

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT

~~NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION~~

~~Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classification/Control Markings

This report contains unprocessed information. Plans and/or policies should not be evolved or modified solely on basis of this report.

<p>1. COUNTRY: ARGENTINA (AR)</p> <p>3. TITLE: (U) TERRORISM-Murder of Argentine Diplomat</p> <p>5. DATE OF INFORMATION: 790116-790117</p> <p>7. DATE & PLACE OF ACQUISITION: 790116-790117, Buenos Aires</p> <p>9. ASSESSMENT: SOURCE (b)(3):10 USC 42, INFO (b)(3):10 USC 42</p> <p>11. REQUEST EVALUATION (b)(3):10 USC 42, QPQ (country)</p> <p>14. SOURCE: Amembassy telegram 0436, dtd 790116, and Amembassy Tel. 0444, dtd 790117</p>	<p>2. REPORT NUMBER: (b)(3):10 USC 424</p> <p>4. PROJECT NUMBER: N/A</p> <p>6. DATE OF REPORT: 790209</p> <p>8. REFERENCES: (b)(3):10 USC 424</p> <p>10. ORIGINATOR: (b)(3):10 USC 424;(b)(6)</p> <p>12. PREPARING OFFICER: /</p> <p>13. APPROVING AUTHORITY: (b)(3):10 USC 424;(b)(6)</p>
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15. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

ADVANCE REPORT - ~~FOR DEFENSE USE ONLY~~

D YES ☐
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R
C NO ☒

16. SUMMARY:

(U) This IR forwards two Amembassy telegrams concerning the disappearance of Argentine diplomat, Elena Holmberg.

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

Rec'd RDS-3B/ 27 FEB 79

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17. SUBJECT AND AREA CODES:
1 03225-HR, 1 03220-HR, 2 00400-HR, 2 00400-HR

<p>18. DISTRIBUTION BY ORIGINATOR: DIA (original)</p> <p>DIA (RCI-1) DIA (DB-3E) USCINCSO Quarry hts CZ</p>	<p>19. DOWNGRADING AND DECLASSIFICATION DATA:</p> <p>CLASSIFIED BY: DIAM 58-11, ENCL 3 5 DEC 78 DECLASSIFY ON: 9 FEB 1985</p> <p>DECLASSIFIED IN FULL Authority: EO 13526 DIA FOIA & Declassification Services Offices Date: Oct 19, 2018</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CONFIDENTIAL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Classification/Control Markings</p>	<p>20. ENCLOSURES:</p> <p>2 Enclosures</p> <p>1. Amembassy tel. 0436, DTG 162144Z JAN 79, 1 cy, 6 pgs (C) 2. Amembassy tel. 0444, DTG 171411Z JAN 79, 1 cy, 3 pgs (U)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">MICROFILMED BY RDS-EDS</p>
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21. This IR contains 1 pages.

Date: Oct 19, 2018

162144Z JAN 79

TELEGRAM

..INDICATE

☐ COLLECT

☐ CHARGE TO

FROM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

CLASSIFICATION
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~~12065~~

SECRET

TAGS:

SUBJECT:

ACTION:

INFO :

~~GDS 1/16/85 (THAYER, YVONNE) OR P~~
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THREE ABDUCTIONS HIGHLIGHT POLITICAL COMPLEXITIES

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AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ BUENOS AIRES 0436

AMB
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POL 3
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(b)(3):10 USC 42

(c) SUMMARY: In the past week, two abducted journalists reappeared and one abducted Argentine diplomat was found drowned in a river. No clear explanation was provided for any of the three cases, although Argentine authorities spoke out against the crimes and a judicial investigation has been launched to resolve the diplomat's murder. Kidnapping for ransom, harassment of Chilean residents because of the Beagle dispute, internal political and/or military rivalry, terrorist connections and ^{factional} ~~factious~~ warnings are among rumored motives behind the three cases, pointing up the complexity in assigning blame in this violent and

*****END SUMMARY*****

RAFTED BY:

DL:YThayer:ik

LEARANCES:

DRAFTING DATE

1/16/79

TEL. EXT.

276

CONTENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY:

POL.COINS.WHHallman

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DCM:MChaplin

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CLASSIFICATION

OPTIONAL FORM 153
(Formerly FD-413)
January 1975

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Classification

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still troubled country. END SUMMARY.

1. (U) Argentine diplomat Elena Holmberg, who was kidnapped in downtown Buenos Aires December 20, was found drowned in the Rio Lujan on Jan. 11. Two autopsies confirmed her death by drowning shortly after her abduction. Foreign Minister Pastor strongly condemned the murder and declared that the "culprits must pay" and Federal Judge Marquardt opened an extensive and well-publicized investigation into the case. Holmberg's body lay in state in the Foreign Ministry before her burial Jan. 14, which was attended by Interior Minister Harguindeguy, Holmberg's uncle former President Alejandro Lanusse, and other high ranking officials. Some confusion developed over the identification of the body when the Benavidez cemetery where the body was first deposited sent the wrong body to Buenos Aires for a court-ordered autopsy. Judge Marquardt briefly held 17 persons connected with the removal of the body until it was clarified that Holmberg's body had been mixed up with another drowning victim recovered from Lujan River the same day.

