

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

8/18/80

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TO : Political Files

THRU : POL - Mr. King

FROM : POL - Townsend B. Friedman

SUBJECT: Hypothesis -- The GOA As Prisoner of Army Intelligence

DATE: 8/18/80

It is possible to conclude that the policy-making levels of the GOA are prisoners and victims of intelligence services here, particularly the Army's 601 Battalion. Over the last several months the GOA has been embarrassed or troubled by a series of events in which it is reasonable to suppose that the 601 played a decisive role:

- The kidnappings in Peru which almost certainly were the work of the 601.
- The suspicious discovery of one of the kidnapping victims dead in Madrid.
- Politically acute members of Videla's staff must realize that the continued tactic of murdering Montoneros without due process is no longer necessary from a security point of view and extremely costly in terms of Argentina's international relations. (There is a countervailing theory that these tactics were the product of a written doctrine elaborated soon after the military took over. General Rivera's comments earlier this year suggest to some that this is so.) Disappearance is 601 work.
- Anybody with an ounce of political sense in the GOA would have aborted, if he had been able, these operations. Certainly the risk of the Peruvian caper was not worth the price to Videla of cancelling his visit to Lima. And the price to the GOA of its involvement, or apparent involvement, in Bolivian events certainly has been beyond what any sensible political adviser to Videla would have been willing to have paid.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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Several questions at least arise: Could the political levels of the GOA have stopped the 601 from operating in Peru or Bolivia? Were they aware of its operations? To what degree in making decisions, for example in Bolivia, are the political levels prisoners of the perceptions and reports of the intelligence services? (On the basis of my contacts, there is little reason to have much confidence that these services have either the smarts or the political skills to match their tremendous influence in this government.)

Worrying about the intelligence services in events in the recent past is one thing. Of greater concern is the thought that they or it (the 601) continue to have extraordinary influence here. As the country enters a period of political sensitivity with the change in Presidents and widespread economic unhappiness, I think we all have serious cause for concern that these men will be telling the government what to see and what to do about what they see.

These thoughts are vague and imprecise but it may be worthwhile to have a meeting between various parts of the Embassy to see if we can refine our perceptions in this area.

W
Drafted:POL:TBFriedman:gbm
Cleared:POL:JKing *JK*

cc: POL/R Charge
DAO ADCM
RSO

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