C. ACCOUNTING FOR THE DISAPPEARED: THE

ARGENTINE ARMY LEADERSHIP FULLY REALIZES THAT A FRANK ANSWER CAN NEVER BE GIVEN ABOUT THE DISAPPEARED BECAUSE NO ONE REALLY KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED TO MANY OF THE PERSONS INVOLVED. THOUSANDS OF SUBVERSIVES WERE EITHER KILLED IN ACTION OR SUMARILY EXECUTED AFTER BEING CAPTURED IN ANTI-TERRORIST ROUNDUPS BY THE SECURITY FORCES; PERSONS WERE SHOT AND THEIR BODIES WERE DISPOSED OF WITHOUT THEIR IDENTITIES HAVING BEEN CLEARLY ESTABLISHED.

EVEN THOUGH MANY PEOPLE ARE AWARE THAT THESE KILLINGS TOOK PLACE, THE ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES SIMPLY CANNOT ADMIT PUBLICLY THAT THIS TYPE OF ACTION WAS CONDUCTED BY OFFICIAL POLICY DURING THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM.
But did not seize anybody.
C. On March 12, a group of about 60 armed men, dressed in civilian clothes, arrived at the home of José Pinho, where his son, Héctor, lives, which is also located in Nuevos. After searching the home in front of the Pinho residence, they entered the latter. When the younger Pinho arrived home, the men detained him, driving him off with his head covered. The father claims that the raiders also took items of value from the home.

NOTE BY O/C/TE: CAUTION.

RE: Friedman: Whitman Telegrams

1. SUMMARY: As the department knows, two Argentine males were the victims of what appears to have been a temporary disappearance. They were reportedly seized at their homes in front of witnesses March 11 and March 12 by armed men who refused to identify themselves. They were placed in cans and driven away with their heads covered by sacks. Subsequently, their relatives were unable to locate them in any place of detention. The Embassy was informed of these reported events March 14. We relayed them to the staff of President Vila.

There was no need to elaborate on how these reported events could cloud Viola's trip to the U.S. In the meantime, the father of one of the missing men was in touch with human rights groups here and through them to the local press and to interested parties outside Argentina. We were advised late March 14 by this father that his son and the other missing man had been released at about 12:00 hours local time. Both men were at their respective homes, he said. However, neither the family nor anybody else with whom we have been in touch has yet been able to confirm that the other man has been freed; his son was badly mistreated while in custody, the father alleges. He does not know at this point what was the immediate motivation for these arrests or what may have taken place within the regime, such as whether they are part of a pattern with earlier events. But the circumstances, notably the recapture of this practice, after a number of months, on the eve of Viola's visit, strongly suggest this. The most likely hypothesis, we conclude, is that these detentions have been authorized by the same man who approved the arrests of the human rights activists two weeks ago and the brief jailing of the mothers of the Plaza del Mayo March 12. If so, the ultimate target was President-designate Viola and the purpose would have been to reaffirm a hard-line on the regime's internal security practices, ventilate displeasure, and embarrass Viola as he sets out on his visit to the U.S. End Summary.

2. (U) Early March 14 the Embassy was informed by local human rights activists of the reported detention of two young men in circumstances that had all the hallmarks of past disappearances. As the day went along increasing details emerged. The two individuals involved were Jorge Magnino and Héctor Pinho. Though Magnino's family filed a habeas corpus on behalf of their son, Pinho's father was far more active in spreading word of the young men's apparent disappearances. He is the ultimate source of most of what we now know.

3. (U) The events were as follows:
A. On March 11 armed men in civilian clothes arrived in the early morning at the home of Magnino, located in the Buenos Aires working class suburb of Nuevos. Without identifying themselves, they took Magnino off in a car with his head covered by a sack. Magnino's wife witnessed this procedure.
B. Also on March 11, but later, a group of armed men also dressed in civilian clothes searched the home of Magnino's mother-in-law.
CONFIDENTIAL

