

DEPARTMENT OF STATE TELEGRAM

INDICATE
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Internal Security

FROM Amembassy BUENOS AIRES CLASSIFICATION ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

E.O. 11652:
TAGS:
SUBJECT:

GDS
PINS, ASEC, AR
Success Claimed for Army in Tucuman

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ACTION:

Secstate WASHDC

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ BUENOS AIRES 3637

AMB
DCM
POL-3
POL/R
ECOM
USIS
USDAO
MILGP-2
SCIAT
LEGAT
RF
CHRON

1. Gen. Adel Vilas, commander of the Fifth Brigade and head of the Army's anti-guerrilla efforts in Tucuman Province, gave a press conference on May 23. It was only the second time that journalists have been allowed in the area since the operation began on Feb. 9. Vilas claimed that 350 members of the ERP had been killed, captured or wounded during that period, and that 30 guerrilla camps had been discovered. He emphasized that this was done with a force of only 1,500 men and with the support of the local populace. No indication was given of how much longer the operation would last.

2. Comment: Vilas did not break down the figure of 350 into how many were killed, wounded and

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detained. Since 350 "suspected" terrorists can be rounded up in an hour or two, it is difficult to interpret the figure. DAO reports would indicate that less than 50 have been killed. Of the detainees, how many are really terrorists is impossible to say. Vilas's emphasis on the low number of troops used is in part an attempt to convince the Army as a whole of the success of the operation. Many officers have complained that two or three times that number were really necessary.

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