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Folder Title:

POTUS [President of the United States]-Travel (Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, October 13-18, 1997): Background Papers, Argentina

Staff Office-Individual:

Inter-American Affairs

Original OA/ID Number:

1361

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Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. briefing paper	Handbook for Argentina, October 1997 (18 pages)	ca. 10/1997	b(7)(E)
002. briefing paper	Re: [Cooperation] (2 pages)	ca. 09/1997	P1/b(1)
003. briefing paper	Argentina: U.S. - Argentine Security Cooperation (1 page)	ca. 09/1997	P1/b(1)
004. briefing paper	Argentina: Human Rights Overview (1 page)	ca. 09/1997	P1/b(1)
005. briefing paper	Argentina: Falklands/Malvinas and Relations with the United Kingdom (1 page)	ca. 10/1997	P1/b(1)
006. briefing paper	Argentina: Argentine-Cuban Relations (1 page)	ca. 09/1997	P1/b(1)
007. briefing paper	Argentina: Counter-Terrorism/Israeli Embassy and AMIA Bombings (1 page)	ca. 10/1997	P1/b(1)
008. briefing paper	Re: [Cooperation] (1 page)	ca. 10/1997	P1/b(1)
009. briefing paper	Argentina: Peacekeeping/White Helmets Initiative (1 page)	ca. 10/1997	P1/b(1)
010. briefing paper	Argentina: U.S. - Argentina Trade Relations (1 page)	ca. 09/1997	P1/b(1)
011. briefing paper	Argentina: Political Situation and Elections (1 page)	ca. 10/1997	P1/b(1)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
National Security Council
Inter-American Affairs
OA/Box Number: 1361

FOLDER TITLE:

POTUS [President of the United States]-Travel (Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, October 13-18, 1997): Background Papers, Argentina

2009-1155-F
ke2448

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
- b(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
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- b(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- b(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
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POTUS 10/12-19 TRIP PUBLIC STATEMENTSARGENTINA: ARRIVAL STATEMENT

It is great a pleasure to arrive in your magnificent country.

Cooperation between the United States and Argentina has been growing steadily over the past few years across a great range of issues -- international security, trade, investment, and protection of the environment. Argentina is one of our closest partners in the United Nations and in the Summit of the Americas process.

I look forward to productive talks with President Menem which will highlight the warm ties between our two countries. We will be discussing, among other things, the progress toward the next Summit of the Americas in Santiago, Chile next year, which will do much to consolidate relations among the countries of the Western Hemisphere.

Our common aim is the deepening of democracy, continued expansion of prosperity and the guarantee of sustainable development in an international environment of peace and stability.

I also look forward with great pleasure to experiencing, along with the great city of Buenos Aires, some of the unique natural beauty of your country in Iguazu and Bariloche.

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BUENOS AIRES: AIRPORT ARRIVAL

Your visit to Argentina will begin with a brief arrival ceremony at Ezeiza International airport. As you and the first Lady depart the plane you will pause briefly at the top of the stairs for photos. You will be greeted at the bottom of the steps by Charge Ronald Godard, accompanied by Argentine National Ceremonial Director (ANCD), Ambassador Fernando Taboada, who will direct you to where the official welcoming committee, headed by President Carlos Saul Menem will be waiting.

As you and President Menem exchange greetings there will be a 21 gun salute. Ambassador Taboada will then introduce you and the First Lady to the remaining welcoming committee while the Charge introduces your staff to President Menem. Ambassador Taboada will then guide you to a point to the right of President Menem for the playing of both national anthems - Argentine first.

Following the national anthems, there will be chance for brief comments to the press. Ambassador Taboada will then guide both Presidents for a quick review of the troops en route to awaiting limousines, where you will be joined by the First Lady. President Menem will not accompany you in your car. The motorcade will depart for the Sheraton Hotel about 25 minutes away.

Background

Ministro Pistarini International airport, more commonly know as Ezeiza, is some 47 kms from downtown Buenos Aires. The airport was inaugurated by President Juan Peron in April of 1949. Its site is not ideal, being square in the fog basin of Argentina, but the land was state owned, which met the needs of the government's pocketbook.

The original name, Ezeiza, was that of a small town near the airport. It was later changed to honor the former Army General and Minister of Public Works when the airport was built.

U.S. carriers American and United use Ezeiza for daily flights to and from the United States.

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BUENOS AIRES: WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY AT SAN MARTIN PLAZA

Your vehicle will arrive at the red carpet and President Menem will meet you. You and President Menem will review troops assembled along the carpet leading to a platform where you will take position. There will be a band playing during this time.

President Menem will then be announced. He will make brief remarks and introduce you. You will make brief remarks. Buenos Aires Mayor Fernando de la Rúa will present you the key to the city. A master of ceremonies will narrate events and announce the playing of the national anthems.

The MC will announce that you will lay the wreath. You and President Menem will walk across the street and through the honor guard to the monument steps. President Menem will hold. You will walk to the wreath, and climb the stairs with the honor guard, who will lay the wreath. Immediately after touching the wreath, you will take a position at attention a few steps away, directly in front of the wreath, to render honors to San Martin. The ceremonial band will play "taps". During this, doves will be released from behind the monument. You will then rejoin President Menem. The MC will announce the end of the ceremony and you will be escorted back to your vehicle by President Menem. (N.B. President Menem has asked to ride with you to the next event, your meeting with him at the Casa Rosada.)

Background

This ceremony is traditional for visiting Heads of State. President Bush did so during his visit.

General Jose de San Martin is considered the founding father of Argentina. His historical significance to the country is similar to how we view George Washington.

General San Martin was born in what would later become Argentina. He began his military career in Spain and fought against the French when Napoleon invaded the Iberian Peninsula. News of revolution in Argentina led him to return in 1812. His actions and leadership of the revolutionary troops forced the resignation of the ruling triumvirate in October of 1812.

Between 1816 and 1820 the final defeat of Spanish colonial forces in the southern region of South America was achieved, largely due to the leadership, planning, and perseverance of General San Martin. Today, San Martin is recognized as the national hero of Argentina as well as being the liberator of Chile and Peru.

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BUENOS AIRES: WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY AT SAN MARTIN PLAZA

Your vehicle will arrive at the monument side of San Martin Plaza, where you will be welcomed and escorted to your position for the ceremony by Foreign Minister Di Tella. There will be a band playing during this time.

A master of ceremonies will narrate events and announce the playing of the national anthems. The MC will announce that you will lay the wreath, which will be positioned by ceremonial troops at the pedestal of the monument. You will walk to the wreath, accompanied by the Foreign Minister and formally lay the wreath. Immediately after touching the wreath, you will take a position a few steps away from and directly in front of the wreath to render honors to San Martin. The ceremonial band will then play taps. You will make brief, prepared remarks. The MC will announce the end of the ceremony and you will be escorted back to your vehicle en route to meeting with President Menem.

This ceremony is traditional for visiting Heads of State. President Bush participated in the same ceremony during his visit.

Background

General Jose de San Martin is considered the founding father of Argentina. His historical significance to the country is similar to how we view George Washington.

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BUENOS AIRES: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MENEM

Your meeting with President Carlos Menem will take place in the Casa Rosada (Pink House) after the wreath laying ceremony. On arrival at the "Portico," you will be greeted and led in along a red carpet, up a short set of steps, and then to the right down another red carpet. At the top of a double set of marble steps, you enter the White Room.

President Menem will greet you. (N.B. Alternatively, President Menem will have ridden with you to the Casa Rosada from the wreath laying ceremony.) Press will be available for photos. Departing through doors to the right of the dais, President Menem will lead you down a corridor and through double doors to his Presidential Office for a short private conversation.

Next, you and President Menem will proceed to the formal (expanded) meeting in the North Room, entering it through the left door of the adjacent White Room. You will be seated at the middle of the conference table on the side nearest the White Room, and President Menem will be directly opposite (with his back to the window). (Press spray on arrival, simultaneous translation during meeting).

Following the formal meeting, President Menem will escort you to the third-floor press room.

BACKGROUND

The Casa Rosada serves as the Argentine President's downtown office. The building is located on the "Plaza de Mayo," where the city was founded in 1580. At that time, it was surrounded by fortifications and located on a hill above the River Plate -- now nearly a mile away. In 1806-07, the building was occupied by invading British troops. Later, in the 1850's, it was painted pink, then a fashionable color for residences.

From a balcony facing the plaza, Juan Peron and other Argentine leaders have spoken to large crowds on momentous occasions. Last year this balcony was featured prominently in the filming of "Evita." The "Plaza de Mayo" is most recently known as the location for protests by the "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" seeking information on their children who were "disappeared" during Argentina's "dirty war" (1976-1983).

ARGENTINA: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MENEM

Your meeting with President Carlos Menem will take place in the Casa Rosada (Pink House), a few minutes' ride from the hotel.

On arrival at the "Portico," you will be greeted and led in along a red carpet, up a short set of steps, and then to the right down another red carpet. At the top of a double set of marble steps, you enter the White Room. President Menem will descend a dais to greet you. (Press available for photos). Departing through doors to the right of the dais, President Menem will lead you down a corridor and through double doors to his Presidential Office. (Whisper translation for five minute private conversation).

Next, you and President Menem will proceed to the formal (expanded) meeting in the North Room, entering it through the left door of the adjacent White Room. You will be seated at the middle of the conference table on the side nearest the White Room, and President Menem will be directly opposite (with his back to the window). (Press spray on arrival, simultaneous translation during meeting).

Following the formal meeting, President Menem will escort you to the third-floor press room. ((Details on press conference and Casa Rosada departure in USIS site paper.))

BACKGROUND

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ARGENTINA: MEETING WITH POLITICAL LEADERS

Leaders of the opposition political parties will come to your hotel suite for a meeting that is expected to last about half an hour.

Background

In mid-term congressional elections on October 26, President Menem's Justicialist (Peronist) Party faces stiff competition from the recently formed "Alliance" of the two principal opposition parties: the social-democratic Radical Civic Union (UCR) and a new center-left coalition called FREPASO. The Alliance may not win a majority in the lower house (Senators are not running this year), but will likely end up well positioned for a run at the presidency in 1999.

You will meet with the leadership group of the Alliance, all of whom have presidential ambitions: former Argentine President Raul Alfonsin; Buenos Aires Mayor, Fernando de la Rúa; Congressional candidates Rodolfo Terragno and Carlos "Chacho" Alvarez; and Senator Graciela Fernandez Meijide.

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ARGENTINA: MEETING WITH JEWISH COMMUNITY

Your meeting with representatives of the Argentine Jewish community will take place in your hotel suite. They will ask for continued USG help in solving the terrorist bombings of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires and the AMIA building. The group will be led by Dr. Ruben Beraja, President of the Argentine Delegation of Jewish Associations (DAIA). Beraja will introduce you to the other members, which will include Oscar Hansman, President of the Argentine Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) and several family members of victims of the 1994 terrorist attack on its building.

BACKGROUND

Argentina contains the fifth largest Jewish community in the world. The Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires was bombed in March 1992, killing 29 people. The Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) was bombed in July 1994, causing 86 fatalities and several hundred injured. Islamic Jihad, a Hizballah cover group, claimed responsibility for the embassy attack. There have been no such claims for the AMIA bombing, but Hizballah remains the prime suspect.

Although the Argentine government has made all the right statements regarding its determination to pursue the terrorists responsible for both attacks and has offered a large reward, little progress has been made in either investigation. Argentina's antiquated legal system lacks the appropriate tools and resources required for such complicated investigations. The USG has tried to plug the gaps through an array of training projects. We have provided, through the Department of State's Anti-Terrorism Assistance program, training for nearly 500 officials at a cost of \$4.8 million. In the wake of both bombings, the USG deployed a team of experts from State, ATF, and the FBI to assist the investigations. In the AMIA case, the U.S. team was instrumental in the recovery of engine parts, which have become the most important physical evidence in the case.

The lack of progress has caused understandable anguish in the Jewish community in general and among the families of the victims in particular. Their frustration most recently boiled over in mid-July during the third anniversary commemoration of the AMIA bombing when a large number of participants jeered the senior Argentine officials present as well as DAIA President Beraja. The protest also highlighted divisions within the local Jewish community over how best to spur further action.

