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QUESTION OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS (MALVINAS)

SECURITY COUNCIL

Fortieth year

Letter dated 16 May 1985 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and
Worship of Argentina addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to write in connection with the opening of the strategic airport which has been constructed in the Malvinas Islands by the United Kingdom.

My Government has repeatedly stated that, far from helping to solve the problems with Argentina and contributing to stability in the South Atlantic, British policy in that region pursues strategic and global objectives which transcend the framework of the Malvinas, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, and run counter to the genuine interests of Latin America and the world with respect to peace and security. The new airport, coupled with the presence in the area of nuclear-capable warships and submarines, missile installations, highly sophisticated radar systems and military personnel numbering 4,000, is evidence of such serious intentions.

The United Kingdom Government has attempted to justify this new and important escalation in the militarization of the territories usurped from Argentina by alleging that its purpose is to promote the economic development of those territories.

Such arguments are not borne out by the facts. The United Kingdom Ministry of Defence has reserved the new runway for its exclusive use and civil aviation is barred from it. This is consistent with a policy which has always given precedence to strategic considerations over the social progress and prosperity of the islands. Between July 1982 and April 1985, the United Kingdom spent nearly \$3 billion - approximately \$1.5 million per inhabitant - in the so-called "Fortress Falklands". In contrast, only 31 million pounds sterling has been allocated for development plans during the five-year period 1983-1988.

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The United Kingdom Government has further suggested that the airport would make it possible to reduce the large number of troops currently stationed in the Malvinas Islands and South Georgia. This suggestion contradicts recent remarks by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, Lord Trefayne, who has stated that no significant reduction in the number of military personnel is envisaged. Furthermore, on 14 March of this year the United Kingdom Government informed Parliament that such a move was unlikely, even in the event of a formal cessation of hostilities; it thereby confirmed the speciousness of its insistence on the necessity of that condition.

The United Kingdom has further argued that there is a need to defend the islands against possible Argentine attacks. Such an argument cannot be made in good faith. My Government has repeatedly stated that it would seek the return of the Argentine territories which are illegally occupied by the United Kingdom exclusively through the peaceful means for the settlement of international disputes provided for in the Charter of the United Nations. At no time has it strayed even one inch from that firm commitment. The truth of the matter is that the only source of tension in the South Atlantic is the conduct of the United Kingdom Government, which, violating the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations and the commitments it has undertaken within the inter-American framework, has militarized the Malvinas Islands, has introduced nuclear weapons into the South Atlantic, is enforcing an illegal "exclusion zone" against Argentine ships and aircraft, and refuses to resume negotiations on the sovereignty issue.

Indeed, the massive and disproportionate British military presence in the South Atlantic cannot be attributed to supposed requirements of defence against Argentina. It must therefore be asked what are the real objectives pursued in our region by the United Kingdom, a nuclear Power and member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Part of the answer is to be found in the statements made by the British Secretary of State for Defence in Washington in September 1983. At that time, Mr. Heseltine expressly linked the Malvinas Islands with the East-West conflict. Such a way of thinking, which must surely lead to the nuclearization of the South Atlantic, ignores the fundamental interests of our region with respect to peace and security and has repeatedly been criticized by the Latin American countries.

Furthermore, we cannot fail to mention our profound concern at the linkage which certain political circles close to the British Government maintain is necessary between the militarization of the Malvinas, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the defence of the United Kingdom's interests in Antarctica. It is plain that there is a total incompatibility between the aims of the Antarctic Treaty and the use by the United Kingdom of a military and nuclear base contiguous to the geographical area covered by that international agreement to pursue its objectives in Antarctica. It is hardly necessary to point out the potential consequences for the future of that continent of such designs, which have been so often discussed in the British Parliament.

Member States and the United Kingdom itself are well aware of the Argentine Government's readiness to leave no stone unturned in its quest for a peaceful and negotiated settlement to the dispute relating to sovereignty over the Malvinas,

South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. It maintains that stand, despite the recklessness with which London is behaving in this delicate matter and in spite of the United Kingdom Government's obstinate refusal to recognize the fundamental political changes which have taken place in my country and the political and practical necessity of finding a solution to the sovereignty dispute and to the other outstanding differences between the two countries. Consequently, my Government cannot fail to draw attention to the dangers of the continuing refusal of the United Kingdom Government to comply with the obligation to resume bilateral negotiations in accordance with the Charter and General Assembly resolutions on the question of the Malvinas Islands. So long as British policy in the South Atlantic dismisses the necessity of settling all outstanding issues with Argentina, any reconciliation between the two countries and the final removal of tension in the area will continue to be unattainable objectives.

I request that this note be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 23 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council, and brought to the attention of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

(Signed) Dante CAPUTO
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship
of the Argentine Republic

