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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 SCS-06 SY-05 MCT-01 AID-05 PC-01 /091 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/ECA:JBUMPUS:BP
APPROVED BY ARA:JBUSHNELL
HA:MSCHNEIDER
ARA:FMCNEIL
ARA/ECA:RWZIMMERMANN

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P 070108Z APR 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY

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

() Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s): _____

Declassify: () In Part () In Full

() Classify as _____ () Extend as _____ () Downgrade to _____

Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, BR

SUBJECT: REPORT OF NUNS DEATH

REF: BA 2346

1. DEPARTMENT HAS RECEIVED WITH DEEPEST CONCERN REPORTS OF MURDER OF TWO NUNS AND FIVE OTHER WOMEN PICKED UP IN DECEMBER ABDUCTIONS.

2. DEPARTMENT BELIEVES WE MUST ACT FORCEFULLY NOW TO MAKE GOA AWARE OF OUR OUTRAGE AT SUCH ACTS. ARGENTINES MUST UNDERSTAND THAT AS LONG AS SUCH DISAPPEARANCES OCCUR OUR RELATIONS WILL BE PLACED UNDER GREAT STRAIN, EVEN THOUGH WE CONTINUE TO RESPECT VIDELA'S EXPRESSED PERSONAL INTENTIONS.

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3. ACCORDINGLY, AMBASSADOR SHOULD SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT VIDELA TO EXPRESS U.S. SHOCK AT THE REPORTED

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DEATHS OF SEVEN WOMEN. FAILURE OF REMAINDER TO APPEAR ON PEN LISTS HEIGHTENS OUR CONCERN. AMBASSADOR SHOULD EXPLAIN TO THE PRESIDENT THAT THIS DEVELOPMENT HAS COME AT AN ESPECIALLY UNFORTUNATE TIME. THERE HAD BEEN SOME MODEST BUT POSITIVE STEPS ON THE PART OF THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT AND THE UNITED STATES HAD RESPONDED TO THESE WITH POSITIVE ACTIONS. WE HAD MOVED FROM "NO" VOTES ON IFI LOANS TO ABSTENTIONS ON THE LAST TWO LOANS AND HAD APPROVED THE SALE OF SOME MILITARY EQUIPMENT. OUR POSITIVE ACTIONS WILL BE HARD TO MAINTAIN, HOWEVER, IN LIGHT OF THE REPORTED DEATHS OF THE SEVEN WOMEN. TO OFFSET THE VERY NEGATIVE IMPRESSION CAUSED BY THE SEVEN DEATHS -- AND THE PRESUMPTIVE DEATHS OF THE OTHER 6 "MADRES" -- ARGENTINA WOULD HAVE TO MAKE SUBSTANTIAL FURTHER VISIBLE PROGRESS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS AREA.

4. AMBASSADOR SHOULD CONTINUE PRESENTATION BY SUGGESTING THAT GOA CONSIDER ACTIONS WHICH CAN BE TAKEN AGAINST THE PEOPLE WHO COMMITTED THIS CRIME. THEY SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL AND IF SOME IN AUTHORITY WINKED AT THE CRIME THOSE INVOLVED SHOULD BE DISCIPLINED. THERE WILL BE GREAT PRESSURE IN THE UNITED STATES FOR CHANGES IN OUR POLICY TOWARD ARGENTINA IF SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE STEPS ARE NOT TAKEN. WE REALIZE HOW DIFFICULT THIS WILL BE FOR THE GOA, BUT WE MUST BE ABLE TO SHOW CONVINCING PROGRESS OR OUR RELATIONS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SUFFER. OUR GOVERNMENT BELIEVED THAT PRESIDENT VIDELA HAD COMMITTED THE GOA TO RELEASE OR TRY ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS, TO RETURN TO THE RULE OF LAW AND TO PUT A HALT TO DISAPPEARANCES. YET ALL OF THESE AREAS OF CONCERN CONTINUE. THE DEATHS OF THESE WOMEN UNDERLINE OUR CONCERN.

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5. FYI. DEPARTMENT REALIZES THAT OUR INFORMATION ABOUT THE DEATHS OF THE NUNS AND THE OTHERS IS BASED ON SENSITIVE SOURCES AND THAT THE EMBASSY CORRECTLY IS CONCERNED ABOUT PROTECTING THESE SOURCES. YOUR PRESENTATION WILL HAVE TO TAKE THIS INTO CONSIDERATION. WE CANNOT, HOWEVER, REFRAIN FROM CONFRONTING THE ARGENTINES WITH THIS CRIME.

6. DEPARTMENT IS ALSO MOST CONSCIOUS OF THE REPORTS OF THE IMPENDING RATIFICATION OF THE TREATY OF TLATELOLCO, THE POSSIBLE RELEASE OF JACOBO TIMERMAN AND THE PUBLICATION OF THE LAST PRISONER LISTS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT OUR PROPOSED

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DEMARCHE COULD EFFECT THESE POSITIVE GOA STEPS, BUT FEEL
NONETHELESS, WE MUST SPEAK OUT.

7. YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT FRANK MCNEIL RAISED THIS MATTER
WITH AJA ESPIL ON MARCH 30 ON BASIS AFP TICKER ITEM. AJA
ESPIL EXPRESSED HORROR AT POSSIBILITY REPORT WAS TRUE AND
SPECULATED THAT INCIDENT WOULD NOT ONLY ANGER VIDELA BUT
PERHAPS PUT HIM IN POSITION TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST THOSE
WHO SANCTIONED THIS OUTRAGE. SUBSEQUENTLY, AJA ESPIL
SUGGESTED TO JOHN BUSHNELL, PRESUMABLY AS A RESULT
OF CONVERSATIONS WITH BA, THAT REPORT MIGHT BE FALSE.

8. DEPARTMENT WILL MAKE PARALLEL PRESENTATION TO AJA
ESPIL. TO INSURE THAT THE PRESENTATIONS ARE SYNCHRONIZED,
WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR CABLING DEPT DATE AND TIME OF
AMBASSADOR'S APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT VIDELA. VANCE

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