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BUENOS AIRES: STATE DINNER

President Menem will host this dinner, to be held at the main restaurant on the grounds of the Sociedad Rural de Argentina ("Rural Society of Argentina"). There will be approximately 700 guests invited to this gala affair, which the Argentines intend to be one of the visit's premier events. Entertainment for the evening will be centered around a traditional Argentine "asado" or barbecue.

You and Mrs. Clinton will be met upon arrival at 9 p.m. by President Menem and his daughter, Zulema. The other guests are to be seated at that time, following a 90-minute outdoor cocktail hour. As you enter you may be introduced to the congressional leadership and the President of the Supreme Court for a possible photo-op. You will be escorted to your seats at a head table made up of roughly 30-34 guests, where you will be seated between Zulema and President Menem. If you have not had the opportunity to do so earlier in the day, you may be introduced to a select group of dignitaries on the way in.

After an exchange of toasts (the only moment at the dinner itself where there will be very limited press), dinner will be served. Following the hour-long meal, you will be accompanied by President Menem to the covered patio area for coffee. A horse-drawn coach will then take you to the nearby fairgrounds where the outdoor traditional show is to take place, lasting for approximately 35 minutes. By 11:15, the entertainment will be over and your car will be ready to take you back to the hotel.

Background

Entertainment will consist of demonstrations of equestrian skills by "gauchos" in their typical garb, folk music and dance, the tango, and jazz. This "gaucho culture" is widespread throughout southern Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile.

The grounds of the Sociedad Rural are located immediately adjacent to the U.S. Embassy. It is widely recognized as the site of the annual Rural Exposition, a major agricultural trade show in July-August and to which thousands of both local and international ranchers and businessmen come.

The complex is used extensively by President Menem for entertaining. On previous occasions, he has hosted official functions there during visits by former President Bush, the Duke of Edinburgh, as well as all of the presidents of the Mercosur countries, among others.

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ARGENTINA: STATE DINNER

President Menem will host the dinner, to be held at the main restaurant on the grounds of the Sociedad Rural de Argentina ("Rural Society of Argentina"). There will be approximately 1,000 guests invited to this gala affair, which the Argentines intend to make into one of the visit's premier events. The evening will be centered around a traditional Argentine "asado" or barbecue. Entertainment will likely consist of demonstrations of equestrian skills by "gauchos" in their typical garb, folk music and dance, the tango, and jazz, among other activities. The "gaucho culture" is widespread throughout southern Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile.

Background

The Sociedad Rural is next to the U.S. Embassy. It is widely recognized as the site of the annual Exposicion Rural de Argentina, an agricultural trade show which occurs in July-August and to which thousands of both local and international ranchers and businessmen come every year.

The complex is used extensively by President Menem for entertaining. On previous occasions, the President has hosted official functions there during visits by former President Bush, the Duke of Edinburgh, as well as all of the presidents of the Mercosur countries, among others.

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POTUS VISIT 10/12-19 TRIP PUBLIC STATEMENTS

ARGENTINA: STATE DINNER TOAST

(NB: Argentine MFA intends to have the state dinner at the Sociedad Rural ("Rural Society") grounds in Buenos Aires, and to give it the flavor of a traditional Argentine asado, or barbecue, complete with gauchos in traditional dress, folk music and dance, the tango, and in the spirit of bilateralism, jazz.)

Mr. President, Hillary and I want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for this magnificent banquet and entertainment.

Thanks to the initiative of our mutual friend Diego Guelar, I have already had the opportunity to enjoy your delicious Argentine beef in Washington, but there is no better way to appreciate it than in a real asado (ah-SAH-doe) here on the grounds of the association that represents Argentina's proud tradition as a world leader in agriculture.

The gaucho music and dancing were wonderful, and there is no mistaking the reasons why the tango is the symbol of Argentina throughout the world. I also appreciate your including some of our own national music -- and I think that the saxophonist was especially good.

Mr. President, the fact that we in the United States can now share fully in the bounty of Argentina's Pampas is also a symbol of the positive changes that have been occurring under your leadership within Argentina and in our relationship. After many decades, Argentina's agricultural producers have been able to eradicate a terrible disease and to compete once more worldwide with their outstanding product. The recent resumption of exports of fresh Argentine beef to the United States is just one more step in the constantly growing economic and trade relationship between our countries, a relationship that benefits both our peoples.

Our excellent relations are not, of course, limited to the economic sphere. We are close partners in all important international endeavors, cooperating actively in the United Nations, in multilateral security endeavors, in the efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons, in the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas and in the rest of the broad and ambitious agenda that we undertook in the Summit of the Americas in Miami and whose progress we will jointly pursue in the second Summit of the Americas in Santiago, Chile in April, 1998.

Mr. President, Argentina is a close friend and partner of the United States. Our meetings today in Buenos Aires will serve to strengthen and broaden our partnership, but I am also looking forward to enjoying our personal friendship with you on the links in Bariloche -- I think my knee is strong enough now.

POTUS VISIT 10/12-19 TRIP PUBLIC STATEMENTS

ARGENTINA: DEPARTURE STATEMENT

(The assumption is that the statement, if given, will be given at Bariloche.)

It is truly difficult for us to say good-bye to Argentina. Your overwhelming hospitality, the great city of Buenos Aires -- a world capital in every sense, the breathtaking magnificence of Iguazu, the serene beauty of Bariloche and the grandeur of the Andes before us, have made this visit an unforgettable experience for us.

Argentina is indeed a blessed place, incredibly rich in natural diversity, and with a people proud of their nation's historic achievements and striving to achieve ever more as they move into the new century. We in the United States are also proud to be Argentina's friend and partner in this progress, and this visit has done much to cement our friendship and our cooperation.

In our meetings with President Menem we have initiated the Special Consultative Process, in which members of both our cabinets will work together to expand and strengthen our cooperative relationship; we have concluded agreements on the environment, on energy, and on scientific research that will greatly benefit both our nations.

We have also reaffirmed our commitment to progress toward the Free Trade Area of the Americas and the other aims that all the nations of our hemisphere will pursue in the second Summit of the Americas in Santiago, Chile, next year.

I want to thank President Menem and all the people of Argentina for the welcome that you have given us, and hope that it will not be long before we can visit your marvelous country once more.

POTUS 10/12-19 TRIP PUBLIC STATEMENTS

ARGENTINA: STATEMENT FOR JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE

President Menem and I have just concluded wide-ranging and concrete discussions of the very close and productive relations that the United States and Argentina enjoy.

It was a pleasure to meet with President Menem again, for the first time here in Argentina. I note that, with each meeting, the level of our cooperation and interchange across an ever-going range of issues continues to rise.

Today our two governments will initiate the Special consultative Process, led by our Secretary of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina. This process will institute regular meetings between cabinet ministers that will consolidate and expand our cooperative relations.

We will also be formalizing agreement on a range of other issues from telecommunications to space to the environment. As you can see, we have a very extensive business agenda for this brief visit, which is indicative of the breadth and closeness of our relationship.

President Menem and I also spoke in detail about progress for the second Summit of the Americas to be held in Santiago,

Chile, next year, and our plans to continue working to assure peace and security in the Western Hemisphere, to proceed toward the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and to make the benefits of education, health, and sustainable development in a healthy natural environment accessible to all our citizens.

**POTUS 10/12-19 TRIP PUBLIC STATEMENTS
ARGENTINA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

Q: Is the United States concerned about the level of corruption and the lack of independence of the judiciary in Argentina?

- Our laws make it illegal for U.S. companies to offer bribes to obtain contracts. This problem is addressed in the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption, and I am pleased to note that Argentina was among the first countries to ratify this important agreement.
- We have extensive programs of cooperation with the Argentine Government, and with Argentine non-governmental organizations as well, in the area of judicial reform. We intend to continue these.

Q: How can you and your Administration lecture Latin American countries on corruption given your problems with campaign fund raising and other unethical practices?

- The fact that in other countries we cooperate in efforts to eliminate corruption and promote good government in no way suggests that we think we have all the answers.

Q: Why is the U.S. Government not cooperating with the efforts of the Argentine courts to discover the truth in the IBM-Banco de la Nacion bribery case?

- The fact is that we have responded to many requests from the Argentine Justice Ministry for documents and other information about this case.
- We have a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty with Argentina which sets out the procedures under which our respective justice departments cooperate in cases like these. Our justice systems differ and this occasionally slows down exchanges of information, but overall the Treaty works well.
- We will continue to comply with requests from the Argentine Government for information which may help in the investigation of this case.

Q: Is the United States Government concerned about the fact that the bombings of the Israeli Embassy and the AMIA community center in Buenos Aires have not been solved?

- Yes, we are concerned about that and we have expressed our concern to the Argentine Government on many occasions. We have also provided extensive technical assistance to the investigation. A few months after the AMIA bombing we sent our most senior counter-terrorism officer, Ambassador Philip Wilcox, to Buenos Aires to talk to the Argentine Government about ways of combating international terrorism.
- Let me add, however, that we appreciate how difficult it is to solve crimes such as these, and that we are impressed with the Argentine Government's commitment to combat international terrorism. Argentina played a leading role in this area at the Summit of the Americas in Miami in December 1994 and hosted a regional meeting to help prepare for the hemispheric anti-terrorism conference in Lima in 1996.
- Last year Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay reached an agreement to strengthen border controls in the area where their three borders meet. Efforts such as these are important in the fight against international terrorism.

Q: Why is the United States trying to involve the Argentine military in the fight against drugs?

- Our bilateral program of cooperation with Argentina in counternarcotics is aimed at strengthening civilian police departments. The Argentine Government has offered the logistical help of the armed forces in the fight against drug trafficking and we welcome that initiative. The military can provide valuable support to the police in this area. Our cooperation, however, will continue to be aimed at helping the civilian police force.
- We recognize that our international challenge in this area is to develop effective programs that reduce cultivation, production, and trafficking of illegal drugs while supporting democratic governance and human rights.
- I am pleased to note that the Argentine Government recently hosted a meeting of heads of national drug law enforcement agencies of Latin America and the Caribbean

under the auspices of the UN's Drug Control Program. Here, as in the fights against international terrorism, Argentina is taking a leading role.

Q: Why does the United States continue to pressure Latin American countries to fight narcotics production while doing nothing about narcotics consumption in the U.S.?

- Our counternarcotics efforts are often misunderstood. In the last fiscal year in the United States, federal government spending for international drug control and interdiction programs accounted for only 12 percent of our total federal spending on drug control activities.
- About 34 percent of our 1998 federal drug control budget is devoted to demand reduction.
- Three of the five goals of our National Drug Control Strategy related to U.S. domestic programs.
- We know we have a long way to go, but we believe we are making progress. Cocaine use is down, the number of first-time users is declining, and current drug use in the U.S. household population is down.
- Drug consumption is not exclusively a U.S. problem, but also affects many Latin American countries.

Q: Is the United States trying to undercut MERCOSUR in order to make it easier to establish a Free Trade Area of the Americas?

- We welcomed MERCOSUR when it was created nearly three years ago and we continue to support it. Indeed, we support any regional trade agreements that stimulate trade and do not divert or distort it.
- MERCOSUR and the Free Trade Area of the Americas are complementary, not incompatible. There are many paths to creating the FTAA and we believe that MERCOSUR is one of them.

Q: You have been promising that Chile would be the next country to join NAFTA ever since 1993. Given the fact that you have not been able to obtain fast-track authority since then, how can you expect to negotiate seriously for the creation of the FTAA?

- We submitted our request for fast-track authority to Congress last month. The debate in Congress will give us an opportunity to examine the arguments for and against it.
- Once the fast track legislation is approved by Congress, we will negotiate a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with Chile. Chile will be the first step in our ultimate goal of creating a Free Trade Area of the Americas.

Q: Can Argentine travelers expect to continue to enjoy the Visa Waiver program?

