

DEPARTMENT OF STATE 2 14 36

TELEGRAM

INDICATE
 COLLECT
 CHARGE TO

FROM: Amembassy BUENOS AIRES CLASSIFICATION: ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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SUBJECT:

GDS
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The Future Role of Armed Forces in Argentina

ACTION:

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State 179603

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AMB
POL-3
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ECOM
USIS
USDAO
MILGP-2
SCIAT
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RF
CHRON

Summary. The military as an institution, despite serious unrest in some army commands, is not at this point prepared to assume the responsibility for governing Argentina. The military has indicated its preference that the civilians find solutions for the current crisis. Military's posture of restraint is not, however, unqualified. An extended power struggle within GOA that promised lengthy continuation of present authority crisis and breakdown in public order could force them to act. Further, should leftist govt result from crisis or new political alignment emerge from present political struggle which would not be able to control terrorists, military would act. End Summary.

1. The military as an institution is not, at this point, prepared to topple constitutional government in Argentina.

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Indeed, according to Emb sources, at CINC level, hope is that civilians will find solution to current economic and political crisis. In part this is due to military's understanding that magnitude and complexity of problems facing country not amenable to simplistic solutions. While some factions within army want military to intervene more directly in present crisis, no leader or plan of action which would elicit broad majority support for a coup has emerged.

2. While military is playing large ~~is~~ if behind-the-scenes role in present power struggle their objectives at this point appear limited. Essentially military wants civilian, duly constituted govt to put house in order and get on with task of economic recovery. If it becomes clear this cannot be done under Mrs. Peron they appear willing to accept Senator Luder or other constitutionally-selected moderate who could tackle economic problems. We believe that Peronists, UCR and military all prepared to give Luder strong support in effort to strengthen his hand in tackling economic mess.

3. There is some question at present on whether some Corps or Division commander within army might attempt coup on own authority. If this were to occur, which we do not believe to be likely, both civilian and military reaction would be difficult to predict.

4. For short term we believe military will restrict itself to closely monitoring political developments. Intervention in political struggle will occur, as in Lopez Rega departure, when military feels nudge is needed to prod civilians along. If civilians falter badly then we can expect more decisive military action.
5. In event of military coup, which for the near future appears remote, we do not envision leadership being hostile to US. However, admiration for Chilean model coup widespread in army and we might, if Argentine military chooses this path, face problems in relations similar to those we face in Chile.
6. Basically, situation here is very fluid. We will follow developments closely and keep Department advised.
7. Above coordinated with DAOE025x1


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