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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
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Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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NO. 11652:

SS: PFOR,

SUBJECT: BRIEF
MURDERS IN A

IMPLICATIONS OF POLITICAL

YOU HAVE PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE RECENT ASSASSINATIONS OF PROMINENT POLITICAL EXILES IN ARGENTINA. STATEMENTS FROM OUR EMBASSIES IN THE REGION SUPPORT THE CONCLUSION: THERE IS NO EVIDENCE AVAILABLE SUGGESTING THE EXISTENCE OF A CONSPIRACY AMONG ELEMENTS OF THE SOUTHERN CONE TO TRACK DOWN AND ARREST ASYLEES RESIDENT IN THOSE COUNTRIES.

2. HOWEVER, THERE ARE CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE SITUATION IN WHICH FOREIGN POLITICAL EXILES FIND THEMSELVES IN ARGENTINA, OF WHICH YOU SHOULD BE AWARE. OUR EMBASSY IN BUENOS AIRES BELIEVES THAT ELEMENTS OF ARGENTINE SECURITY FORCES WERE INVOLVED IN, OR WINKED AT, THE MURDERS LAST MONTH OF MICHELINI AND GUTIERREZ RUIZ, FORMER URUGUAYAN LEGISLATIVE LEADERS. ALTHOUGH THE EVIDENCE IS EVEN MORE CIRCUMSTANTIAL, THE EMBASSY FEELS ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES

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ALSO HAVE SOME CONNECTION TO THE KILLING OF EX-PRESIDENT TORRES A FEW DAYS LATER IN BUENOS AIRES.

3. IN THE CASE OF THE URUGUAYANS, THE EMBASSY SPECULATES THAT THEY MAY HAVE BEEN KILLED AS A FAVOR -- WHETHER REQUESTED OR NOT -- TO ELEMENTS IN THE URUGUAYAN MILITARY-SECURITY APPARATUS. THE MURDER OF TORRES, IT FEELS, COULD BE LINKED TO ARGENTINE SECURITY SINCE HE WAS RUMORED TO BE INVOLVED WITH LEFTIST TERROR GROUPS. IN NEITHER CASE, HOWEVER, IS THERE ANY SUGGESTION THAT THE ASSASSINATIONS WERE ORDERED OR CONDONED BY PRESIDENT VIDELA OR HIS IMMEDIATE ADVISORS.

4. AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THESE POLITICAL MURDERS, THE UNMCR REPRESENTATIVE IN BUENOS AIRES HAS PROVIDED THE EMBASSY WITH DISTURBING REPORTS ABOUT THE INHOSPITABLE ATMOSPHERE FOR MANY FOREIGN POLITICAL EXILES LIVING IN ARGENTINA. THEIR TOTAL IS ESTIMATED BY UNHCR AT 15,000 -- 10,000 OF WHOM ARE CHILEAN AND MOST OF THE BALANCE URUGUAYAN.

5. UNHCR ESTIMATES THAT ABOUT 1,000 OF THE CHILEAN EXILES; AND 300-400 OF THE OTHERS COULD BE CONSIDERED TO BE IN DANGER FROM ARGENTINE SECURITY FORCES OR RIGHTIST EXTREMISTS, EITHER FROM ARGENTINA OR FROM THEIR NATIVE COUNTRIES. IT IS NOT SURPRISING, ACCORDING TO THE EMBASSY, THAT THERE IS GROWING CONCERN, AND IN SOME CASES NEAR PANIC, AMONG REFUGEE GROUPS LIVING IN ARGENTINA.

6. CONFIDENCE IS NOT ENHANCED BY THE LACK OF VIGOR WITH WHICH THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT IS RESPONDING TO THE SPREADING POLITICAL VIOLENCE, BY THE LEFT AS WELL AS THE RIGHT. DESPITE ITS PLEDGE TO CURB TERRORISM, AND DESPITE REPORTS WE HAVE THAT VIDELA HIMSELF HAS ORDERED A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION TO BRING THE GUILTY TO JUSTICE, THERE IS LITTLE OBSERVABLE ACTION BY THE GOVERNMENT TO CURB ABUSES BY ITS INTELLIGENCE/SECURITY FORCES.

7. THE JUNTA'S FAILURE TO END HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, EVEN ITS FAILURE TO ANSWER CONVINCINGLY CHARGES THAT IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM, TENDS TO CONFIRM THE WORST FEARS OF

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THOSE MOST CONCERNED WITH THE SITUATION. VIDELA'S INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS TO CONTROL HIS POLICE, EITHER BECAUSE HE IS BY NATURE CAUTIOUS OR LACKS THE STRENGTH TO CONFRONT HIS HARDLINERS, WILL ONLY HEIGHTEN THESE FEARS.

8. IF THE ABUSES CONTINUE OR SPREAD WITHOUT A FIRM AND UNEQUIVOCAL RESPONSE FROM THE JUNTA, WE CAN EXPECT OUR EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN COHERENT RELATIONS WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN ARGENTINA TO BECOME MUCH MORE COMPLICATED, IF NOT FRUSTRATED ALTOGETHER. ROBINSON

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