- We are now in the second year of the Visa Waiver Pilot Program for Argentina, the first in Latin America. The program is going well, it benefits the people of both our countries, and we fully expect that it will continue.

Q: Why does the United States discriminate against such Argentine products as steel tubing, citrus, and peanuts, especially when you have such a large trade surplus with Argentina?

- Whenever two countries have a trading relationship as large and diverse as ours, a certain number of trade disputes are unavoidable. What is remarkable about the case of Argentina and the United States, I think, is that there are so few of them.
- As you know, Argentine beef is now being exported to the United States after a 70 year hiatus, and last July our Commerce Department revoked countervailing duty orders on Argentine steel tubular goods and cold-rolled steel, wool, and leather goods. We will of course continue to apply our trade laws but will ensure this is done in a non-discriminatory manner consistent with WTO standards.
- Argentine citrus products have not been permitted into the United States due in part to concerns about plant diseases, but we may examine this in light of Argentine disease-eradication efforts. Our tariff-rate quotas on

peanuts are part of our Uruguay Round commitments in the GATT negotiations, but we do allow U.S. importers to purchase Argentine peanuts from storage facilities in third countries.

- Trade disputes such as these, however, are exceptional. Overall the trading relationship is sound and growing.
- As for the trade surplus, it is largely due to Argentina's need for capital goods as it modernizes and expands its economy. In the longer term, this need will gradually decline and bilateral trade will tend to be more balanced.

Q: What does Major Non-NATO Ally status mean for Argentina?

- Let me tell you first what it does *not* mean. It does not constitute a mutual defense obligation in event of war. As you know, Argentina, like other nations of the hemisphere, is joined with the United States through the Rio Pact, which contains collective security provisions. MNNA status carries with it no additional commitment.
- Nor does it automatically confer access to advanced weapons systems. What it does is to make Argentina eligible to receive certain benefits such as participation in reciprocal training, participation in cooperative research and development, and bidding for certain Defense Department contracts.
- Perhaps more importantly, it symbolizes the close cooperation between Argentina and the United States in international security and peacekeeping, and the importance we attach to Argentine leadership in these fields, both here in the hemisphere and beyond.
- Argentine troops participated in the Gulf War and serve as peacekeepers in Cyprus, Eastern Slavonia, and elsewhere. Argentina participated in the multinational operation to restore democracy to Haiti. MNNA status is our way of recognizing these efforts, and will help formalize the excellent relationship between our two countries.

Q: Aren't your decisions on MNNA status for Argentina and advanced arms sales to Chile and your opposition to a UN Security Council seat for Brazil all aimed at breaking up MERCOSUR and promoting U.S. domination of Latin America?

- No. I categorically reject this idea. Our decision regarding MNNA status for Argentina is unrelated to our decision to change our policy on arms sales to the region, but both decisions reflect our view that Latin America has changed dramatically over the past decade.
- Democratic governments are now in place in every country of the hemisphere except Cuba. Military forces are under civilian control. Confidence and security-building measures are being adopted. Here in the Southern Cone, Argentina's excellent relations with Brazil and Chile are proof of that.
- Our policy regarding the expansion of the UN Security Council is also completely unrelated to our decision regarding MNNA status for Argentina. We can accept new permanent seats for Latin America, Asia, and Africa, and we believe the countries in those regions should decide among themselves how to distribute these new seats. This is a decision for the countries themselves to make. Our only view is that the Council should not be enlarged beyond 21 or it will become unworkable.

Q: Now that you have lifted the arms embargo and are trying to push fighter aircraft on Chile, are you not concerned about reviving an arms race in Latin America?

- As we announced in August, our policy on selling advanced weapons to the region has changed from one of presumptive denial to a decision to proceed on a case-by-case basis, though always within a context of restraint. This change will allow U.S. firms to compete on an equal basis with others for the sale.
- The change was needed to keep pace with the dramatic changes that have occurred in the region in recent years. The nations of the hemisphere have legitimate defense modernization needs and we see no useful purpose in continuing to deny U.S. companies the right to compete to meet those needs.

- Having said that, let me make clear that we will carefully review any request for the sale of advanced weapons. We would not approve such a sale where we believed that it would promote instability, favor a party to a border conflict, or otherwise trigger an arms race.

Q: Why is Lockheed dragging its heels on delivery of the reconditioned A-4s to Argentina?

- I understand there have been some delivery problems with the A-4, but that Lockheed and the Argentine Government have been discussing how to solve them.
- This was a direct commercial sale between Lockheed and the Argentine Government in which the U.S. Government was not involved.

Q: Why is the United States continuing to support the illegal British colonial occupation of the Malvinas Islands?

- The United States takes no position on the sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the islands. We encourage our Argentine and British friends to continue to work out their differences through diplomatic dialogue.

Q: Why did you schedule your visit to Argentina so close to the election? Do you think it is appropriate for you to help President Menem's party with their election chances in this fashion?

- My visit is of course unrelated to the election here later this month. In any case the Argentine public does not need any help from me to make up its mind.
- I am looking forward during this visit to meeting with a spectrum of leaders including those of the opposition parties.
- The kind of vigorous democratic contest now underway in Argentina is a healthy sign and I am delighted to be able to witness it first hand.

Q: Why does the United States keep pressuring Argentina about its pharmaceutical patent law?

- The absence of adequate patent protection for pharmaceuticals in Argentina is a serious concern for us, a concern shared by President Menem and his Administration.
- We will continue to work with the Argentine Government to seek the kind of world-class patent protection needed to make Argentina attractive to for job-creating investment by research-based industries.

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FACT SHEET: U.S.-ARGENTINA RELATIONS

The United States and Argentina enjoy a close bilateral relationship, although this was not always the case. President Menem's efforts to open Argentina's economy and realign its foreign policy have been major factors in this improvement. Since Menem took office in 1989, Argentina has repeatedly supported U.S. interests and policies. Argentina usually votes with the U.S. in the United Nations and has participated in UN Security Council-mandated multilateral force deployments to Haiti and the former Yugoslavia. The Menem administration supports the U.S. campaign to improve human rights practices and democratic rule in Cuba and joins with the U.S. in international disarmament efforts from nuclear supply to control of missile technology.

As the political relationship improved, economic relations blossomed. The United States is now Argentina's leading source of imports and rivals Brazil as Argentina's largest trading partner. The United States currently enjoys a \$2 billion trade surplus with Argentina. In 1994, the United States and Argentina signed a bilateral investment treaty. U.S. foreign direct investment is valued at more than \$10 billion and growing. Both EXIMBANK and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation support high-value business projects to expand U.S. trade to and investment in Argentina.

A few unresolved trade disputes remain. The leading issue is the need to ensure adequate protection of intellectual property rights within Argentina. On the Argentine side, local producers seek improved access to U.S. markets for agricultural goods such as peanuts and citrus.

Argentina's efforts to reform its military and shift its focus to peacekeeping operations have gained support of the U.S. military. Cooperation has increased dramatically, as evidenced by U.S.-Argentina joint military exercises held recently in Argentina and increased Argentine participation in International Military Education and Training Fund programs. To cement a better security relationship, Argentina has sought major non-NATO ally status designation. The U.S. has not made an announcement on this issue.

There has been broad collaboration on other fronts. In 1996, the U.S. and Argentina signed bilateral agreements facilitating cooperation on space and nuclear issues. Argentina has actively supported U.S. environmental positions in various international fora, and works closely with the U.S. on antiterrorism issues, both bilaterally and through the Summit of the Americas process.

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
002. briefing paper	Re: [Cooperation] (2 pages)	ca. 09/1997	P1/b(1)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
National Security Council
Inter-American Affairs
OA/Box Number: 1361

FOLDER TITLE:

POTUS [President of the United States]-Travel (Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, October
13-18, 1997): Background Papers, Argentina

2009-1155-F
ke2448

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
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C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
003. briefing paper	Argentina: U.S. - Argentine Security Cooperation (1 page)	ca. 09/1997	P1/b(1)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
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Inter-American Affairs
OA/Box Number: 1361

FOLDER TITLE:

POTUS [President of the United States]-Travel (Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, October
13-18, 1997): Background Papers, Argentina

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
004. briefing paper	Argentina: Human Rights Overview (1 page)	ca. 09/1997	P1/b(1)

COLLECTION:

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FOLDER TITLE:

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13-18, 1997): Background Papers, Argentina

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
005. briefing paper	Argentina: Falklands/Malvinas and Relations with the United Kingdom (1 page)	ca. 10/1997	P1/b(1)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
National Security Council
Inter-American Affairs
OA/Box Number: 1361

FOLDER TITLE:

POTUS [President of the United States]-Travel (Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, October
13-18, 1997): Background Papers, Argentina

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
006. briefing paper	Argentina: Argentine-Cuban Relations (1 page)	ca. 09/1997	P1/b(1)

COLLECTION:

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Inter-American Affairs
OA/Box Number: 1361

FOLDER TITLE:

POTUS [President of the United States]-Travel (Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, October 13-18, 1997): Background Papers, Argentina

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
007. briefing paper	Argentina: Counter-Terrorism/Israeli Embassy and AMIA Bombings (1 page)	ca. 10/1997	P1/b(1)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
National Security Council
Inter-American Affairs
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POTUS [President of the United States]-Travel (Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, October
13-18, 1997): Background Papers, Argentina

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
008. briefing paper	Re: [Cooperation] (1 page)	ca. 10/1997	P1/b(1)

COLLECTION:

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FOLDER TITLE:

POTUS [President of the United States]-Travel (Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, October 13-18, 1997): Background Papers, Argentina

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ARGENTINA: SPACE COOPERATION

In 1991, we signed a space cooperation agreement which was renewed in February 1996. During his meeting with President Clinton in June 1993, President Menem expressed deep appreciation for the ongoing cooperation and the crucial role it had played in building support for his decision to dismantle the Condor missile program. In 1994, Argentina became the first Latin American nation to join the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).

We continue to look for ways to deepen cooperation. State initiated the first U.S.-Argentina Conference on Space, Science and Technology for Society, held in Buenos Aires on September 22-24, 1997. It brought together government and business leaders and scientists to improve cooperation in environmental monitoring, education, and satellite-aided search and rescue. The Conference provided the Menem Administration a high profile event that reinforces its decision to abandon the Condor program and demonstrated our commitment to assist in redirecting assets previously devoted to missile production to civilian projects.

NASA and the Argentine Space Agency (CONAE) have been developing the SAC series of satellites. The most recent project, SAC-A, is a small satellite for testing new space technologies and will be launched from the Space Shuttle in 1998. The satellite, built by CONAE, will take digital space photography, take measurements of the Earth's magnetic field and track migrations of whale populations in the southern hemisphere. In addition, Argentina participates in Shuttle-based experiments to study the crystallographic aspects of the parasite that causes Chagas Disease. An agreement for SAC-A will be prepared for signature during the President's visit. The English version of the SAC-C agreement was signed on October 28, 1996, and the Spanish version will also be signed during the visit. SAC-C is a small Earth observing satellite, which will be launched by NASA in 1999. Its primary mission will be to monitor agriculture production, forests, and air and water pollution.

TALKING POINTS

- Argentina's missile nonproliferation commitments and the creation of a civil space agency have opened long-closed areas of cooperation. Since our last meeting we have taken important steps to expand civil space cooperation.
- We are cooperating on the Argentine SAC-series of satellites; the latest in the series, SAC-A, will be launched on the Space Shuttle in 1998.

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- The First U.S.-Argentina Conference on Space, Science, and Technology for Society was held in Buenos Aires last month. It produced positive results and was an excellent opportunity to expand government and private sector collaboration.

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
009. briefing paper	Argentina: Peacekeeping/White Helmets Initiative (1 page)	ca. 10/1997	P1/b(1)

COLLECTION:

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
010. briefing paper	Argentina: U.S. - Argentina Trade Relations (1 page)	ca. 09/1997	P1/b(1)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
National Security Council
Inter-American Affairs
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FOLDER TITLE:

POTUS [President of the United States]-Travel (Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, October
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POTUS 10/12-19 TRIP PUBLIC STATEMENTS

ARGENTINA: STATEMENT FOR JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE

President Menem and I have just concluded wide-ranging and concrete discussions of the very close and productive relations that the United States and Argentina enjoy.

