



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

January 29, 1979

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MEMORANDUM

TO: S/P - Mr. Anthony Lake
FROM: S/P - Richard Feinberg *RF*
SUBJECT: Argentine Human Rights

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The attached memo to the Secretary from HAV argues that the deplorable and deteriorating human rights situation in Argentina demands a hardening of our posture, and suggests several specific steps.

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Whether the Argentine situation is getting worse, in terms of body counts, will be debated by some, but I would argue that the behavior of the Argentine security forces is now more alarming, in that anti-government terrorism has been virtually eliminated for over a year. Current violations, therefore, are part of a simple and systematic policy of repression of non-violent political opposition. In Argentina today, no one feels safe.

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The so-called moderates in the Argentine government have been promising us improvements, while at the same time often disclaiming responsibility for acts of the allegedly independent security forces, in what appears to more than one observer to be a calculated plan to deflect foreign criticism. Nevertheless, the Embassy will probably argue that if we appear to be withdrawing our support from President Videla, the position of the "hard liners" will be strengthened within the Argentine military. My response is that this risk is too hypothetical and too difficult for us to gage to form the basis for our policies. We can, however, distill potential nationalist reactions to our sanctions -- which can play into the hands of the hard liners -- by making them multilateral.

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GDS - 1/29/85 - (Paul H. Kreisberg)

Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP

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Specific Steps

Whether we vote no or abstain in the IFIs is not as significant as we seem to imagine, unless we succeed in actually altering IFI behavior. We should consult with Treasury to decide whether it would be better to lobby the Europeans to defeat loans now coming to the Boards, or whether we should work toward modifying overall lending levels to Argentina during the budget cycles of the Banks. Nachmanoff believes we would be more effective taking the latter approach for a select list of countries such as Argentina, and I would tend to agree. Whichever approach we take, it is important that it be perceived in Buenos Aires not as a US initiative, but as coming from what the junta perceive as the "western, civilized world."

It is probably time for another public statement on the Argentine human rights situation, which we or Embassy Buenos Aires could phrase in terms of what a Human Rights Report would have said had it been required by Congress.

I disagree with the HA recommendation that we should deny Exim loans, because in the specific case of Argentina, such bilateral economic pressures are used by the military to hide behind the flag. (This tactical decision, however, should not be used as a precedent for allowing Exim loans to countries whose human rights performance is not at least as bad as Argentina's.) We might suggest that Exim avoid too massive an increase in their activity levels in Argentina, a stance which financial considerations alone should dictate, although Exim may have a rosier picture of the Argentine economy than I do.

Argentina has been purchasing very large quantities of weapons from Europe. While further squeezing of the US pipeline of military or military-related commercial items might have a symbolic content, unless we convince our allies to follow suit, the Argentine military will not be materially affected.

Incidentally, we can stick it to the Soviets by drawing attention to their opportunistic refusal to criticize the Argentines, on whom they happen to be dependent for wheat. Another example of Russian hypocrisy.

Attachment:
As stated.

cc: S/P - Mr. Kreisberg
Ms. Walker

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