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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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TO: The Deputy Secretary
FROM: ARA - William H. Luers, Acting *WHL*

Your Meeting with Ambassador to Argentina
Robert C. Hill
Tuesday, February 22, 3:00 pm

PARTICIPANTS

The Deputy Secretary
Ambassador Robert C. Hill
Fernando E. Rondon, ARA/ECA

CHECKLIST

- Courtesy. Express appreciation for Ambassador Hill's service in a dangerous, difficult post.
- Argentine Political Violence. Ask Ambassador to brief you on Argentine progress to date in stemming terrorism and the prospects for a return to the rule of law.
- U.S.-Argentine Confrontation. Inquire about the consequences for U. S. interests if we adopt sanctions against Argentina, e.g., a cutoff of military sales.
- Nuclear Proliferation. Ask Ambassador to comment on what we can do to stem the prospects for nuclear weapons development in Argentina.

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The Country

Argentina has special importance to us, because it is closer to being a nuclear power than Brazil. This is so primarily because of Argentina's trained scientists as well as its natural uranium-heavy water technology which is somewhat less susceptible than Brazil's to international control. Argentina is also a breadbasket of almost unimaginable proportions in a potentially food-hungry world. It has a diversified trading relationship with the world, including the USSR with which it enjoys a \$250 million trade surplus, and the PRC; its well-trained, literate population of 25 million people have long made it a key cultural and political force in Spanish America; and its unions are Latin America's most potent ones.

The shortcomings of so rich a country are only too well known: It has tried unsuccessfully to develop stable political institutions for the past thirty years, it set world records for inflation in 1975 and 1976, and it has been suffering the onslaught of the best-organized, most brutal terrorist movement in our hemisphere. Argentina's response to terrorism has been equally extreme, with torture and other forms of human degradation a common occurrence.

Bilateral Relations

Human rights have become the dominant factor in our relations. We have tried repeatedly to get the Argentines to acknowledge they have gained the upper hand against the terrorists and begin to wage peace. Your meeting with the Argentine Charge on February 12 was designed to convey a sense of urgency to the Argentines as were Ambassador Hill's meetings last week with senior Argentine officials. But so far our efforts have been to little avail. We seem ever closer to voting against Argentina in the Inter-American Bank, have not signed the 1977 military sales agreement, and will soon announce a sharp cut in 1978 FMS credits.

Our ability to influence Argentina's atomic energy program will suffer commensurately.

Ambassador Hill has served in Argentina for almost three years witnessing the turmoil of the Peron period,

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the initial hope which the military coup in March 1976 represented, and now the deterioration of relations as a result of human rights.

Terrorism has also taken its toll on our Mission personnel. In 1975 our Consul in Cordoba was murdered; that same year a USIA officer narrowly escaped death. For security reasons, the staff of our Embassy in Buenos Aires has been reduced in half, and our key personnel require armed bodyguards and bullet proof cars.

Ambassador Hill is not optimistic about our ability to induce human rights improvements in Argentina. History confirms that no nation in Latin America has been less vulnerable to American influence than Argentina. We are still trying to achieve change, however, hoping that Argentina's more moderate generals may somehow prevail in military councils.

Attachment:

Biographic Information

HR
Drafted: ARA/ECA: FERondon: jc
2/16/77: x29166

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Robert C. Hill

Ambassador to the Republic of
ARGENTINA

Addressed as: Bob



Ambassador Hill has been the U.S. envoy to Argentina since January 1974. Prior to assuming his present job he served as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. From 1969 to 1972 he was Ambassador to Spain. During the Eisenhower Administration, Ambassador Hill served as Ambassador to Costa Rica (1953-54) and El Salvador (1954-55), then as Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of State for Mutual Security Affairs (1955-56) and Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations (1956-57). From 1957 to 1961, he was Ambassador to Mexico.

In addition, Ambassador Hill was a member of the New Hampshire House of Representatives for the 1961-1962 session. From 1965 to 1967 he was Chairman of the Republican National Committee Foreign Policy Task Force.

Born on September 30, 1917, Ambassador Hill attended Dartmouth College. He is married to the former Cecilia Gordon Bowdoin. They have two sons. From 1943 to 1946 Ambassador Hill was a Foreign Service Officer stationed in Calcutta and New Delhi.

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