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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT OF STATE, WASHINGTON
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
() Release () Excise () Deny
Exemption(s): NR
Declassify: () In Part () In Full
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Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

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Dec 10
File - Arms Transfers
(A, D, F)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

TO: The Secretary
FROM: ARA - Terence A. Todman
SUBJECT: A Time to Support Argentina's Videla

Our Embassy in Buenos Aires has reported that ambitious, hardline Navy Commander Massera appears to be behind a "blistering" attack on President Videla. A pro-Navy publication has portrayed Videla as a "lackey" who came to Washington to do the bidding of his "boss" in Washington, arguing that Videla should have refused to attend the signing like the more dignified Presidents of Brazil and Mexico. Meanwhile, as if to show who has guts, the Navy has announced the seizure of three Soviet trawlers within Argentina's territorial waters.

We have also just learned that Alfredo Bravo, a prominent human rights leader in Argentina, has been released. It is believed that he was kidnapped by the Navy during Videla's visit to Washington. Videla reportedly told a group of American correspondents that this was humiliating and that heads would roll.

It would appear that Videla is finally showing his mettle. Standing up to nationalistic elements in the military will be no easy task, however. The fact that US military credits for FY 1977 have just been lost and that we have been unable to move Argentina's commercial arms requests, even when unrelated to internal security can only hurt Videla. Given Videla's apparent commitment to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and human rights, this clearly appears to be a time to help rather than hinder him in the coming months.

I very much hope you will be able to take early and favorable action on Les Gelb's memorandum to you of September 15 on arms transfers to Argentina.

Drafted: ARA/ECA: FERondon: jc
About 9/27/77
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GDS

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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Marvin

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