Department of State

INCOMING

TELEGRAM

BUENOS AIRES #2 OF 02 1618532

PHASE 2A-16

INFO OCT-01 ADS-02 HIN-10 SS-15 CIE-00 D00-00 10-14

NSC-08 NSG-08 SSO-00 SY-05 HN-05 PM-09 OCT-02

INRE-08 SYE-00 SP-02 /000 V

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PM AMEBASSAD BUENOS AIRES

TO DELEGATION WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8826

4. THE ELDERS PICHON TOLD US THAT HIS SON AND MAGNINO WORKED IN THE SAME LEATHER GOODS FACTORY. HE DENIED THAT HIS SON HAD ANY POLITICAL OR LABOR AFFILIATION THAT WOULD EXPLAIN HIS SEEN DETENTION. ALL CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM HAVE BEEN BY PHONE AND THEREFORE CIRCUMSTANTIAL. WE HOPE TO SEE HIM PERSONALLY SOON TO LEARN MORE. HOWEVER, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE PEOPLE HOLDING HIS SON WERE MOST INTERESTED IN LOCATING ANOTHER ONE OF THE PINCHOS. THIS OTHER SON ACCORDING TO PICHON IS ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THE WORKERS AT THE CANTABRICA STEELWORKERS WHO ARE MAKING A VIOLENT PROTEST refuse OVER THE CLOSING FOR ECONOMIC REASONS OF THE CANTABRICA PLANT. ONE DELEGATION OF CANTABRICA WORKERS WAS RECEIVED BY THE PDFP.

5. REPORTEDLY, THE PINCHON AND MAGNINO FAMILIES IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO LOOK FOR THE YOUNG MEN. POLICE DENIED HOLDING THEM. ULTIMATELY, PINCHON, AT LEAST, CONTACTED LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS. IT WAS THEN TOLD ON MARCH 14 THAT WE FIRST HEARD OF THESE EVENTS. IN OUR EXPERIENCE A LAG OF 48 TO 72 HOURS BETWEEN THE TIME A VICTIM IS A VICTIM OF AN APPARENT DISAPPEARANCE AND THE MENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS BEGIN TO RAISE ALARMS IS NOT AT ALL UNUSUAL. IT WAS APPARENT, TOO, THAT LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS WERE ALERTING THE LOCAL PRESS AS WELL AS INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS TO THESE EVENTS. SOME OF THE BUENOS AIRES PAPERS REPORTED THESE DISAPPEARANCES MARCH 15. THE RELEASE WAS REPORTED MARCH 16.

6. THE EMBASSY CONTACTED A MEMBER OF PRESIDENT VIOLAS STAFF.

TO DESCRIBE THE EVENTS ABOVE. THERE WAS NO NEED TO ELABORATE ON HOW SUCH APPARENT DISAPPEARANCES, UNLESS CLEARED UP RAPIDLY, COULD SOW THE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE FOR VIOLAS VISIT. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATIONS IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT OUR CALLS HAD ALARMED THE PRESIDENCY AND VIOLAS STAFF TO THE PROBLEM AND THAT ONCE ALERTED THEY WERE MOVING TO RESOLVE IT.

7. DJ AT ABOUT MIDNIGHT MARCH 15 THE EMBASSY LEARNE FROM THE ELDERS PICHON THAT HIS SON WAS WITH HIM AT THEIR HOME. HE SAID THAT THE YOUNG MAN WAS RELEASED BY HIS CAPTORS IN AN EMPTY FIELD AT ABOUT 2000 HOURS THAT EVENING. AS THEY LET HIM GO THEY REPORTEDLY TOLD HIM "GET GOING, AND TELL YOUR FATHER NOT TO MAKE SO MUCH NOISE." THE SON STATED THAT MAGNINO WAS APPARENTLY RELEASED AT THE SAME TIME. THE FATHER REPORTED THAT HIS SON WAS "BADLY TORTURED" DURING HIS DETENTION. WE HAVE NO INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION THAT MAGNINO WAS RELEASED.

8. COMMENT: THERE IS MUCH MISSING FROM OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THIS EPISODE, AS DISTINCT FROM OTHERS OF THE LAST TWO WEEKS WHERE THE POLICE AND COURTS WERE OVERTLY INVOLVED. IN THE COURSE OF THE COMING WEEK WE MAY LEARN MORE. IT IS POSSIBLE TO SPECULATE THAT IT WAS A FABRICATION, THAT IT WAS THE WORK OF THE LEFT OR THE MONTENEGROS; THAT IT WAS THE WORK OF SOME POLITICAL OPPONENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT; OR THAT IT WAS THE WORK OF ELEMENTS OF THE SECRECY FORCES. ANY OF THESE GROUPS, OF COURSE, MIGHT WANT TO EMBARRASS THE GOA AND VIOLA ON THE EVE OF VIOLAS VISIT TO THE U.S. AT THIS WRITING WE ARE INCLINED TO SEE THE SECRECY FORCES AS THE PROBABLE AUTHOR, IF THE ELDERS PICHON'S ACCOUNT IS ACCURATE, THERE ARE TOO MANY ALLEGED WITNESSES TO THESE EVENTS ESPECIALLY IN A COUNTRY WHERE FEAR IS STILL A VERY