

Argentina loses jets, British frigate sinks

London (AP) — Britain said its jets, missiles and shore gunners shot down at least seven Argentine warplanes as a new battle raged Monday over the British beachhead on the Falkland Islands. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher ruled out a cease-fire sought by Pope John

Paul II.

The British Defense Ministry announcement said an eighth Argentine plane was seen leaving the battle trailing smoke and acknowledged the sinking of the British frigate Antelope, which was set ablaze in an air raid Sunday.

The Argentine government admitted the loss of two planes but claimed its raiders did "serious damage" to a troop transport and "damage" to a frigate. The Buenos Aires communique identified neither ship but the Argentine Embassy in Washington said the transport

was the converted liner Canberra.

The British Defense Ministry said some ships may have been damaged but gave no details.

The Argentine Joint Chiefs of Staff in an earlier communique claimed one of Britain's carrier-based Harriers was shot down by anti-aircraft fire during a raid on Stanley, the Falklands capital 50 miles east of San Carlos.

British Defense Secretary John Nott claimed more than a third of Argentina's air force has been destroyed in the undeclared war and more ships were arriving to reinforce the British task force.

"There is no question of a truce," Nott told the House of Commons. He said the British still have a difficult fight ahead but "one thing is certain, the days of the occupying Argentine garrison are numbered."

In a later interview with the British Broadcasting Corp., he said, "The task force commander has been told to repossess the Falkland Islands at the earliest possible opportunity."

He called the idea of a cease-fire accompanied by negotiations on sovereignty over the South Atlantic islands "absurd." "There's a new situation," he added. "We're not going to talk about sovereignty at the moment we are trying to retake the islands."

In its report on the Antelope, the British Defense Ministry said fires aboard the frigate went out of control despite efforts by the crewmen and they were forced to abandon ship. They were transferred to other vessels, it said, and "there were no further reports of casualties."

The ministry refused comment on a report by Press Association, Britain's domestic news agency, that an Argentine bomb had lodged in the Antelope's engine room and exploded when technicians tried to defuse it, killing one person and wounding seven.

The ship was hit while operating in Falkland Sound, which separates the two main islands, West Falkland and East Falkland.

According to the British accounts, Argentine air attacks have sunk two frigates, the Antelope and its sister ship Ardent, and damaged four other warships since the British task force landed a reported 5,000 troops

at San Carlos Friday.

Neither Britain nor Argentina allows foreign reporters in the battle area and dispatches from their own correspondents are subject to censorship. There are British newsmen with the war fleet and Telam has reporters on the Falkland Islands.

Nott spoke to Commons soon after Mrs. Thatcher rejected the pope's latest plea for a cease-fire. She said Britain would not stop fighting until Argentine troops withdraw from the British colony they seized April 2.

Argentina's ruling military junta in turn accused Britain of an "absurd colonialist venture" to retake the islands Argentina calls the Malvinas.

The junta also denounced the Common Market for indefinitely renewing trade sanctions Monday and warned the United States to stop supporting the British.

Defense Minister Amadeo Frugoli said the United States is the West's most important nation and "must think seriously about the gravity of the situation and adopt a more balanced position."

President Ronald Reagan, at a White House press briefing, said the United States has no plans to provide assistance to Britain "in the sense of troops or anything involved in the fighting." Washington declared its backing of Britain after mediation efforts by Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. collapsed last month.

In London, Defense Ministry spokesman Ian McDonald said waves of Argentine Mirage and Skyhawk warplanes roared over Falkland Sound and were engaged by Harrier jets, the warships and shore-based guns and missiles of the San Carlos invasion force. Seven were shot down and one fled in a trail of black smoke, he said.

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