

UNCLASSIFIED

2/15/78

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FROM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

CLASSIFICATION [REDACTED]

E.O. 11652:
TAGS:
SUBJECT:

GDS
PINT, SHUM, AR
US SHIFT TOWARD MASSERA?

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ACTION:

SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

AMB
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U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
 Release () Excise () Deny
Exemption(s): _____
Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full
() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to
Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 1182
0742

REF: A) BUENOS AIRES, B) BUENOS AIRES 0833 (NOTAL)

MILGROUP

1. The Embassy has recently been getting indications that a number of Argentines believe ~~that~~ the US Government has "tilted" towards supporting Admiral Massera because it believes the Admiral wants to improve the human rights situation in Argentina.

2. This impression apparently stems from President Carter's interview statement to the American Press Institute editors on January 27 in which he was quoted as saying: "I think we are making success (in human rights) in a very slow, tedious way. I

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LOT 81F93
(7/7) 52/52

OPTIONAL FORM 153
(Formerly FS-413)
January 1975
Dept. of State

noticed that this morning--I can't vouch for the accuracy of it--there was a story in the news for instance about contending military leaders in Argentina and that the challenging group, I think from the Navy, said that their basis for future success was their deeper commitment to human rights and that they thought that we might support them because they were more convinced that human rights was the case." (Text given USINFO 0281731.) We believe the President's comments referred to the Karen de Young article published in the WASHINGTON POST January 27. The de Young article was not published here, but quickly became widely known through publication in Brazil and WASHINGTON POST copies circulated here among interested parties.

3. The President's comments were also not published in Argentina. However, the ~~RXXXX~~ Rio de Janeiro daily JORNAL DO BRASIL on January 30 carried a wire service story which cited President Carter's allegedly favorable impression of the Argentine Navy for its commitment to improve the human rights in Argentina. The Argentine daily LA PRENSA (February 2) quoted EL CRONISTA of Santiago as accusing Massera of trying to exploit his interest in human rights, "an issue which is being watched in several parts of the world, especially in the as a divisive ploy to further his own "personalist" political ambitions. United States" / And an AFP story datelined Buenos Aires

UNCLASSIFIED

Classification

Page 3 of 1182
MRN

February 10 reported that "President Carter's praise for the Argentine Navy attitude regarding human rights is repeatedly mentioned here" (in Buenos Aires). Several members of the mission have also been asked about President Carter's alleged support for Massera in the wake of the Washington POST story.

4. Embassy sources indicate that the two US press stories have upset Argentine officials. GOA officials reportedly complained that the Karen de Young piece damaged Argentina's image and that the President's remarks can be interpreted as interfering in Argentina's internal affairs.

5. Massera himself was reportedly concerned about the effect the two reports would have on his relations with the other two members of the Junta. According to several independent sources, including a small-circulation, direct mail news sheet received by the embassy, Massera attempted to forestall any criticism from his Junta colleagues at their February 1 meeting by immediately raising the subject himself and complaining that the POST story was erroneous and harmful to Argentina's image. Massera also reportedly told the Junta members that he had called in the US ambassador that afternoon to tell him the same thing.

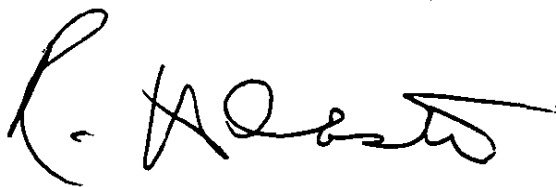
6. COMMENT: ~~The misunderstanding arising from the POST story and the President's remarks is regrettable, particularly~~

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OPTIONAL FORM 153A
(Formerly FS-413A)
January 1975
Dept. of State

~~line~~ the dissemination of both articles by rumor and at third or fourth hand has led to inaccurate interpretations distorting the US position vis-a-vis individual Junta members. To complicate the matter further, the ambassador's call on Admiral Massera at the latter's specific request ~~was~~ was interpreted here by some--and possibly even used by Massera--as a sign of the US shift in Massera's favor. (It should be noted that Massera's ^{reported} explanation to the Junta at its February 1 meeting of his calling in the US ambassador was not correct. Among other topics, Massera commented ^{to the Ambassador} that he had never tried to hide his disagreements with Videla and that the de Young article would help him to air further their differences of ~~opinion.~~ ^{opinion.} See Ref. B) ~~xx~~ Massera's seeking support from abroad is not new; his record of accomplishment is mixed; reportedly the West German Government turned down a Massera supporter's bid to have Massera invited to West Germany as guest of the Government.



CASTRO