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2 of 6

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 06202 01 OF 02 230049Z
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SP-02 SSO-00 /027 W
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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 6202

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FOR ASST SECRETARY TODMAN FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, SHUM, AR, US
SUBJECT: DRAFT MEMCON: ASST SEC TODMAN WITH PRESIDENT VIDELA
REF: BUENOS AIRES 6127

1. FOLLOWING IS DRAFT MEMCON FOR ASST SECRETARY'S APPROVAL.

BEGIN TEXT. PRESIDENT VIDELA EXPRESSED HIS WARM WELCOME TO ASST SEC TODMAN AND ASKED IF HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO TALK WITH ALL THOSE WHOM HE HAD HOPED TO SEE IN ARGENTINA., VIDELA WANTED HIM TO BE AWARE OF THE VIEWS OF A WIDE RANGE OF ARGENTINES. HE HOPED AND BELIEVED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS FAITHFULLY INTERPRETING THE DESIRES OF THIS LARGE GROUP.

2. AS A BACKDROP TO CURRENT EVENTS, THE PRESIDENT SKETCHED OUT RECENT ARGENTINE HISTORY--THE PROGRESSIVE DETERIORATION OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN THE 1969-75 PERIOD. BY THE END OF 1975 THERE WAS A POWER VACUUM AT THE CENTER OF GOVERNMENT, BUT THERE WAS ALSO GREAT RELUCTANCE BY THE ARMED FORCES

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PAGE 02 BUENOS 06202 01 OF 02 230049Z

TO INTERVENE IN VIEW OF THEIR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE. FINALLY, FACED WITH IMMINENT ECONOMIC COLLAPSE OF THE COUNTRY WHICH WOULD HAVE THROWN THOUSANDS OF WORKERS ON THE STREETS, PREY TO PREVIOUSLY UNSUCCESSFUL RECRUITING

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

2 of 6

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

3 of 6

EFFORTS OF THE TERRORISTS, THE MILITARY HAD TO TAKE OVER WHEN THE POLITICAL PARTIES ADMITTED THEY WERE INCAPABLE OF RESOLVING THE SITUATION.

3. THE ARMED FORCES TAKEOVER WAS NOT JUST ANOTHER PALACE COUP. IT WAS THE ASSUMPTION OF POWER BY THE ARMED FORCES AS AN INSTITUTION. THEY DID SO RELUCTANTLY, AND THEIR OBJECTIVE WAS EXCLUSIVELY TO GET THE COUNTRY BACK ON THE TRACK. THEY HAD NO SECTARIAN OR PERSONAL AMIBITIONS. THEY WERE COMMITTED TO RETURNING THE COUNTRY TO A THOROUGHLY REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY. THEY HAD MADE MUCH PROGRESS IN THE INTERVENING 16 MONTHS AND HOPED WITHIN A SHORT TIME TO MAKE MORE AND TO DEMONSTRATE SPECIFICALLY WHAT THIS GOVERNMENT WANTED TO ACHIEVE.

4. ASST SEC TODMAN NOTED THE PROGRESS MADE, THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY, AND THE VIRTUAL ELIMINATION OF TERRORISM--GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS. HE STATED THAT THE BASIS OF THE TENSION BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS WAS THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION'S CONVICTION THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF A GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE--INDEED ITS SOLE PURPOSE--WAS HOW IT TREATED ITS OWN PEOPLE. WHERE IT APPEARED THAT HUMAN RIGHTS HAD BEEN VIOLATED, WE FELT IMPELLED TO SPEAK UP. WE HAD RECEIVED MANY REPORTS OF VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GOA'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST TERRORISM AND THE ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS WERE STRONGLY MOTIVATED TO TAKE A STAND AGAINST ANY SUCH ABUSES. THE USG APPRECIATED THE CRUCIAL SITUATION WHICH THE GOA FELT

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PAGE 03 BUENOS 06202 01 OF 02 230049Z

ITSELF TO BE IN BUT COULD NOT BE SUPPORTIVE WHEN SUPPRESSION OF TERRORISM VIOLATED THE RIGHTS OF THE INNOCENT. HE SAID THAT THE POLITICIANS HE SAW SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO DO WHAT IT DID TO COUNTER TERRORISM AND THEY GENERALLY SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT AND FELT THE SITUATION IS GREATLY IMPROVING. THEY CONTEND THAT THE IMPROVEMENT IS SUCH THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOW RELAX RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

5. PRESIDENT VIDELA SAID HE WOULD NOT BE PICTURED AS ONE WHO IS UNCONCERNED ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF HIS CITIZENS. HE FELT THAT MAN, AS GOD'S WORK, MUST BE RESPECTED AND VIEWED AS THE PURPOSE OF SOCIETY. HE ARGUED THE GREATEST GOOD FOR THE GREATEST NUMBER AND CHALLENGED ASST SEC TODMAN TO FIND AN