It was a pleasure to meet with President Menem again, for the first time here in Argentina. I note that, with each meeting, the level of our cooperation and interchange across an ever-growing range of issues continues to rise.

Today our two governments will initiate the Special Consultative Process, led by our Secretary of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina. This process will institute regular meetings between cabinet ministers that will consolidate and expand our cooperative relations.

We will also be formalizing agreement on a range of other issues from telecommunications to space to the environment. As you can see, we have a very extensive business agenda for this brief visit, which is indicative of the breadth and closeness of our relationship.

President Menem and I also spoke in detail about progress for the second Summit of the Americas to be held in

Santiago, Chile, next year, and our plans to continue working to assure peace and security in the Western Hemisphere, to proceed toward the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and to make the benefits of education, health, and sustainable development in a healthy natural environment accessible to all our citizens.



U.S. Department of State

Background Notes: Argentina, September 1997

Released by the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs.

OFFICIAL NAME: The Argentine Republic

PROFILE

GEOGRAPHY

Area: 2.8 million sq. km (1.1 million sq. mi.); about the size of the U.S. east of the Mississippi River; second largest country in South America.

Cities: Capital--Buenos Aires (city: 3 million; metropolitan area: 12 million).

Other major cities: Cordoba (1.2 million); Rosario (950,000); Mar del Plata (900,000); Mendoza (400,000)

Terrain: Andes mountains and foothills in west. Aconcagua, (7,021 m; 23,034 ft) is highest peak in the Western Hemisphere; remainder of country is lowland; central region characterized by vast grassy plains (pampas).

Climate: Varied: predominantly temperate with extremes ranging from subtropical in the north to arid/subantarctic in far south.

PEOPLE

Nationality: Noun and adjective--Argentine(s).

Population (mid-1995: 34.6 million.

Annual population growth rate: 1.3%.

Ethnic groups: European 97% , mostly of Spanish and Italian descent.

Religions: Roman Catholic 92% , Protestant 2% , Jewish 2% , other 4%.

Language: Spanish.

Education: Years compulsory--7; Adult literacy--96.2%.

Health: Infant mortality rate--23.6/1000. Life expectancy of newborns: 72.3 years.

Work Force: Industry and commerce--36% , agriculture--19% , transport and communications--6%.

GOVERNMENT

Type: Republic.

Independence: July 9, 1816.

Constitution: 1853, revised 1994.

Branches: Executive--president, vice president, cabinet.

Legislative--bicameral congress (72-member Senate, 257-member Chamber of Deputies).

Judicial--Supreme Court, federal and provincial trial courts.

Administrative subdivisions: 23 provinces and one federal capital district.

Political Parties: Justicialist, Radical Civic Union, FREPASO, numerous smaller national and provincial parties.

Suffrage: universal adult.

ECONOMY (1997 projections)

GDP: \$292 billion.

Annual real growth rate: 5% .

Per capital GDP: \$8,500.

Natural resources: Fertile plains (*pampas*). Minerals: lead, zinc, tin, copper, iron, manganese, oil, uranium.

Agriculture (7% of GDP, about 60% of exports by value) Products--grains, oilseeds and by-products, livestock products.

Industry (26% of GDP), Types--food processing, oil refining, machinery and equipment, textiles, chemicals and petrochemicals.

Trade: Exports--\$24.5 billion: grains, meats, oilseeds, manufactured products; Major markets--Brazil 25% ; U.S. 11% ; EU 25% .Imports--\$25.5 billion: machinery, vehicles and transport products, chemicals. Major suppliers--U.S. 23% , Brazil 20% , EU 28% .

U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS

The United States and Argentina currently enjoy a close bilateral relationship after many years of estrangement. The efforts of the Menem Administration to open Argentina's economy and realign its foreign policy have contributed to the improvement in these relations, and the interests and policies of the two countries coincide on many issues. Argentina and the United States often vote together in the United Nations and other multilateral fora. Argentina has participated in many multilateral force deployments mandated by the United Nations Security Council, including recent missions to Haiti and the former Yugoslavia. Reflecting the growing partnership that marks ties between the two countries, on December 5, 1996, President Clinton and Argentine President Menem announced the establishment of a special consultative process to address important issues in the bilateral relationship.

U.S. Embassy Functions

The U.S. Mission in Buenos Aires carries out the traditional diplomatic function of representing the United States Government and people in discussions with the Argentine Government, and more generally, in relations with the people of Argentina. The excellent political relationship between the United States and Argentina is increasingly reflected in the U.S. embassy's efforts to facilitate cooperation in nontraditional areas such as counter-terrorism, anti-narcotics, and scientific cooperation on space, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and the environment.

The Embassy also provides a wide range of services to U.S. citizens and businesses in Argentina. Officers from the U.S. Foreign Service, Foreign Commercial Service and Foreign Agricultural Service work closely with the thousands of U.S. companies which maintain offices and/or do business in Argentina, providing information on Argentine trade and industry regulations and assisting U.S. companies starting or maintaining business ventures in Argentina. Attaches accredited to Argentina from the Department of Justice, including the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Customs, the Federal Aviation Administration, and other federal agencies work closely with Argentine counterparts on issues related to international crime and other issues of concern.

An active, sophisticated, and expanding media environment, together with growing positive interest in American culture and society, make Argentina an uncommonly receptive environment for the information and cultural-exchange work of the United States Information Service. The number of Argentines studying in U.S. universities is rapidly growing, and the Fulbright fellowship program has more than tripled the annual number of U.S. and Argentine academic grantees since 1994.

The embassy's consular section provides vital services to the more than 20,000 U.S. citizens resident in Argentina as well as to the more than 330,000 who visit Argentina annually. Services include issuing passports, documenting the birth of U.S. citizens abroad, assisting in participation in U.S.

elections by registered voters, offering tax and Social Security information, assisting U.S. citizens arrested and/or in jail in Argentina and provision of other services in the event of death, destitution, or other emergencies abroad.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officers

Ambassador--vacant
 Charge d'Affaires, a.i.--Ronald D. Godard
 Deputy Chief of Mission--Manuel Rocha
 Political Counselor--Mark A. Sigler
 Economic Counselor--Thomas H. Martin
 Commercial Counselor--Michael Likila
 Consul General--Bryant J. Salter
 Science Counselor--Philip Covington
 Administrative Counselor--Benjamin Castro
 Defense Attaché--Col. Jeffrey W. Whisenhunt, USAF
 Commander, U.S. Military Group--LTC (P) Clark Lynn III, USA
 Public Affairs Officer--Alexander Almasov

The U.S. embassy and consulate general in Argentina are located at 4300 Colombia Avenue in Buenos Aires' Palermo district. Mission offices can be reached at tel. (54)(1)777-4533/34; fax (54)(1)777-0197. Mailing addresses are: U.S. Embassy Buenos Aires, APO AA 34034; or 4300 Colombia, 1425 Buenos Aires, Argentina.

ECONOMY

In 1989, after decades of economic decline and chronic bouts of inflation, Argentina under President Menem began an unprecedented, profound, and remarkably successful economic restructuring based on trade liberalization, privatization, public administrative reform, and macroeconomics stabilization.

The 1991 Convertibility Law established a quasi-currency board which has provided the pillar of price stability but constrains monetary policy severely. The government privatized most state-controlled companies, opened the economy to foreign trade and investment, improved tax collection, and created private pension and workers compensation systems.

Average annual GDP growth exceeded 7% from 1991 to 1994, driven primarily by consumption. GDP declined 4.4% in 1995, and grew just 3.5% in 1996, primarily due to local recession which followed the December 1994 Mexico peso devaluation.

The structural reforms--coupled with monetary stability--fostered major new investments in industrial sectors producing goods for exports. This was most notable in the food products, oil and gas, automotive, and mining and metals sectors. As a result, Argentina's exports doubled in only two years--from about \$12 billion in 1994 to almost \$24 billion in 1996. Foreign direct investment continues growing impressively. GDP growth projections for 1997 range from 5.0% to 6.1% .

The October 1996 unemployment rate was 17.3%--down from 18.4% in mid-1995. As economic recovery gathers momentum in 1997, unemployment is expected to drop by at least two percentage points. However, larger and more significant declines will come slowly over the longer term.

Argentina is vulnerable to abrupt changes in capital flows. However, strong leadership and earlier structural reforms helped the country weather the 1995-96 financial storm. Argentine authorities, supported by the U.S., Japan, Europe, and international financial institutions, reacted decisively to bolster the peso. The government has continued to demonstrate credibility through further economic adjustment and conclusion of a new Standby Agreement with the International Monetary Fund in April 1996. Argentina is currently negotiating with the IMF to replace the Standby Agreement with an Extended Fund Facility arrangement.

Argentina's principal economic policy challenges in 1997 are:

1. Stimulating job creation through labor market reform;
2. Continuing the reform of provincial administration and banking; and
3. Simplifying tax collection and combating tax evasion.

Other structural problems include perceptions of widespread corruption, and of an ineffective judicial system.

Banking

Continuing the consolidation of Argentina's banking system is a government priority for 1997. Peso and dollar deposits in the banking system grew strongly and reached \$55 billion by year end 1996. This represents nearly a 50% increase from June 1995, when bank deposits reached a low of \$37 billion as a result of the Mexican peso crisis. However, increased liquidity in the banking system in 1996 did not translate quickly into increased lending. Credit is still very expensive in Argentina, and consumer confidence is weak.

The government continues to encourage privatization of financially troubled provincial banks, but progress has been mixed. Some provincial governments fear job losses and strongly oppose bank privatization. Government-owned banks still have an extremely large market share, and the financial sector stands to suffer as a result.

Foreign Trade

An important development in helping Argentina meet its external payments is the dramatic turnaround in its trade balance in 1995, which reversed merchandise trade deficits of 1993 and 1994. Year-end data suggested that Argentina balanced imports and exports for 1996. Total merchandise exports in 1996--close to \$24 billion--are approximately 10% above those in 1995. Foreign trade will play an increasingly important role in Argentina's economic development. At present, exports represent only about 8% of Argentina's GDP, far below the Latin American average of 16.6%. That percentage is certain to rise steadily and substantially as Argentine export competitiveness improves.

Exceptionally strong international prices for grain and dairy products greatly benefited Argentina in 1996. Some grain prices went down, but Argentina registered bumper harvests.

MERCOSUR, a regional customs union and emerging trade bloc which includes Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and has associations with Chile and Bolivia, improved industrial productivity, and economic stabilization in Brazil have all contributed to the dynamic growth of Argentina's foreign trade. Most notably, Argentina's exports to Brazil (over 25% of total exports) totaling about \$6.3 billion, were 70% above the level in 1994.

Argentina's trade with the other members of MERCOSUR has grown fivefold since 1991. (During that period, its total foreign trade doubled.) As a consequence, Argentina's MERCOSUR partners accounted for one-third of Argentina's exports during 1996.

Argentina's trade and investment have tremendous potential to grow along with hemispheric economic integration. Macroeconomic stability in Brazil and continued strength of the Brazilian Real are important variables for Argentina's foreign trade in 1997. On an upbeat note, Chile's association with MERCOSUR, as of October 1, 1996, improved access for Argentine exports to East Asia via Chilean ports.

The U.S. registered trade surpluses with Argentina from 1993 to 1996 totaling nearly \$11 billion. The surplus is expected to increase by \$2 billion for 1997--due in large part to Argentina's continued demand for capital goods as well as the recovery of the domestic economy. This reflects the Argentine Government's policy of encouraging modernization and improved competitiveness for Argentine industry.

Argentina adheres to most treaties and international agreements on intellectual property. It is a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization and signed the Uruguay Round agreements in December 1993--including measures related to intellectual property. However, extension of adequate patent protection to pharmaceuticals has been a highly contentious bilateral issue. In January 1997, the U.S. announced it would suspend 50% of Argentina's GSP benefits because of its unsatisfactory pharmaceutical patent law.

