15. (U) SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: DIRECT NO FORWARD TO AVOID ERRORS.

16. (C/NOFORN) THIS IR FORWARDS INFORMATION CONCERNING GOA EFFORTS TO RESPOND TO USG INITIATIVES ON BEHALF OF JEHOVA'S WITNESSES.

22. DETAILS: (C/NOFORN) SOURCE DISCUSSED RECENT U.S. AMBASSADOR CASTRO'S VISIT WITH ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER PASTOR, IN WHICH THE FORMER EXPRESSED CONCERN FOR JEHOVA'S WITNESSES IN ARGENTINA. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, AMBASSADOR CASTRO'S OVERTURE ON BEHALF OF THE LITTLE KNOWN RELIGIOUS SECT, ALONG WITH OTHER GROUPS' INITIATIVES, HAS HAD AN EFFECT ON THE GOA.

2. (C/NOFORM) SOURCE CITED AN INCREASING NUMBER OF LOW-RANKING NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND RECRUITS CLAIMING EXEMPTION FROM MILITARY SERVICE, ACCENTUATING DIFFICULTIES OF THE GOVERNMENT IN DEALING WITH THE JEHOVA'S WITNESSES. FOUR ARGAF NCO'S ARE NOW UNDER ARREST IN PARANÀ, AND ARE AWAITING TRIALS; IF FOUND GUILTY, THEY COULD FACE SENTENCES OF FOUR YEARS.

3. (C/NOFORM) ACCORDING TO SOURCE, GOA IS DEALING WITH THE MATTER BROUGHT UP BY AMBASSADOR CASTRO IN A SERIOUS AND RESPONSIBLE WAY. THE GOVERNMENT, HE ASSERTED, IS UNDERTAKING A STUDY TO DETERMINE HOW BEST TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM AND MEET USG APPROVAL AS WELL. CURRENTLY BEING CONSIDERED IS THE ALTERNATIVE OF ALLOWING THE JEHOVA'S WITNESS MEMBERS TO SERVE TWO YEAR "CIVIL SERVICE" ENLISTMENT IN AREAS SUCH AS FORESTRY WITH THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, WITH YPF (YACINTOS PETROLIFEROS FISCALES, STATE OIL ENTITY), OR STATE MINES IN ISOLATED AREAS OF THE COUNTRY. THIS WOULD NOT ONLY ELIMINATE THE JAIL SENTENCES, BUT WOULD ALSO GIVE GOA FLEXIBILITY IN DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM OF PROVIDING MUCH-NEEDED LABOR IN REMOTE AREAS OF THE COUNTRY.

COMMENT: (C/NOFORM) HE SEEMED SINCERE AND HONEST IN THE ELABORATION OF GOA'S PROBLEMS WITH JEHOVA'S WITNESSES. THE THRUST OF THE DISCUSSION WAS THAT ARGENTINA WILL RESPONSIBLY RESPOND TO USG CONCERN FOR JEHOVA'S WITNESSES, AND THAT GOA EFFORTS WILL GAIN THE APPROVAL OF USG AS WELL AS ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES.

B. (C/NOFORM) SOURCE SEEMED GENUINELY INTERESTED IN HOW USG DEALS WITH THESE TYPES OF PROBLEMS.
Usd does not face this particular problem currently, because

of non-compulsory service (no draft); [Sec. 3.3(b) (1)]

When the draft was in force, usd would normally

place sect members in non-combatant related duties such as

orderlies, administration, and other support activities.

Source took note of this information, and asked if it

would be possible to obtain information on jehovah's witnesses,

such as pamphlets or brochures. promised to try to

fulfill his request.

The discussion reflected the fact that

constructive consideration of the matter is being given

by goa.

This msg amembassy coordinated, decl/rev 8 feb 1985.

bt

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