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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7630
INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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FROM ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS: PFOR SHUM OVIP AR US (TODMAN, TERENCE A)
SUBJ: MEETING BETWEEN ASSSTANT SECRETARY TODMAN AND
PRESIDENT VIDELA OF ARGENTINA

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1. WITH THE SPECIAL ASSISTANCE OF THE VENEZUELAN GOVT, ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE FOR A 25-MINUTE MEETING BETWEEN ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN AND PRESIDENT VIDELA. THE MEETING OCCURRED ON MAY 11 BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT'S ARRIVAL AT THE AIRPORT AND THE TRADITIONAL WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY AT BOLIVAR'S TOMB.

2. VIDELA BEGAN BY SAYING THAT HE HAD BEEN CONCERNED TO LEARN THAT I WOULD BE IN BA AT A TIME WHEN HE WOULD BE ABSENT, THE FOREIGN MINISTER HOSPITALIZED FOLLOWING THE BRUTAL ATTACK AND OTHER LEADING FIGURES OF THE GOVT PRESENT IN VENEZUELA. THIS MEANT THAT HIS GOVT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GIVE ME THE KIND OF RECEPTION AND ATTENTION THEY WOULD HAVE LIKED. HE WAS THEREFORE VERY RELIEVED AND PLEASED THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR THIS MEETING TO TAKE PLACE.

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3. VIDELA SAID THAT HE BELIEVED IN THE VALUE OF PERSONAL CONTACT FOR THE BUILDING OF UNDERSTANDING AND THAT WAS WHAT ARGENTINA WAS SEEKING. THEY WERE COMMITTED TO THE DIGNITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. THEY WERE TROUBLED THEREFORE TO FIND THEMSELVES IN THIS SITUATION IN WHICH THE WELL-BEING OF THE COUNTRY WAS BEING ATTACKED BY TERRORISTS AND GUERRILLAS. HE DID NOT CALL IT A WAR BECAUSE HE DID NOT WISH TO DIGNIFY THE ENEMIES OF THE COUNTRY WITH THE CONDITION OF BELLIGERENCY BUT, IN FACT, IT WAS A WAR SITUATION THAT THEY WERE FACING. THE COUNTRY WAS GOING THROUGH THREE CRISES AT THE SAME TIME-- THE POLITICAL CRISIS WITH THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN DISARRAY AND THE COUNTRY ABOUT TO DISINTEGRATE, THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND NOW THE ATTACKS OF VIOLENCE. THE OPPONENTS OF THE REGIME WERE ATTACKING ON ALL FRONTS INCLUDING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL. PART OF THE REASON FOR THE ATTACK ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS TO ABORT THE PRESENT VISIT TO VENEZUELA. IT WAS THEIR INTENTION TO USE THIS AS FURTHER JUSTIFICATION OF FEAR ON THE PART OF THE GOVT AND ITS INABILITY TO FUNCTION. IT WAS TO DENY THEM THIS POSSIBILITY THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO CONTINUE WITH THE VISIT.

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4. I EXPRESSED MY APPRECIATION TO HIM FOR TAKING THE

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obtained _____ not obt. _____
IPS by *[Signature]* Date 10-16-76

Declassified Case: LW= 57067 Date: 05-30-2013

TIME TO RECEIVE ME. I SAID THAT I SHARED HIS BELIEF IN THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL CONTACT AND WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN TO HIM OUR VIEWS ON THE GENERAL PROBLEM OF HUMAN RIGHTS TO WHICH HE HAD REFERRED. FIRST I WISHED TO EXPRESS MY REGRET FOR THE BRUTAL ATTACK ON THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND MY HOPE FOR HIS COMPLETE AND SPEEDY RECOVERY. I WAS HAPPY HOWEVER THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO MAKE THE TRIP IN ANY EVENT, SINCE THE MORE THE GOVT COULD SHOW THAT IT WAS IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION BY CARRYING OUT ITS NORMAL FUNCTIONS AND BY APPLYING THE LAW THE LESS WOULD BE THE VICTORY OF THE

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TERRORISTS IN THIS REGARD. I SAID THAT WE UNDERSTOOD THE NEED FOR THEM TO TAKE FIRM ACTION BUT THAT THE MORE RESTRAINT DEMONSTRATED BY THE GOVT IN TERMS OF THE MEASURES USED AND THE AVOIDANCE OF RETALIATION IN KIND THE GREATER WOULD BE THE PROSPECTS FOR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THE GOVT WAS TRYING TO DO. THE MORE FOREIGNERS OR OUTSIDERS THAT COULD VISIT AROENTINA TO OBTAIN A TRUE PICTURE OF THE SITUATION THE BETTER WOULD BE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR GAINING UNDERSTANDING.

5. I ADDED THAT I WAS SORRY THE SCHEDULING PROBLEMS WOULD NOT PERMIT ME TO VISIT BA ON THIS TRIP BUT THAT I WOULD TRY TO INCLUDE IT ON THE VERY NEXT TRIP I TOOK TO THE AREA. PRESIDENT VIDELA SAID THAT HE WOULD LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING ME THERE. HE UNDERSTOOD OUR POSITION IN DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HOPED WE WOULD UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS HE FACED IN APPLYING IT IN THE SAME WAY, GIVEN THE SITUATION HE FACES.
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