Investment

U.S. direct investment in Argentina, an estimated \$10 billion in mid-1996, is concentrated in telecommunications, banking, electric energy generation, gas and petroleum production, food processing, and motor vehicle manufacturing. Additional direct U.S. investment of \$2 billion is expected in 1997.

The U.S. and Argentina have an Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) agreement and an active U.S. Export-Import Bank (EXIMBANK) program. Total EXIMBANK exposure in Argentina approaches \$2.5 billion, and the OPIC portfolio is approaching the country limit.

The Argentine Government has announced privatization of the postal service, which already competes with several large private mail companies. There are also plans to privatize many of Argentina's airports, including Ezeiza International Airport in Buenos Aires, by September 1997.

Under the 1994 U.S.-Argentine bilateral investment treaty, U.S. investors enjoy national treatment in all sectors except shipbuilding, fishing, nuclear power generation, and uranium production. The treaty allows for international arbitration of investment disputes.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

After years of instability, Argentina is today a fully functioning democracy. During President Carlos Menem's first term (1989-1995), he dramatically reordered Argentina's foreign and domestic policies. His overwhelming reelection in May 1995--in the face of hardships caused by economic restructuring and exacerbated by the Mexico peso crisis--provided a mandate for his free market economic strategy and pro-U.S. foreign policy. Menem's second term ends in July 1999; the constitution does not provide for a sitting president to succeed himself more than once.

The constitution of 1853, as revised in 1994, mandates a separation of powers into executive, legislative, and judicial branches at the national and provincial level. Each province also has its own constitution which roughly mirrors the structure of the national constitution.

The president and vice president were traditionally elected indirectly by an electoral college to a single six-year term. They were not allowed immediately to seek reelection. Constitutional reforms adopted in August 1994 reduced the presidential term to four years, abolished the electoral college in favor of direct election, and allowed a sitting president to stand for reelection after his or her first term. Cabinet ministers are appointed by the president. The constitution grants the president considerable power, including a line-item veto.

Provinces traditionally sent two senators, elected by provincial legislatures, to the upper house of Congress. Voters in the federal capital of Buenos Aires elected an electoral college which elected the city's senators. The constitution now mandates a transition to direct election for all senators, and the addition of a third senator from each province and the capital. The third senator will represent the electoral district's largest minority party. The revised constitution reduces senatorial terms from nine to six years in office. One third of the Senate stands for reelection every three years.

Members of the Chamber of Deputies are directly elected to four-year terms. Voters elect half the members of the lower house every two years through a system of proportional representation.

Other important changes to the constitutional system included the creation of a senior coordinating

minister to serve under the president and the popular election of the mayor of the city of Buenos Aires. The constitution establishes the judiciary as a separate and independent entity of government. The president appoints members of the Supreme Court with the consent of the Senate. Other federal judges are appointed by a special judicial commission. The Supreme Court has the power, first asserted in 1854, to declare legislative acts unconstitutional.

Political Parties

The two largest political parties are the Partido Justicialista or Peronist Party (PJ), which evolved out of Juan Peron's efforts to expand the role of labor in the political process in the 1940s, and the Union Civica Radical, or Radical Civic Union (UCR), founded in 1890. Traditionally, the UCR has had more urban middle-class support and the PJ has received more labor support. Support for both parties is broadly based. A grouping of mostly left parties and former peronists--the Front for a Country of Solidarity (FREPASO)--has emerged in the 1990s as a serious political contender especially in the Federal Capital. Smaller parties occupy various positions on the political spectrum and some are active only in certain provinces.

Historically, organized labor (largely tied to Menem's Peronist Party) and the armed forces have also played significant roles in national life. Labor is only just emerging from disarray; its political power has been significantly weakened by Menem's free market reforms. The armed forces are firmly under civilian control. Repudiated by the public after a period of military rule (1976-83), marked by human rights violations, economic decline, and military defeat in the 1982 Falkland Islands war, the Argentine military is now a slimmed-down, all volunteer force focused largely on international peacekeeping.

Government Policy

The Menem Administration has pursued wide-ranging economic reforms designed to open the Argentine economy and enhance its international competitiveness. Privatization, deregulation, fewer import barriers, and a fixed exchange rate have been cornerstones of this effort. All these changes have dramatically reduced the role of the Argentine state in regulating the domestic market. The reform agenda, however, remains incomplete, including needed improvements in the judicial system and provincial administration.

National Security

The president and a civilian minister of defense control the Argentine armed forces. The paramilitary forces under the control of the Ministry of Interior are the *Gendarmeria* (border police) and the *Prefectura Naval* (coast guard). The Argentine armed forces maintain close defense cooperation and military supply relationships with the United States. Other countries also have military relationships with the Argentine forces, principally Israel, Germany, France, Spain, and Italy. The lack of budgetary resources is the most serious problem facing the Argentine military. Current economic conditions and the government's commitment to reduce public sector spending have slowed modernization and restructuring efforts. Under President Menem, Argentina's traditionally difficult relations with its neighbors have improved dramatically and Argentine officials publicly deny seeing a potential threat from any neighboring country.

PEOPLE

Argentines are a fusion of diverse national and ethnic groups. Descendants of Italian and Spanish immigrants predominate. Waves of immigrants from many European countries arrived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Syrian, Lebanese, and other Middle Eastern immigrants number about 500,000, mainly in urban areas. Argentina has the largest Jewish population in Latin America, about 250,000 strong. In recent years, there has been a substantial influx of immigrants from neighboring Latin American countries. The native Indian population, now estimated at 50,000, is concentrated in the peripheral provinces of the north, northwest, and south. The Argentine population has one of Latin America's lowest growth rates. Eighty percent of the population resides in urban areas of more than 2,000 and more than one-third of the population lives in the greater Buenos Aires area. This

sprawling metropolis, with about 12 million inhabitants, serves as the focus for national life. Argentines enjoy comparatively high standards of living; half the population considers itself middle class.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Europeans arrived in the region with the 1502 voyage of Amerigo Vespucci. Spanish navigator Juan Diaz de Solias visited what is now Argentina in 1516. Spain established a permanent colony on the site of Buenos Aires in 1580. They further integrated Argentina into their empire following the establishment of the Vice-Royalty of Rio de la Plata in 1776, and Buenos Aires became a flourishing port.

Buenos Aires formally declared independence from Spain on July 9, 1816. Argentines revere General Jose de San Martin, who campaigned in Argentina, Chile, and Peru, as the hero of their national independence. Following the defeat of the Spanish, centralist and federalist groups waged a lengthy conflict between themselves to determine the future of the nation. National unity was established and the constitution promulgated in 1853.

Two forces combined to create the modern Argentine nation in the late 19th century: the introduction of modern agricultural techniques and the integration of Argentina into the world economy. Foreign investment and immigration from Europe aided this economic revolution. The investment, primarily British, came in such fields as railroads and ports. The migrants who worked to develop Argentina's resources came from throughout Europe, but mostly from Italy and Spain.

Conservative forces dominated Argentine politics until 1916, when their traditional rivals, the Radicals, won control of the government through a democratic election. The Radicals, with their emphasis on fair elections and democratic institutions, opened their doors to Argentina's expanding middle class as well as to elites previously excluded from power for various reasons. The Argentine military forced aged Radical President Hipolito Yrigoyen from power in 1930 and ushered in another decade of Conservative rule.

Using fraud and force when necessary, the governments of the 1930s attempted to contain forces for economic and political change that eventually helped produce the governments of Juan Domingo Peron (b. 1897). New social and political forces were seeking political power. These included the modern military and the labor movement that emerged from the growing urban working class.

The military ousted Argentina's constitutional government in 1943. Peron, then an army colonel, was one of the coup's leaders, and he soon became the government's dominant figure as minister of labor. Elections carried him to the presidency in 1946. He aggressively pursued policies aimed at giving an economic and political voice to the working class and greatly expanded the number of unionized workers. In 1947, Peron announced the first five-year plan based on nationalization and industrialization. He presented himself as a friend of labor and assisted in establishing the powerful General Confederation of Labor (CGT). Peron's dynamic wife, Eva Duarte de Peron, known as Evita (1919-1952), helped her husband develop his appeals to labor and women's groups. Women obtained the right to vote in 1947.

Peron won reelection in 1952, but the military deposed him in 1955. He went into exile, eventually settling in Spain. In the 1950s and 1960s, military and civilian administrations traded power. They tried, with limited success, to deal with diminished economic growth and continued social and labor demands. When military governments failed to revive the economy and suppress escalating terrorism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the way was open for Peron's return.

On March 11, 1973, Argentina held general elections for the first time in ten years. Peron was prevented from running, but voters elected his stand-in, Dr. Hector J. Campora, to the presidency. Peron's followers also commanded strong majorities in both houses of the National Congress, which assumed office on May 25, 1973. Campora resigned in July 1973, paving the way for new elections.

Peron won a decisive victory and returned as President in October 1973 with his third wife, Maria Estela Isabel Martinez de Peron, as Vice President.

During this period, extremists on the left and right carried out terrorist acts with a frequency that threatened public order. The government resorted to a number of emergency decrees, including the implementation of special executive authority to deal with violence. This allowed the government to imprison persons indefinitely without charge.

Peron died on July 1, 1974. His wife succeeded him in office, but her administration was undermined by economic problems, Peronist intraparty struggles, and growing terrorism from both left and right. A military coup removed her from office on March 24, 1976. Until December 10, 1983, the armed forces formally exercised power through a junta composed of the three service commanders.

The armed forces applied harsh measures against terrorists and their sympathizers. They silenced armed opposition and restored basic order. The costs of what became known as the "Dirty War" were high in terms of lives lost and basic human rights violated.

Serious economic problems, defeat by the U.K. in 1982 after an unsuccessful Argentine attempt to forcibly take control of the Falklands/Malvinas Islands, public revulsion in the face of severe human rights abuses, and mounting charges of corruption combined to discredit and discourage the military regime. This prompted a period of gradual transition and led the country toward democratic rule. Acting under public pressure, the junta lifted bans on political parties and restored other basic political liberties. Argentina experienced a generally successful and peaceful return to democracy.

On October 30, 1983, Argentines went to the polls to choose a president, vice president, and national, provincial, and local officials in elections international observers found to be fair, open, and honest. The country returned to constitutional rule after Raul Alfonsin, candidate of the Radical Civic Union (UCR), received 52% of the popular vote for president. He began a six-year term of office on December 10, 1983.

In 1985 and 1987, large turnouts for mid-term elections demonstrated continued public support for a strong and vigorous democratic system. The UCR-led government took steps to resolve some of the nation's most pressing problems, including accounting for those who disappeared during military rule, establishing civilian control of the armed forces, and consolidating democratic institutions. However, constant friction with the military, failure to resolve endemic economic problems, and an inability to maintain public confidence undermined the Alfonsin Government's effectiveness, which left office six months early after peronist candidate Carlos Saul Menem won the 1989 presidential elections.

As President, Menem launched a major overhaul of Argentine domestic policy. Large-scale structural reforms have dramatically reversed the role of the state in Argentine economic life. A decisive leader pressing a controversial agenda, Menem has not been reluctant to use the presidency's extensive powers to issue decrees advancing modernization when the congress was unable to reach consensus on his proposed reforms. Those powers were curtailed somewhat when the constitution was reformed in 1994 as a result of the so-called Olivos Pact with the opposition Radical Party. That arrangement opened the way for Menem to seek and win reelection with 50% of the vote in the three-way 1995 presidential race.

The 1995 election saw the emergence of the moderate left FREPASO political alliance. This alternative to the traditional two main political parties in Argentina is particularly strong in Buenos Aires, but as yet lacks the national infrastructure of the Peronist and Radical parties. In an important development in Argentina's political life, all three major contestants in the 1995 race espouses free market economic policies.

Argentina will hold mid-term congressional elections in October 1997. These are widely seen as

setting the stage for the 1999 presidential race. The government's pro-market policies remain unchallenged, but continued high unemployment and growing public concern over corruption have hurt the government's standing in public opinion polls.

