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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

11 December 1978

MEMORANDUM

ARGENTINA-CHILE: BEAGLE CHANNEL DISPUTE [redacted]

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Prospects continue to be poor that Argentina or Chile will make the necessary concessions to defuse the Beagle Channel crisis, or that the Foreign Ministers' meeting tomorrow will either avert or delay an Argentine military initiative.

[redacted]

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If the Foreign Ministers' meeting fails, the most probable Argentine military initiative will be to occupy Evout and Barnaveit islands, which are probably uninhabited, and perhaps part of the sparsely inhabited Cape Horn island. This limited action would give the Argentines the land-based territory they seek to guarantee their claim to maritime control of the South Atlantic without a major loss of life. This move would also place the burden of any military escalation on the Chileans. In such a case, the Chileans might limit themselves to a diplomatic response.

[redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by the Latin America Division of the Office of Regional and Political Analysis. It was requested by the Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs. Questions and comments may be addressed to

[redacted]

[redacted]

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Our best evidence suggests that the Argentines do not wish to initiate a major conflict. They are ready to do so, however, and might attempt large-scale actions along the 2000-mile border if the conflict widens. [REDACTED]

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