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Se refiere a:

24MAY82 – CIA. Daily cable.

(Central Intelligence Agency) (desclasificado 2007)

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**Director of  
Central  
Intelligence**

Central Intelligence Daily rm

**Top Secret**

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CABLE**



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# **National Intelligence Daily (Cable)**

**24 May 1982**

**Top Secret**

*CPAS NIDC 82-121C*

*24 May 1982*

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## SPECIAL ANALYSES

## UK-ARGENTINA: Probable British Strategy

[REDACTED]

*//London is aiming at a rapid military victory in the Falklands, and its forces are likely to spend only a short time consolidating the beachhead. The British probably intend a direct assault against Argentine forces at Stanley even though their forces are substantially outnumbered. The government appears ready to accept relatively heavy losses in exchange for quick military success. Prime Minister Thatcher could call early elections in the event of success, but a serious military setback or stalemate would probably result in her replacement.//* [REDACTED]

*//The British apparently envision a campaign lasting less than two weeks. They probably expect to consolidate their position at San Carlos in short order and are likely to move against Darwin/Goose Green, less than 32 kilometers away, where there are 600 Argentine troops and an airfield. Afterward they would move on Stanley, about 80 kilometers to the east.//* [REDACTED]

*//Darwin/Goose Green is important because it is astride the only main route to Port Stanley, and because a British victory there would provide continuing psychological momentum. The Argentine units there probably will be unable to resist long the 5,000 to 6,000 troops of the British land force.//* [REDACTED]

*//While the main British force is moving toward Stanley, small units probably will raid Argentine positions on both East and West Falkland to destroy Argentine aircraft, ammunition, and supplies. British ships and aircraft will attack Stanley to pin down the Argentine troops and soften them up for an assault.//* [REDACTED]

*//Difficult terrain and poor weather may slow the British advance from Darwin/Goose Green to Stanley. British forces on the move will be at high risk from Argentine aircraft, and Harriers from the British aircraft carriers or possibly from the field at San Carlos will have to provide protection.//* [REDACTED]

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[redacted]

//The Argentines probably will place troops on the high ground about 25 kilometers from Stanley--at Mt. Challenger, for example--to obstruct the advance. Argentine forces also could launch a counterattack from Stanley in an attempt to deal with British units piecemeal.// [redacted]

//Although the 3,000 troops aboard the Queen Elizabeth 2 have been described as a garrison force, they could become involved if the British troops become bogged down. The forces on board, the Scots Guards and the Welsh Guards, are among the best British units. These troops, which could arrive as early as Wednesday, might be landed in northern or north-central East Falkland to outflank Argentine defenses.// [redacted]

//Once they arrive in the Stanley area, the British forces probably will initially establish defensive positions, but after a short period of artillery bombardment joined by naval and air attacks, they probably will attempt to storm the town spearheaded by Scorpion light tanks. The British are better trained and somewhat better equipped than the Argentines, and would be supported by air and sea. The Argentines, however, outnumber the British two to one and would be in prepared defensive positions.// [redacted]

//The Argentines will attack British land and sea forces during the campaign, using aircraft from the mainland. The British aircraft carriers will continue to be the most attractive target.// [redacted]

//The British are unlikely to attack mainland bases. They apparently can stage only a few Vulcan bombers from Ascension Island to Argentina, and British carriers would have to move dangerously close to Argentine defenses to attack with Harriers.// [redacted]

#### The Political Will

//As long as the British see negotiations proposals as detrimental to their interests, a short campaign that is proceeding successfully will receive broadbased support in the UK. Backed by favorable public opinion, Thatcher's government and an overwhelming majority of her party probably are willing to continue to accept relatively heavy losses, but only if a clear-cut military victory is the result.// [redacted]

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//Within the Social Democratic - Liberal alliance and even within the Labor Party--which is becoming increasingly divided over how to resolve the crisis--a majority will support such a campaign for now. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] Thatcher and her "war cabinet" likely will give commanders on the scene considerable leeway for the immediate future.// [redacted] 25X1  
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//A short, successful campaign, especially with few new losses, would catapult the Tories into a stronger position than at any time since the early 1960s. Consequently, despite disclaimers by the Conservative Party chairman, chances would increase dramatically for an election as early as late spring, with a major Tory victory likely.// [redacted] 25X1

//Nonetheless, Thatcher is following a high-risk strategy. Loss of the Sheffield and casualties sustained during and since the invasion sent shockwaves through the UK, but they are "acceptable" because of the UK's general military successes. Any serious reverses, however, almost certainly would force Thatcher to reconsider an aggressive military course, and would increase pressure for a cease-fire.// [redacted] 25X1

//Heavy losses early in the campaign or a stalemate on the ground could spur the UK to redouble its efforts and even attempt a spectacular military reprisal. Within a relatively short time, however, British reverses probably would seriously erode Thatcher's position as Prime Minister and compel her to accept a cease-fire and UN mediation while British forces struggled to hold their ground.// [redacted] 25X1

//If Thatcher fell, she would be replaced by a Tory less clearly locked into hardline military policies. There has already been speculation that Foreign Secretary Pym is uncomfortable with Thatcher's emphasis on a military victory. It is unlikely, however, that a general election would follow immediately.// [redacted] 25X1

//Less dramatic setbacks probably would encourage the military to request more time and the government to grant it. Thatcher's position would not be greatly affected at first, but the longer a military victory is denied, the more constricted her maneuvering room would become.// [redacted] 25X1

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