FOREIGN POLICY

In foreign policy, Menem has dramatically made partnership with the United States the centerpiece of his approach. Argentina was the only Latin American country to participate in the Gulf war and all phases of the Haiti operation. It has contributed to UN peacekeeping operations worldwide, and has offered to send peacekeepers to Eastern Slavonia and police to the international Police Task force in Bosnia. Menem was an enthusiastic supporter of the December 1994 Summit of the Americas. At the UN, Argentina is one of the U.S.'s closest collaborators. In regional fora, such as the OAS and Rio Group, Argentina has repeatedly advanced U.S. goals.

Eager for closer ties to developed nations, Argentina has pursued relationships with the OECD, and even NATO, and has left the Non-Aligned Movement. It has become a leading advocate of nonproliferation efforts worldwide. A strong proponent of enhanced regional stability in South America, Argentina has revitalized its relationship with Brazil, settled lingering border disputes with Chile, and restored diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom. In September 1995, Argentina and the UK signed an agreement to promote oil and gas exploration in the Southwest Atlantic, defusing a potentially difficult issue and opening the way to further cooperation between the two nations.

Principal Government Officials

President--Carlos Saul Menem

Minister of Foreign Affairs--Guido Di Tella

Ambassador to the United States--Diego Guelar

Ambassador to the Organization of American States--Alicia Martinez Rios

Ambassador to the United Nations--Fernando Petrella

Diplomatic/Consular Offices in the United States

Argentina maintains an embassy in the United States at 1600 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington DC 20009 (tel. 202-939-6400; FAX 202-332-3171).

It has consular offices in the following locations:

Atlanta:

245 Peachtree Center Ave., Suite 2101

Atlanta, GA 30303

Tel: (404) 880-0805; Fax: (404) 880-0806

Chicago:

205 North Michigan Ave., Suite 4209

Chicago, IL 60601

Tel: (312) 819-2620; Fax (312) 819-2612

Houston:

1990 Post Oak Blvd., Suite 770

Houston, TX 77056

Tel: (713) 871-8935; Fax (713) 871-1639

Los Angeles:

5055 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 210

Los Angeles, CA 90036

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Miami:
800 Brickell Ave. PH1
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New York:
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New York, NY 10019
Tel: (212) 603-0400; Fax: (212) 541-7746

Washington, DC:
1718 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20009
Tel: (202) 797-8826

Office of the Economic and Trade Representative
1901 L St., NW
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 56-4475

Contact List:

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Viamonte 1133, 8th floor
tel. (54)(1) 371-4500; fax (54)(1) 371-8400

U.S. Department of Commerce
Office of Latin America and the Caribbean
International Trade Administration
14th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 202-482-2436; 1-800-USA-TRADE; Fax: 202-482-4726; Internet: <http://www.ita.doc.gov>
Automated fax service for trade-related information: 202-482-4464

TRAVEL AND BUSINESS INFORMATION

The U.S. Department of State's Consular Information Program provides Travel Warnings and Consular Information Sheets. **Travel Warnings** are issued when the State Department recommends that Americans avoid travel to a certain country. **Consular Information Sheets** exist for all countries and include information on immigration practices, currency regulations, health conditions, areas of instability, crime and security, political disturbances, and the addresses of the U.S. posts in the country. **Public Announcements** are issued as a means to disseminate information quickly about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term conditions overseas which pose significant risks to the security of American travelers. Free copies of this information are available by calling the Bureau of Consular Affairs at 202-647-5225 or via the fax-on-demand system: 202-647-3000. Travel Warnings and Consular Information Sheets also are available on the Consular Affairs Internet home page: <http://travel.state.gov> and the **Consular Affairs Bulletin Board (CABB)**. To access CABB, dial the modem number: (301-946-4400 (it will accommodate up to 33,600 bps), set terminal communications program to N-8-1 (no parity, 8 bits, 1 stop bit); and terminal emulation to VT100. The login is **travel** and the password is **info** (Note: Lower case is required). The CABB also carries international security information from the Overseas Security Advisory Council and Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security. Consular Affairs Trips for Travelers publication series, which contain information on obtaining passports and planning a safe trip abroad, can be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954; telephone: 202-512-1800; fax 202-512-2250.

Emergency information concerning Americans traveling abroad may be obtained from the Office

of Overseas Citizens Services at (202) 647-5225. For after-hours emergencies, Sundays and holidays, call 202-647-4000.

Passport Services information can be obtained by calling the 24-hour, 7-day a week automated system (\$.35 per minute) or live operators 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (EST) Monday-Friday (\$1.05 per minute). The number is 1-900-225-5674 (TDD: 1-900-225-7778). Major credit card users (for a flat rate of \$4.95) may call 1-888-362-8668 (TDD: 1-888-498-3648)

Travelers can check the **latest health information** with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. A hotline at (404) 332-4559 gives the most recent health advisories, immunization recommendations or requirements, and advice on food and drinking water safety for regions and countries. A booklet entitled *Health Information for International Travel* (HHS publication number CDC-95-8280) is available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402, tel. (202) 512-1800.

Information on **travel conditions, visa requirements, currency and customs regulations, legal holidays, and other items of interest to travelers** also may be obtained before your departure from a country's embassy and/or consulates in the U.S. (for this country, see "Principal Government Officials" listing in this publication).

U.S. citizens who are long-term visitors or traveling in dangerous areas are encouraged to register at the U.S. embassy upon arrival in a country (see "Principal U.S. Embassy Officials" listing in this publication). This may help family members contact you in case of an emergency.

Further Electronic Information:

Department of State Foreign Affairs Network. Available on the Internet, DOSFAN provides timely, global access to official U.S. foreign policy information. Updated daily, DOSFAN includes *Background Notes*; *Dispatch*, the official magazine of U.S. foreign policy; daily press briefings; *Country Commercial Guides*; directories of key officers of foreign service posts; etc. DOSFAN's World Wide Web site is at <http://www.state.gov>.

U.S. Foreign Affairs on CD-ROM (USFAC). Published on a semi-annual basis by the U.S. Department of State, USFAC archives information on the Department of State Foreign Affairs Network, and includes an array of official foreign policy information from 1990 to the present. Contact the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954. To order, call (202) 512-1800 or fax (202) 512-2250.

National Trade Data Bank (NTDB). Operated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, the NTDB contains a wealth of trade-related information. It is available on the Internet (www.stat-usa.gov) and on CD-ROM. Call the NTDB Help-Line at (202) 482-1986 for more information.

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ARGENTINA: USAID ASSISTANCE

This is currently no USAID presence in Argentina, although there was as recently as 1995. With funding of approximately \$1 million a year from 1992 through 1995, the USAID program encouraged more responsible and independent government institutions and a more engaged citizenry. USAID's first priority was the promotion of the consolidation of democracy. To achieve this objective, USAID supported activities of Argentine nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and selected public sector leaders in favor of: 1) a more independent, efficient, and accessible justice system; 2) reducing opportunities for corruption; and 3) increasing civic participation.

Under the administration of justice program several achievements were realized in 1994 and 1995. Judicial education seminars and technical assistance to provincial court officials was provided in several provinces. As a result, new judicial training institutions were approved for establishment in six provinces.

Within the country's largest court system in the Province of Buenos Aires, the training methodology of the already existing judicial schools was updated, and new techniques of curricula design were introduced. A pilot program to decentralize administrative functions was extended from one to three court districts and was implemented throughout the Province.

Under the accountability program, Argentine NGO Poder Ciudadano succeeded in establishing linkages with 113 NGOs and public schools which are carrying out their own anti-corruption programs.

USAID's Civic Participation Program was implemented by another Argentine NGO, Conciencia. Conciencia succeeded in collaborating with 97 other NGOs to carry out activities under its municipal development and public education programs and trained 335 female political candidates running for office from all major political parties (and 77 men who saw how valuable the program was and asked to participate).

USAID also funded an activity to improve the business environment. With USAID support, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and the Argentine National Stock Commission established a cooperative relationship to benefit both countries. Jointly, the two Commissions established and chair the Inter-American Association of Security Market Regulators.

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ARGENTINA: U.S.-ARGENTINA ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA

Argentine and U.S. positions often coincide on issues before international environmental fora such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), although they usually avoid open conflict with G-77 countries. They were an excellent host for the November 1996 CBD Conference of Parties. While not a key player in forest negotiations, they support the U.S. call for continued progress in existing fora, e.g. improved analysis of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, rather than a forest convention, for which there is currently no consensus. Although federal standards are compatible with those found in the U.S., Argentina's environmental protection regimes are relatively new and weak. The greatest environmental policy challenge is to develop clear divisions of authority and establish closer cooperation among environmental agencies.

At Bariloche, on Argentina's southwest border with Chile, you will visit the second oldest national park in Latin America. Argentina is a recent recipient of multimillion dollar loans from the World Bank to modernize its national park systems and address critical park resource management problems. We hope to complete negotiations on a U.S. Parks Service with the Argentine National Parks Administration for increased cooperation and technical assistance, which has in the past included successful training programs for park rangers.

Argentina has an active biotechnology sector and is in the process of commercializing "Roundup Ready" soybeans, a biogenetically engineered strain. It is acutely aware of the importance of the biosafety protocol to the CBD to their trade, agriculture and environment sectors. Argentina appears to have bowed to G-77 pressure at the May 1997 biosafety meeting in Montreal in calling for a broad scope protocol, while privately they have agreed with our stance that the protocol should be scientifically based, narrow in scope and not unduly hinder trade in beneficial biotechnology products.

National and international environmental NGOs have expressed concerns about two projects on the Parana, a river running along Argentina's northeast border which is longer than the Mississippi as well as larger in volume. A U.S. consortium has proposed a 48-turbine dam on the Middle Parana. The five countries which share the Parana are also considering construction of a 24-hour, year-round navigable waterway, the Hidrovia, linking Bolivia with the Atlantic. Both projects require greater study of their potential negative environmental impact than has been done to date. President Wasmosy of Paraguay, Hidrovia's most ardent supporter, recently wrote to you requesting USG support through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A Corps team will attend an October meeting of the International Hidrovia Commission to provide input on the next steps to be taken.

TALKING POINTS

- Your long history of parks creation and preservation is a model for the region, and I applaud the new efforts you are undertaking to improve their management.
- We remain interested in ensuring that any hydroelectric and transportation projects being proposed for the Parana River are developed in a sustainable and environmentally sound manner, with participation by sectors of civil society which would be affected.

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ARGENTINA: SAN CARLOS DE BARILOCHE

San Carlos de Bariloche, more commonly referred to simply as "Bariloche," is an attractive mountain town of 100,000 inhabitants located 1,000 miles southwest of Buenos Aires on the eastern slope of the Andes. The city's architecture is reminiscent of a European ski village, with most buildings made of local wood and stone. The town is famous for homemade chocolates, smoked meats and cheeses, and ceramics.

Bariloche is surrounded by the Nahuel Huapi National Park, with over 1.6 million acres of mountains, forests, lakes and rivers. The altitude in the area ranges from 2,500 to 13,000 feet. Much of the National Park land in Argentina is in private hands, including Ted Turner's 10,000 acre estancia (ranch) in the adjacent province of Neuquen, but the Argentine government places strict controls on building, planting, and clearing. The park is especially famous for the "Bosque de Los Arrayanes (myrtle trees)" on the Quetribue peninsula on Nahuel Huapi lake. The arrayan tree can be found in limited places elsewhere in the hemisphere, but the "Bosque" is the only living complete forest. It evokes such an impressive eeriness that Walt Disney sent his artists to the peninsula in the 1940's where they designed the backdrops for "Bambi".

Bariloche is an ideal getaway that appeals to tourists all year round. In the winter months thousand of tourists flock to the various ski resorts which contain over 5,000 acres of skiable runs, the most well known being "Cerro Cathedral". The other seasons attract those who explore the land by hiking, mountain climbing, horseback riding, mountain biking, and trekking. The area also offers crystalline lakes and rivers for those who like trout fishing, kayaking, rafting, and boating. One of the most challenging golf courses in Argentina is the 9 hole Scottish-style links located on the grounds of the Llao-Llao Hotel.

