (S/15204, S/15206 and S/15207) from the Permanent Representative of Argentina containing allegations of attacks by British forces on the hospital ship Bahia Paraiso and on civilians in Port Stanley.

The United Kingdom refutes the allegation that there was an attack on the Bahia Paraiso in contravention of article 22 of the Second Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of the Armed Forces at Sea of 1949. Military operations were being conducted in the area at the relevant time, but British forces had been instructed to keep well clear of the hospital ship. Article 30 of the Second Convention qualifies article 22 by providing that hospital ships "shall in no wise hamper the movements of combatants" and that during an engagement "they will act at their own risk".

Turning to the alleged attack on civilians in Port Stanley, the British authorities do not yet have full details of the incident described in Argentine communiqués Nos. 150 and 153 (S/15204 and S/15207) and are not in a position to judge how the casualties occurred. The Government of the United Kingdom, naturally, regrets the loss of any life, injury to civilians or damage to property which may have been caused on the Falkland Islands. Whatever the immediate cause, the ultimate responsibility for such incidents lies squarely about Argentina as a consequence of its unprovoked aggression on 2 April 1982 against the Falkland Islands. The accusations in the three Argentine letters have reached new heights of hypocrisy. Had the Argentine authorities been genuinely concerned with the welfare of the civilian population, they would have arranged long ago for their removal to safety in neutralized zones, in accordance with articles 14 and 15 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949, or for their evacuation in accordance with article 49 of that Convention. The Argentine authorities should also have facilitated access by the representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who were unable

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to reach Port Stanley until 10 June 1982, despite the strenuous endeavours which they had been making for some time. The extent to which Argentine forces have treated the civilian population in accordance with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 will be judged in the light of the facts as they emerge: in this connexion, the Government of the United Kingdom is awaiting authoritative reports with great concern.

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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