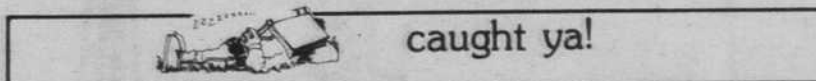


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From Associated Press reports

British control Falklands channel

FALKLAND ISLANDS

Britain was reported in control of the waterway separating the main Falkland Islands on Tuesday after one of its warships fired on an Argentine vessel in the channel.

Argentina had no immediate comment, but threatened to attack any British ship or plane heading to the South Atlantic archipelago.

Britain claimed it had a "tight grip" around the Falkland Islands, and Press Association, Britain's domestic news agency, said the British armada has gained control of the five-mile-wide Falkland Sound dividing East and West Falkland and isolated the Argentine garrisons on the two islands.

The agency quoted informed British government sources as saying that British frigates and destroyers are now making regular patrols along the waterway to prevent Argentine supplies from being ferried by land or sea to the garrisons.

The British Defense Ministry said: "This morning one of our ships in the darkness detected the presence of a vessel within the Total Exclusion Zone. They fired on it. We have no absolute evidence the vessel was hit or sunk. All I can say is we have reports of a large explosion."

"The incident and its location show how tight our grip is on the Falkland Islands."

Reports by British correspondents with the armada identified the frigate as the Alacrity. In dispatches submitted to British censorship, the correspondents said the frigate spotted an Argentine supply ship on radar

and opened fire with 4½-inch automatic guns from a distance of eight miles.

There was no confirmation from the Argentines, who reported no new military action around the Falklands.

But the junta in Buenos Aires said because the British had imposed a 200-mile total war zone around the islands April 30 and extended it to within 12 miles of the Argentine coast on Friday, that Argentina was retaliating with its own broadened war zone.

It said that any British ship or aircraft headed toward the Falkland Islands from anywhere in the South Atlantic will be considered hostile. The three-man junta issued a communique describing the move as "self-defense" in view of Britain's "persistent aggressive attitude."

The communique did not set down specific boundaries.

Meanwhile an Argentine Foreign Ministry official said there had been "a change of attitude, but not of basic position" on the issue of sovereignty over the Falklands.

The official, who asked not to be identified, said Argentina wanted to demonstrate it was not intransigent on sovereignty, which has been the stumbling block in diplomatic efforts.

"Full (British) recognition of our sovereignty is not absolutely necessary," said the official. "But at the end of any negotiations, we must be exercising sovereignty."

British officials at the United Nations were not mollified by the statement, and U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar said negotiations will take a few more days before anything concrete emerges.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher told the House of Commons in London, "the fact we are negotiating does not close off any military options at all. . . ." Her statement indicated Britain may go ahead with a widely predicted assault on the Falklands, seized by Argentine forces April 2.

In London, the luxury liner Queen Elizabeth II was scheduled to sail for the Falklands today, carrying 3,000 troops of the 5th Infantry Brigade, Britain's Rapid Deployment Force.

The brigade, comprised of elements of the Welsh Guards, Scots Guards and Nepalese Gurkhas, is expected to be used as a garrison force on the Falklands should Britain recapture them.

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