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POTUS 10/12-19 TRIP PUBLIC STATEMENTS

ARGENTINA: U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS

BEST EVER

Relationship has never been better; at its historical apogee. Desire and commitment by both sides to keep it there.

Strength of the tie: Only Latin American country for which we have a visa waiver program; designation as Major Non-NATO Ally (if announced); "special consultative process" initiated during this visit (as presumably will be a number of other bilateral agreements).

It is a close relationship made possible by Argentine efforts and success in building democratic institutions, carrying out economic reform, consolidating democracy, and playing a constructive role internationally.

GLOBAL PLAYER

Relationship reflects Argentina's decision to assume a role of responsibility and leadership on a global scale.

Argentine peacekeeping efforts in Cyprus and the former Yugoslavia. Argentina provides observers in Guatemala and in connection with the Peru-Ecuador border dispute. In the past, provided observers in Mozambique, Rwanda, Cambodia.

Argentina is one of our most active global and regional partners. Was with us in Kuwait/the Gulf. Worked with us in every phase of the international effort to restore democratic rule to Haiti. Has supported our effort to improve human rights and democratic rule in Cuba.

TRADE

Close bilateral relationship also reflects Argentine efforts to pursue economic reform, and its enthusiastic participation in world trade. President Menem has pursued an ambitious program of deregulation and privatization.

Support for FTAA is a centerpiece of Argentine trade policy. Argentina heads several important committees working toward this goal as a part of the Summit of the Americas implementation process. We seek fast-track authority to facilitate negotiation of further trade agreements. U.S. investment flows are stronger than ever. There is over \$11 billion of U.S. direct investment

in Argentina. Telecommunications, energy, petrochemicals, food processing and auto manufacturing are promising sectors.

CULTURAL INTERCHANGE

Both nations have rich cultural heritages. We have a strong USIS program in cultural exchange, speakers, specialists, and exchange students.

EDUCATION - (Note: Educational reform and financing are touchy subjects in Argentina. Any mention of education in the President's statement should be done strictly in the context of efforts in the U.S. and the Summit of the Americas process.)

Access to quality education for all our people is one of the commitments undertaken at the Summit of the Americas in Miami in 1994. Progress toward fulfilling that commitment will be one of the focal points of the second Summit of the Americas in Santiago next year.

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, one of Argentina's greatest statesmen and the creator of Argentina's system of public education, said that the first obligation of government is "to educate the sovereign." In a democracy, the only sovereign is the people, and the people must have access to education of the best quality in order to carry out successfully the obligations and privileges of self-government.

We in the United States have embarked on an effort to ensure that the best education is available to all our children from the very earliest age, to prepare them for life and work in the twenty-first century.

We appreciate the Argentine commitment to regular substantial financial contribution to the Fulbright program. And we are eager and committed hosts to the thousands of Argentines now at U.S. universities -- a development of only the last few years.

THE FUTURE

We see Argentina as an essential partner in following through on implementation of Miami Summit goals and preparation for the Santiago Summit of the Americas.

Argentina has been in the forefront of countries most active in framing the Summit process and in implementing the Summit's action plan.

We appreciate the Argentine lead in preparing Santiago Summit papers, including on Administration of Justice and Counter-terrorism. Is second only to the U.S. in the number of Summit action items for which it has assumed the lead for coordination.

We also look forward to continuing close cooperation on issues of development and prosperity, free trade, strengthening the community of democracies, conserving natural resources, and fighting corruption, illegal drugs and organized crime.

Trade will remain an engine that drives our economic partnership. In 1997, we expect two way trade in goods to be over \$ 7.5 billion.

Expanding trade creates good jobs, faster economic growth, and prosperity for both countries.

We are committed to making an aggressive push for trade liberalization in this hemisphere by 2005.

The US welcomes MERCOSUR and other regional pacts which do not divert trade or discriminate against non-member countries.

We are partners in seeing our hemisphere united commercially.

We expect the democratic nations of the hemisphere to launch FTAA negotiations when we meet in Santiago next year.

Trade is an important tool, but not the sum-total of our relationship or our opportunities.

Working with others in the region, we have a chance to create within this hemisphere, which used to be called the New World, a New World model for democratic cooperation, sustainable economic growth and prosperity, and cooperative security.

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BUENOS AIRES: BUSINESS BREAKFAST

The American Chamber of Commerce is hosting a business breakfast which begins at 9:00 am. You and President Menem will drop by at about 10:00 and make remarks to the group to close the breakfast. Special Envoy McLarty will introduce you and President Menem will follow.

There will be approximately 50 to 75 official guest invited from the Argentine government and your delegation. In addition, 200 representatives from American companies and about 200 Argentine business representatives will be invited. Press will be present.

Background

This joint breakfast symbolizes US-Argentine commercial relations which have never been closer. Two way trade for 1997 is estimated to exceed \$8 billion annually with a surplus of over 2 billion in the U.S. favor.

U.S. firms are also the leading investors in Argentina with \$12 billion in investment, and increasing at more than \$2 billion a year. The growing importance of Brazil and Mercosur and the sensitivity of U.S. relations with it, makes your participation in the breakfast a key opportunity to highlight US-Argentine trade, the importance of the Free Trade Area of the Americas goals and our support for MERCOSUR and other regional trade groupings that are trade liberalizing.

The breakfast will be held in the San Telmo room on the first floor of the Sheraton. Remarks will be given by Secretary Albright, Foreign Minister Di Tella, Economic Minister Rogue Fernandez and Secretary Daley prior to your arrival. Special Envoy McLarty and both Secretaries with their Argentine counterparts will be seated at the head table along with the President of the American Chamber of Commerce, Carlos Fedrigotti, which is hosting the breakfast. Fedrigotti is also the president of Citibank Argentina.

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BUENOS AIRES: VISIT TO A JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT SCHOOL

This visit to the "Colegio Superior de Comercio No. 3 Hipolito Vieyles" provides an opportunity to see a public high school in a traditional middle class neighborhood of Buenos Aires and to highlight the activities of the "Junior Achievement" program in Argentina.

Dr. Horacio Sanguinetti, Secretary of Education for the city of Buenos Aires; Dr. Francisco Castellucci, the school's principal; and representatives of Junior Achievement Argentina will meet you at the entrance of the school. Proceeding with them to a classroom, students and faculty will describe and demonstrate the Junior Achievement business projects being conducted. You may also address the larger student body in the auditorium, which seats 700. Following this, you would depart the school.

Background

The high school was founded in 1924 and renamed (1929) in honor of Hipolito Vieytes, a journalist who at the turn of the century wrote on agriculture, industry, and commerce. In its present building since 1945, the school is located near a monument marking the geographical center of Buenos Aires.

As is common in Argentine public schools, students are divided between morning and afternoon session. Total enrollment is 2500, with 350 faculty and staff. The school emphasizes business and economics, although all standard secondary-level subjects are taught. Its "Junior Achievement" students (there are about 25 this year) have consistently placed near the top in national competitions.

Junior Achievement has operated in Argentina since 1991; last year, over 21,000 public and private school student participated in its programs. The organization enjoys high-level political, as well as business support.

President Menem regularly attends Junior Achievement's annual fund-raising event. Several U.S. firms, including Citibank, Hewlett-Packard, General Motors, and General Electric, are among the top supporters of Junior Achievement in Argentina.

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BUENOS AIRES: ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY

Your round table discussion with 12-15 prominent Argentine women representing non-governmental organizations, business, government, journalism, and the arts will be at the National Library. You will be received on arrival by the library's director, Oscar Mitre, who will escort you to the "Sala Julio Cortazar" where the participants will be gathered. Wesley Godard, wife of U.S. Charge d'Affaires Ron Godard, will introduce you, and you will then make opening remarks and open the table for dialogue. After approximately 60 minutes, you will make closing remarks and Mrs. Godard will thank the guests. Simultaneous translation will be provided, although some of the participants will speak English.

Press photographers will take opening shots and then depart. Print media will be permitted to remain throughout the discussion, seated off to one side.

Background

The National Library was established in 1810, the year of Argentine independence. Today the library has grown to contain over one million volumes. Prominent writers who have served as Director of the National Library in the past include Jorge Luis Borges, Gustavo Martinez, and Paul Grousac.

The library conducts an active series of public concerts, lectures, poetry readings, and other events. The "Sala Julio Cortazar" is still alive named after one of Argentina's greatest fiction writers of this century. The library also has a 220-seat auditorium, which is named for Jorge Luis Borges, Argentina's internationally known and most respected living writer.

Some of the participants at this round table will have attended a unique hemispheric conference on civic education was held in Buenos Aires called "Civitas Panamericano." It had 250 participants from 20 countries in North and South America, representing civic organizations, government ministries, the media and the private sector. This conference sought to build regional and international networks of expertise and technology among non-governmental and governmental organizations in order to strengthen civic participation, democratic values and free market economies throughout the Americas.

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BUENOS AIRES: SPEECH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BUENOS AIRES LAW SCHOOL

The Law School of the University of Buenos Aires is the venue for a major activity in Buenos Aires. You will be met at the ground floor entrance by Andres D'Alessio, Dean of the Law School. Proceeding to Dean D'Alessio's office, he will introduce you to Oscar Shuberoff, Rector(President) of the University, and Dr. Ester Schiavoni, President of the National Women's Council, the organization which is co-sponsoring your speech, along with the Law School of the University of Buenos Aires.

They will then escort you to the stage of the "Salon de Actos", located on the first floor. Following remarks by Dean D'Alessio and Dr. Schiavoni, you will be presented an "honorary professorship" by Rector Shuberoff. Your speech comes after the conclusion of this brief academic ceremony. Rector Shuberoff or another university official will then close the program. You leave by the same door that you entered.

Attendees are university faculty and students, as well as representatives from non-governmental organizations, government, and business from the provinces as well as the city of Buenos Aires. Simultaneous translation will be provided.

Background

The University of Buenos Aires was founded in 1821, including a Department of Jurisprudence. This became the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences in 1874. The University, with an enrollment of 185,000, is by far the largest in Argentina. Over 25,000 students are studying law (including undergraduate, graduate and extension programs). There are 900 faculty, almost all part-time, in the law school.

University campuses as we know them in the United States are virtually non-existent in Argentina. Faculties of the University of Buenos Aires are located in several different locations. Construction of the current law school was completed in 1947, during the presidency of Juan Domingo Peron.

The "Salon de Actos" with a seating capacity of 850, including balcony, is used for formal academic ceremonies and major speeches. A large mural depicting the founding of the university provides the backdrop of the stage.

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ARGENTINA: EDUCATION

Argentines have a long and proud tradition of public education. Argentina has, at times, approached levels of education comparable to the most sophisticated systems in the world. Today it has an estimated adult literacy rate of 96%. Yet, during the past several decades, education has suffered from the lack of political stability and economic resources necessary to build a well-articulated and stable system. Universities are currently funded and regulated by the federal Ministry of Culture and Education. The primary and secondary systems are under provincial control, with oversight by and limited funding from the federal government.

Background

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, President of Argentina from 1869 to 1874, was a pioneer of public education and a great admirer of the U.S. educational system. A celebrated writer, educator, and diplomat, Sarmiento served as Ambassador to Washington in the 1860's. While in the U.S., he was highly influenced by American educator Horace Mann. As president, Sarmiento's greatest contribution to the education field was to establish a system of public schools throughout Argentina. To help achieve his goal, he brought 65 American schoolteachers to Argentina, almost all women from New England.

The University Reform of 1918 resulted in basic policies of open admissions, free tuition, and student and faculty participation in the governance of the universities. During the military administration of 1976-1983, stiff entrance examinations replaced the policy of unrestricted admissions for students. The Alfonsín administration reinstated open admissions throughout the university system. As a result of almost 14 years of open admissions, the University of Buenos Aires went from a student body of 60,000 in 1983 to 185,000 today.

In order to utilize more efficiently the education budget, President Menem has favored the gradual implementation of university admissions standards and tuition fees; the Higher Education Law of 1995 has generated vigorous public and political opposition. The notion of free education is so deeply ingrained in the Argentine body politic that tuition is taboo even among the conservative political groups. Controversy still lingers as some universities are adhering to the law, while others continue to "study" its implementation.

