

CONFIDENTIAL - *le* *W* *INCOMING*  
Department of State TELEGRAM

PAGE 01 BUENOS 09715 01 OF 03 202138Z  
ACTION ARA-14

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PH-05 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3817  
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AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 3 BUENOS AIRES 971

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SHUM, AR  
SUBJECT: DISAPPEARANCE OF MOTHERS GROUP'S SUPPORTERS:  
LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

REF: BUENOS AIRES 9420 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: OVER THE WEEKEND ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES (GOA) MADE TWO DRAMATIC ANNOUNCEMENTS REGARDING THE DEC. 8-10 DISAPPEARANCES OF 13 PERSONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO ON FRIDAY NIGHT (12/16) THE GOVERNMENT'S INFORMATION OFFICE ISSUED A CAREFULLY WORDED COMMUNIQUE REPUDIATING ANY GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT AND BLAMING SUBVERSIVE NIHILISM FOR THE DISAPPEARANCE. THE FOLLOWING NIGHT (12/17) THE FIRST ARMY COMMAND ISSUED A BULLETIN ANNOUNCING THAT THE MONTONERO ORGANIZATION HAD CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE KIDNAPPING OF THE TWO FRENCH NUNS AND HAD MADE FOUR DEMANDS, INCLUDING THE FREEDOM OF 21 POLITICAL PRISONERS, FOR THEIR RELEASE. THE MONTONERO PLOY IS, HOWEVER, VIDELY DISBELIEVED, AND FAMILY MEMBERS OF SOME OF THE DISAPPEARED PERSONS CALLED ON THE FRENCH AND AMERICAN EMBASSIES ON MONDAY (12/19) TO REGISTER THIS DOUBT AND URGE THAT DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE BE BROUGHT AGAINST GOA TO FORCE IT TO PRODUCE THE PERSONS ABDUCTED. WE ARE USING ALL EMBASSY RESOURCES TO TRY TO SORT OUT WHAT MAY ACTUALLY HAVE HAPPENED TO THE PERSONS ABDUCTED. ELEMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT CONTACTED CONTINUE TO PROFESS MYSTIFICATION AND AT THE SAME TIME PRIVATELY TO DERIDE THE "MONTONERO PLOY". END SUMMARY

1. THE GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA BROKE ITS OFFICIAL SILENCE REGARDING THE DISAPPEARANCES OF AT LEAST 13 MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE "MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO", AFTER A WEEK OF CONSIDERABLE DIPLOMATIC AND PRESS INTEREST, BY ISSUING AN INTRICATELY WORDED COMMUNIQUE LATE DECEMBER 17. THE PRESIDENCY'S COMMUNIQUE OBLIQUELY MADE THREE POINTS-- THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THE DISAPPEARANCES; "NIHILISTIC SUBVERSION" WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE ACTIONS; AND LASTLY, THE GOVERNMENT REJECTED THIS ATTEMPT TO CAUSE CONFRONTATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES, THE CHURCH, AND FAMILIES CAUGHT UP IN EXTREMIST VIOLENCE. THE GOVERNMENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT DID NOT ANSWER QUESTIONS REGARDING CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISAPPEARANCES OR DISPEL THE STRONG NEGATIVE REACTIONS IN FRANCE TO THE DISAPPEARANCE OF TWO NUNS FROM A TOULOUSE ORDER.

2. THE FOLLOWING NIGHT (12/17) IN AN UNUSUAL COMMUNIQUE THE FIRST ARMY COMMAND ANNOUNCED THAT THE AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE HAD RECEIVED A COMMUNICATION EARLIER THAT DAY FROM THE MONTONERO ORGANIZATION CLAIMING CREDIT FOR THE

KIDNAPPING OF THE TWO FRENCH NUNS, SISTER ALICIA AND SISTER LEONIE. ACCORDING TO THE ARMY COMMUNIQUE THE "MONTONERO" DOCUMENT DEMANDED:

- A. THAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ISSUE A DOCUMENT REPUDIATING THE PRESENT ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT;
- B. THAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT ISSUE A DOCUMENT REPUDIATING THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT AND GRANT ASYLUM TO ARGENTINE POLITICAL PRISONERS;

C. THAT THE MILITARY JUNTA SUBMIT A PUBLIC REPORT TO THE UNITED NATIONS REGARDING THE STATUS OF DETAINED AND DISAPPEARED PERSONS IN ARGENTINA;

D. AND, THAT 21 "CRIMINAL SUBVERSIVES" (SEE LIST BELOW) BE RELEASED. THE ARMY COMMUNIQUE THEN WENT TO REPEAT PARTS OF THE PREVIOUS DAY'S PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE ANNOUNCEMENT. THE COMMUNIQUE WAS GIVEN WIDE PLY IN THE ARGENTINE PRESS WITH NO COMMENT.

3. THE FRENCH PRESS AGENCY IN FACT DID RECEIVE THREE DOCUMENTS IN THEIR NOON MAIL ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17-- THE "MONTONERO" LETTER, A HANDWRITTEN LETTER IN FRENCH FROM SISTER ALICIA AND A 6 X 8 GLOSSY PHOTOGRAPH OF THE TWO FRENCH CAPTIVE NUNS SEATED BELOW A MONTONERO FLAG HOLDING A COPY OF THE DECEMBER 14 EDITION OF "LA NACION". THE "MONTONERO" LETTER STATED THAT ON DECEMBER 8 AND 10 TWO COMBAT CELLS OF THE MONTONERO ARMY HAD DETAINED THE TWO FRENCH NUNS. (NO MENTION WAS MADE OF THE OTHER 11 DISAPPEARED PERSONS.) IT ADDED THAT THEIR DETENTION HAD TAKEN PLACE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN CERTAIN STATEMENTS FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, AND THE ARGENTINE MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND TO FREE BEFORE DECEMBER 24 THE FOLLOWING PERSONS:

- EX-PRESIDENT HECTOR J. CAMPORA
- JOURNALIST RODOLFO WALSH
- EX-GOVERNOR OF STA. CRUZ "SR. COPERNIK"
- EX-GOVERNOR OF MENDOZA DR. MARTINEZ VACA
- EX-MINISTER OF EDUCATION DOCTOR TALANA
- EX-RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BUENOS AIRES LICENCIADO ERNESTO VILLANUEVA
- EX-SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF STATE WORKERS OF ROSARIO SR. OSCAR AGUIRRO
- SECRETARY GENERAL OF TEACHERS' UNION SR. BRAVO
- STUDENT LEADER DANTE GULLO
- JOURNALIST EMILIANO ACOSTA

*Handwritten initials and signatures:*  
P.D.  
Not B.  
M.B.

*Vertical stamp:*  
Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP  
Change to  
( ) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny ( ) Declassify  
Exemptions b ( ) ( ) E.O. 13526 25x ( ) ( )  
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*Large handwritten note:*  
Patt - Frank McNeil (on 12/19)  
raised this with Comd. Gen Espin  
describing it as a "flagrant act"  
Rondon talked to the Argentine  
Attache about it. No report  
being raised by Embassy although  
Fred Rondon says an instruction  
to do so was sent to S. A. Ill  
Keep Checking. [initials]

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NARA II

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HA County Files 1977

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1977 - Sept - Dec - HR Argentina