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LETTER DATED 21 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 from my Government, to state the following in reply to the letters dated 17 and 19 June 1982 (S/15230 and S/15241) from the Permanent Representative of Argentina about the South Sandwich Islands.

The South Sandwich Islands lie approximately 1,500 miles east-south-east of Cape Horn in the Antarctic Ocean, to the north of the Antarctic Treaty Area. The islands were discovered by a British national, Captain Cook, and British sovereignty was proclaimed in 1775, before which the islands were terra nullius. The islands have long been administered by the United Kingdom, which was accepted by Argentina until Argentina first advanced a claim to the islands in 1937. In the 1940s and 1950s, the United Kingdom offered to refer the question of sovereignty over the islands to the International Court of Justice, but Argentina declined to accept the Court's jurisdiction.

In 1976, the United Kingdom became aware of the establishment of an Argentine station on Southern Thule for which no authorization had been sought. Accordingly, the United Kingdom protested at the time against these illegal actions and has subsequently maintained in protests to Argentina that this illegal presence was totally unacceptable.

On 2 April 1982, Argentina purported to proclaim "the recovery of its national sovereignty" over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. This proclamation was brought to the attention of the Security Council by the representative of Argentina in his statement at the 2346th meeting of the Security Council on 2 April 1982. At the same time, Argentina used armed force in order to invade the Falkland Islands and South Georgia, while maintaining its illegal presence on Southern Thule.

In my letters of 17 June and 26 April 1982 (S/15231 and S/15002), I reported to the Council the recovery by the United Kingdom of possession of the Falkland Islands and South Georgia, respectively. I now have the honour to report the recovery of possession of the South Sandwich Islands. The Argentine station

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comprised 10 naval and 1 air force personnel. They formally surrendered on board HMS Endurance at 1900 hours GMT on 20 June. At no time were any shots fired by British forces. This action was undertaken in exercise of the United Kingdom's inherent right of self-defence, recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

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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