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

3 of 6

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

4 of 6

ARGENTINE WHO DISAGREED WITH HIM. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT PRETEND THAT THERE WERE NO EXCESSES BY THE SECURITY FORCES IN THEIR FIGHT AND PERHAPS EVEN SOME SCORE-SETTLING. HE SAID THAT WHAT WAS MOST IMPORTANT WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVE; PEACE UNDER THE LAW AND A MONOPOLY OF FORCE UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL. WHEN QUESTIONED ABOUT SEVERAL RECENT DRAMATIC DISAPPEARANCES, HE FREELY ADMITTED THAT AT THIS STAGE OF THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM THE PROBLEM WAS OF ELEMENTS OF THE SECURITY FORCES WHICH--FRANKLY-- WERE BEYOND THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTROL. THEY WERE WORKING HARD ON THIS AND SUCCESS WAS INDISPENSABLE TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVES, BUT SO FAR THEY HAD NOT SOLVED THE PROBLEM.

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 06202 02 OF 02 222200Z
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FOR ASST SECRETARY TODMAN FROM CHARGE

6. ASSTSEC TODMAN SAID THE GOA CANNOT EXPECT INTERNATIONAL RESPECT AND SUPPORT UNTIL INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED RULES OF BEHAVIOR ARE OBSERVED. HE HOPED WE COULD WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH THE GOA TO THIS END, BUT VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS WOULD UNDERMINE ANY EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES. THE GOA HAD MADE SUCH IMPRESSIVE STRIDES IN DEALING WITH TERRORISM THAT IT WOULD NOW BE SEEN AS A DEMONSTRATION OF STRENGTH IF THE GOA TOOK MEASURES WITH PRISONERS AND OTHER DETAINED PERSONS

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

4 of 6

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

5 of 6

WHICH REFLECTED THAT STRENGTH. SUCH MEASURES MIGHT INCLUDE LISTS OF ALL PRISONERS NOW HELD, REINSTATEMENT OF THE RIGHT OF OPTION TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY, OR REINSTITUTION OF THE RIGHT OF HABEAS CORPUS. THERE WERE SOME CASES IN WHICH INTERNATIONAL OPINION BECAME ESPECIALLY CONCERNED. HE CITED THE DETENTION OF JACOBO TIMERMAN WHICH HAD AWAKENED MUCH CONCERN BECAUSE IT INVOLVED PRESUMED ANTI-SEMITISM.

7. PRESIDENT VIDELA SAID HE THOROUGHLY REJECTED ANY IMPUTATION OF RACISM TO HIS GOVERNMENT AND SAID HE WAS THOROUGHLY DEDICATED TO PRINCIPLES WHICH DID NOT TOLERATE IT. TIMERMAN WAS NOT A VICTIM OF RACISM;
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PAGE 02 BUENOS 06202 02 OF 02 222200Z

HE IS SUSPECTED OF INVOLVEMENT OF ECONOMIC CRIMES WITH GRAIVER, WHO IN TURN WAS INVOLVED WITH TERRORISTS. TIMERMAN WILL BE DEALT WITH BY JUSTICE, BUT THIS DOES NOT INVOLVE ANTI-SEMITISM.

8. ASSTSEC TODMAN EXPLAINED PRESIDENT CARTER'S CONCERN ABOUT THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR ARMS AND ASKED IF PRESIDENT VIDELA MIGHT GIVE HIS MOST SERIOUS ATTENTION TO THE POSSIBILITY OF GOA RATIFICATION OF THE TREATY OF TLATELOLCO. SUCH ACTION WOULD BE AN EXAMPLE FOR THE HEMISPHERE.

9. PRESIDENT VIDELA SAID THAT THE GOA HAS ACCEPTED NUCLEAR SAFEGUARDS, WHICH IN PRACTICAL TERMS ARE MORE EXTENSIVE CONTROLS THAN THOSE OF THE NFZ TREATY WHICH HAS POLITICAL LIABILITIES FOR THE GOA. HE SAID QUOTE WE WILL LOOK AT THE SITUATION, HOWEVER, AND SEE IF ACCEPTANCE MIGHT BE FEASIBLE. END QUOTE

10. ASSTSEC TODMAN NOTED THAT THE GOA HAS EXPRESSED ITS SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN A VARIETY OF DOCUMENTS AND STATEMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT. HE HOPED THAT THE GOA MIGHT DO SO AGAIN BY SIGNING THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS. THIS, TOO, WOULD GIVE IMPETUS TO THE HEMISPHERIC CONCERN WITH THE ISSUE. PRESIDENT VIDELA SAID THAT RATIFICATION WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION AND HE WOULD SEE WHAT MIGHT BE DONE.

11. FOLLOWING AN EXCHANGE OF EXPRESSIONS OF FRIENDSHIP

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

5 of 6

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

6 of 6

THE 65 MINUTE CONVERSATION ENDED. END TEXT
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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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PAGE 03 BUENOS 06202 02 OF 02 222200Z

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

6 of 6

Document Information	
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