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U.S. Providing British a Wide Range of Intelligence

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WASHINGTON, April 14 — The United States is providing Britain with political and military information on Argentina from a full range of American intelligence resources, Administration officials said today.

Those officials said that the sharing of intelligence with Britain, including that from aerial surveillance, electronic intercepts, covert agents and diplomats, was based on cooperation dating back to World War II.

"It's become routine," said an informed official.

The officials said that the United States was also helping the British Government to communicate via satellite with the fleet steaming toward the Falkland islands and particularly with the nuclear-powered submarines already on station there, 8,000 miles from London, the officials said.

Other help, they said, was being given in the form of fuel supplies at Ascension Island, under an agreement signed in 1962, and in South Atlantic weather reports that are also routinely made available to most who ask for them.

The officials indicated that all of that assistance came under the definition of "customary patterns," as described by

Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. this afternoon. Not to continue furnishing such assistance, they suggested, would damage United States relations with Britain and therefore lessen American influence in the crisis.

Mr. Haig appeared in the State Department press room this afternoon to read a carefully worded statement in which he asserted that the United States has "long-standing relations" with both Britain and Argentina.

"We have been careful to maintain these relationships in order to preserve our influence" with both nations, he said. "Failure to live up to existing obligations, or going beyond them, would

jeopardize our ability to play the role both countries wish us to perform."

"Since the onset of this crisis," Mr. Haig said, "the United States has therefore not acceded to requests that would go beyond the scope of customary patterns based on existing bilateral agreements." He added that such "customary" assistance would continue.

'Situation Is Too Critical'

Mr. Haig spoke after President Reagan had told reporters in the Rose Garden at the White House this morning that he would not comment on the reports of American assistance to the British. "This situation is too critical that any comment, I think, can be taken one way or the other and endanger the peacekeeping or peacemaking process." Why the Administration changed that decision was not clear.

In London, a spokesman for the British Defense Ministry told reporters, according to wire service dispatches, that the Soviet Union was gathering information on the British fleet in the Atlantic and passing it to Argentina.

The Argentine ambassador here, Estaban Takacs, denied that his government was receiving information from the Soviet Union. In a televised interview this morning, the ambassador said: "There is no military cooperation between the Soviets and Argentina."

On American sharing of intelligence with Britain, Administration officials noted that British intelligence services had been instrumental in the formation of United States intelligence organizations during World War II and that cooperation between the two, despite periods of strain, had developed steadily since then.

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They said that, in accord with that practice, the United States was providing Britain with the widest range of intelligence reports on the situation in Argentina and around the Falklands.

The American officials would not discuss specific sources and methods or operations. But they suggested that the assistance included surveillance from satellites or Air Force SR-71 long-range reconnaissance planes.

Other information comes from electronic interceptions, they said. Regardless of whether the Argentine codes were broken, specialists at the National Security Agency are able to produce intelligence by analyzing the flow of radio traffic by volume and direction.

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