While the universities struggle under the burden of burgeoning numbers, the primary and secondary school systems suffer from low teacher salaries, inadequate teacher training, overcrowded

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classrooms, and run-down facilities. For the past several months, the teachers' union has been maintaining, with great support from the general public, a symbolic hunger strike in front of Congress to protest low salaries, inadequate funding for education, and other aspects of the government's efforts to reform the educational system.

The Federal Education Law of 1993 requires ten years of compulsory education, consisting of kindergarten and a nine-year period of "general basic education." Students may then continue for a three-year "polymodal" cycle which offers a choice between a university preparation track and technical training. Students are routinely graduated, regardless of academic ability, from the polymodal level. The majority of students enter national universities, which, by tradition, follow an open admission policy and do not charge tuition. Only 19 percent of students who enter national universities eventually graduate. Although most Argentines still regard public universities, despite deteriorating conditions, as more prestigious, in the last 15 years, the growth of private universities, albeit of varying quality, has been remarkable.

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ARGENTINA: THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (BEIJING)

The Argentine delegation to the Fourth World Conference on Women was headed by Ambassador Zelmira Regazzoli, President of the Center for National Coordination.

Argentina adopted the Platform for Action with reservations that: underline the parents' primary responsibility for sexual education of their children, specify that no reference to the right to control matters related to sexuality abrogated the condemnation of abortion as a method of birth control, and clarify that Argentine support for national review of laws against abortion does not constitute a proposal to decriminalize abortion.

Argentina participated as an observer at the 1997 session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

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ARGENTINA: POPULATION AND FAMILY PLANNING

For much of its history Argentina was largely underpopulated, and successive governments encouraged immigration. In that context, and reflecting the country's strong Catholic tradition, governmental policies have been pro-life and have not encouraged or even encompassed family planning. Nonetheless, Argentina's population dynamics have been weak by international standards, with population growth below 2 percent per year since mid-century. Between 1950 and last year, the Argentine population doubled while that of Latin America and the Caribbean tripled. Now at 35 million, Argentina's population is increasing by just 1.3% per year.

This may reflect in part the relative economic prosperity, good health conditions and high living standards that Argentines enjoyed for much of this century. However, prolonged economic stagnation in the 1970s and 1980s damaged living standards and social services, including those affecting reproductive health. While infant mortality remains low, maternal mortality just meets the target level set at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo. There are 150,000-170,000 HIV/AIDS carriers, concentrated in the large cities, with intravenous drug use being the major risk factor.

Slow population growth and a total fertility rate of 2.6% in 1996 -- slightly below the Latin American and Caribbean average -- suggest that family planning is widespread, but no data exist on this subject. Argentina's socially conservative governments have never included questions on desired family size, contraceptive prevalence, or other social aspects of demography in any national survey or study, nor has any private entity. Argentina was one of the few governments to reserve on language in the ICPD Program of Action related to family structure (commenting that "although the family may exist in various forms, in no case can its origin and foundation, i.e., the union between man and woman, which produces children, be changed") and reproductive health ("cannot accept the inclusion of abortion in the concept of 'reproductive health' either as a service or as a method of regulating pregnancy").

Because of Argentina's relative prosperity, the U.S. and other bilateral donors have not been active there in decades. Multilateral assistance projects have not included reproductive health or family planning. The UN Population Fund has a very small Argentine program that did not utilize the \$198,000 allocated for 1996.

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ARGENTINA: WOMEN'S ISSUES

Argentina has made important advances in the area of women's rights, but discrimination and violence against women remain problems.

The Constitution and federal law provide equality for all citizens. The 1988 Anti-Discrimination Law establishes a series of penalties from one month to three years imprisonment for anyone who arbitrarily restricts, obstructs, or restrains a person based on "race, religion, nationality, ideology, political opinion, sex, economic position, social class, or physical characteristics." There is no evidence of any systematic effort to abridge these rights by the government or by private groups.

Violence and sexual harassment against women are problems. Insensitivity among police and judges sometimes discourages women from reporting assaults. Domestic violence is seen as a private, familial dilemma as opposed to a societal problem. The greatest challenges facing battered women revolve around the lack of legal remedies as well as the attitude and conduct of the police force.

The National Women's Council and several non-governmental organizations have been working with law enforcement authorities to include in their police training material on handling cases of violence against women. During her tenure as President of the Inter-American Commission on Women, Argentine Ambassador Zelmira Regazzoli successfully pressed the 1994 OAS General Assembly to adopt the Inter-American Convention on Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention of Belem do Para). Since Argentina ratified the Convention in 1995, women's groups have used it to argue for changes in domestic law.

Human rights abuses committed by provincial police are also an issue. Women are especially vulnerable to rape while in detention. The Center for Victim Orientation, a federal police program that allows for provincial participation, has initiated, on an ad hoc basis, instruction in human rights training and increased sensitivity to women's issues. Many public and private institutions offer prevention programs and provide support and treatment for women who have been abused.

Abortion is illegal under all circumstances except when the woman's life is in danger or in the case of rape, and then only if the woman is considered mentally unstable. A local NGO in Buenos Aires estimates that more than 30 percent of maternal deaths are a result of poorly-performed abortions. This figure rises to 40 to 50 percent for adolescent maternal deaths according to the NGO. Both the women and the doctor are considered criminally culpable if an illegal abortion is

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performed. This issue is becoming increasingly controversial. Legislation that granted women counseling on reproductive health and included abortion as an option was amended in the Senate to allow only for natural methods, and supporters are now backing away from it. The matter will be revisited in the next Congress.

Women still encounter economic discrimination and occupy a disproportionate number of lower paying jobs. Often they are paid less than men for equal work, even though this is explicitly forbidden by federal law. Female labor leaders have pressed their male counterparts for affirmative action programs within the trade union movement to counteract this. Many women working as domestic servants are employed in the informal sector, where they are effectively denied work-related economic and social benefits enjoyed by those in the formal sector. Just recently, however, Congress passed a progressive law which provides retirement benefits to housewives and protections for domestic workers.

The National Women's Council, created in 1992 by President Menem in response to recommendations in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, carries out programs to promote equal opportunity in education and employment, encourages the participation of women in politics, supports women's rights programs at the provincial level, and follows through on the Beijing conventions. The Council works closely with President Menem on women's issues, which in some cases has led to charges of politicization. Provisions in the revised Constitution have greatly increased women's participation in politics.

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ARGENTINA: CHILDREN'S ISSUES

The infant mortality rate (IMR) in Argentina declined dramatically from 33.6 to 26.2 per 1,000 live births during the first half of the 1980s, and then slowed in the second five-year period; Argentina currently has an IMR of 20.7 per 1,000 live births.

While death rates from pneumonia, influenza and intestinal infections among children under one year decreased significantly from 1985-1990, according to the latest available statistics 37% of deaths of children under one year old still were due to diseases of the respiratory system and intestinal disease.

Since the USAID Mission closed in 1995 there have been no USAID-supported programs in Argentina.

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ARGENTINA: WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Argentina has been a pioneer in efforts to expand the role of women in political circles. Many of the advances can be traced back to the legacy of Eva Peron, who strove to give women a voice in the political arena and whose efforts resulted in their obtaining the right to vote in 1947.

The Constitution stipulates that the regulations of political parties and party nominations for elections be subject to affirmative action requirements to assure that women are represented in elective office. Gender quotas were first used in the early 1950's by the Justicialista (Peronist) Party for congressional elections as a direct consequence of lobbying efforts by Eva Peron. Use of the quotas, combined with the electoral success of the Peronist Party, resulted in a percentage of women in the national Chamber of Deputies (15 percent in 1952 and 22 percent in 1955) that then was among the highest in the world. It was not until 1991, however, that Argentina became the first country to pass a federal law mandating the use of gender quotas by all political parties in legislative elections to the lower house of the federal Congress. Before the law, an average of only four percent of national representatives were women. In the first national election after the law went into effect, the percentage of women increased to 21 percent, and today it stands at 28 percent.

The law for Argentina's proportional representation system provides that women shall comprise at least 30 percent of every party list for seats in the lower house, and that their positions on the list will be no lower than third after each two men. In practice, however, not all provinces are in full compliance. Most, under pressure, have now adopted a position of minimal compliance (men are still in control of party lists) and in the smaller districts with few representatives, the quota law has almost no impact.

In addition, the law does not apply in the Senate, where only five percent of the senators are women. The number reflects the fact that few provincial legislators or influential party leaders are women, since the party-controlled provincial legislators elect the national senators (two for the majority party and one for the minority). Therefore, until provincial legislatures are more gender-balanced, or the method of electing senators is changed (which will not happen before 1999) the Senate will continue to have a preponderance of men.

However there are many prominent women in politics in Argentina including Maria Julia Alsogaray, Head of the Environment Secretariat in the Office of the President, and Ana Kessler, who

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is director of a recently created office on small and medium sized businesses.

Unfortunately, the current party list system does not ensure the most popular women politicians are chosen to be on the list of candidates. Women legislators also face the added pressure of family responsibilities - many of whom live in district far from Buenos Aires. This has resulted in few women running for reelection while some have not completing their terms.

Nonetheless, one of this election year's biggest and most watched races is between two high-profile women for national deputy of Buenos Aires province -- Hilda "Chiche" Gonzalez de Duhalde running as the Peronist candidate against the UCR/Frepaso alliance's Graciela Fernandez Meijide. Chiche is the wife of the governor of Buenos Aires and leads a group of women who act as neighborhood social workers; she has encouraged comparisons to Evita. Meijide is a popular senator from the center-left coalition, FREPASO, who has a reputation as an earnest, incorruptible politician. One of her sons was among the thousands "disappeared" during the military dictatorship. Meijide is considered a possible presidential candidate in 1999. A leading Argentine pollster opined that female candidates are popular this election year because the public views them as more empathetic to their problems and more open to dialogue.

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ARGENTINA: HEALTH ISSUES

Argentina has an infant mortality rate (IMR) of 20.7 per 1,000 live births and a maternal mortality ratio (MMR) of 100 per 100,000 (by comparison the US IMR is 7.3 and the MMR is 12). The total fertility rate (TFR) or number of children an average woman will have in her lifetime is 2.8. The contraceptive prevalence is unavailable. Argentines enjoy a life expectancy of 72 years.

The latest available statistics show that only 67% of the urban population and 43% of the rural population have access to public drinking water supply systems. Approximately thirty-nine percent of the urban population has access to sewage services.

Since USAID's office closed in 1995, there have been no USAID programs operating in Argentina.

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ARGENTINA: PROTOCOL AND ETIQUETTE

Personal Interaction

While there are some differences, generally U.S. and Argentine standards of good behavior are similar.

Although "Portenos" -- residents of Buenos Aires -- are cosmopolitan and sophisticated, Argentina is also a traditional Latin society. Men are expected to hold doors and pull out chairs for women; men also step aside to allow women into an area first. Women are fashion conscious and dress tends toward formal, although this is much less so among the younger generation.

The traditional Argentine greeting is one kiss on the right cheek between women and between women and men. A kiss is acceptable among men only in the case of long-time friends, although the "abrazo" is common. The concept of "personal space" is, compared to the United States, much more flexible in Argentina. Argentines are accustomed to standing closer to the person they are addressing.

Small talk is considered very important. Before discussing any kind of business, Argentines will inquire about one's family, what one has been doing recently, the weather or just about anything except the reason for the meeting.

At the Table

Women should not leave their purses on the floor or hung on the back of the chair as it is considered in very poor taste to do so. Purses should remain on one's lap or be placed on a nearby chair.

Argentines are justifiably proud of their wine and usually have at least a glass with meals. Similarly, Argentine beef is world renowned and consumed in large quantities.

While eating, hands rest on the table, not on one's lap.

The level of concern about cigarette smoke is much lower in Argentina than in the U.S. Smoking is allowed virtually everywhere, including inside buildings. Restaurants with non-smoking sections are a relatively new idea.