2. (U) Jorge Alberto Fontevicchia, editor of the newsmagazine La Semana, reappeared Jan. 13 after having been kidnapped by three armed men the week before as he was driving home from work. The press

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alluded to a ~~ransom~~ ^{ransom} demand, but no official confirmation of the kidnappers or motive has been made public. Earlier press reports also speculated that the abduction may have been linked to two recent La Semana reports, one allegedly indicating ~~support~~ ^{understanding} for the Sandinista "guerrillas" in Nicaragua and another on fugitive labor leader Casildo Herreras.

3. (U) Chilean journalist Ruben ~~Quesada~~ Gomez Quesada reappeared on the outskirts of Jujuy on Jan. 11, fourteen days after having been abducted from his Salta home. (See Buenos Aires 0147 NOTAL.) Quesada Gomez, a long time Argentine resident, worked for the Salta newspaper El Intransigente.

4. (U) The Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, in a letter to President Videla dated Jan. 11, expressed deep concern about the lack of action and failure to respond to the problem of thousands of people who have disappeared after being kidnapped. The letter expressed condemnation and horror at the kidnapping and death of Elena Holmberg and referred to the then-unexplained kidnappings of Gomez Quesada and Fontevecchia. Attached to the letter was an additional 4,550 signatures to a petition signed by 37,000 people before Christmas concerning disappearance cases and a list of 4,381 documented cases of disappeared persons.

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5. ~~(C)~~ The three cases point up the difficulty in determining the motive and responsibility in what has become the commonplace procedure of abduction and even murder of disparate victims. The Gomez Quesada abduction appears to be a case of blatant harassment of Chilean residents, due to the Beagle Channel controversy, in the tense border provinces of Salta and Jujuy. The abduction of two Chilean residents in Salta effectively provoked the departure of most of the resident Chilean population, according to a source in reftel. (A UNHCR source subsequently told Emboff that the small Chilean refugee population of Salta and Jujuy ~~remains~~ ^{remains} ^{its members} there and/have not been intimidated by local officials.) The joint submission of the dispute to papal mediation has apparently relaxed the situation of Chilean residents in Argentina for the moment.)

6. ~~(C)~~ The Fontevecchia abduction is less clear. Kidnapping for ransom was hinted at in the press, as were suggestions that Fontevecchia provoked official displeasure by publishing stories allegedly favorable to the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua or to indicted fugitive labor leader Casildo Herreras. Privately, it is said Fontevecchia's magazine was supportive of and/or bankrolled by Admiral Massera,

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which sparked Army wrath. Others hint darkly his abduction was to embarrass President Videla. (These last two allegations -- pointing the finger alternatively at the Army and the Navy surface routinely in every ~~abduction~~ ^{abduction} case.) At any rate, the abduction appears to be motivated by political rather than anti-terrorism considerations in a society where abduction and even permanent disappearance have become a routine mechanism for handling political feuds.

7. ~~(C)~~ The Holmberg drowning appears also to fall within the political crime category, with ~~even~~ dark connections with the Massera-Army rivalry. The most often heard rumor is that Holmberg had a serious falling out with Massera political operatives during her tour as Cultural Officer in the Argentine Embassy in Paris. According to this version, Holmberg returned to Buenos Aires from Paris to "blow the whistle" on Massera intimates' appropriation of Embassy image-polishing cultural funds to "buy off" prominent Argentine exiles abroad. Navy use of vast unaccounted-for sums of recuperated Montonero money also figures in these stories. Holmberg's imminent revelation of these shady dealings convinced the Navy to do away with her, according to this plausible enough version.

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The inevitable counterpoint is that the Army did her in after she was persuaded (in a talk with Forn Min Under Secretary Captain Allara) not to give away her damning information against the Navy. Some isolated voices gamely blame the terrorists for killing Holmberg to show that they still enjoy the capability to mount such operations. This version has few adherents, ^{acknowledged} given the ~~acknowledged~~ defeat of leftist terrorists in Argentina and the nature of the abduction. Embassy Paris may be able to provide us with more thoughts on Holmberg's Paris dealings.

8. The Holmberg murder has had a profound and disturbing effect within the Foreign Ministry and the Argentine public. The fact that she was a member of a prominent and well-connected Argentine family, a government official with rightwing tendencies and a strong defender of Argentina's image make her case all the more shocking in a society inured to daily disappearances and deaths of unnamed "Marxist" enemies of the state. Her abduction represents the institutionalization of terrorist tactics for political motives reaching beyond the anti-terrorism campaign and reiterates the urgency of reestablishment of law and an end to extralegal operations in Argentina.

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CASTRO

MC

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19 14: 11

AIRES-

CN 0444
171411ZJAN 79

TELEGRAM

(b)(3):10 USC 424

INDICATE
COLLECT
ACTION INFO FILE

FROM
BUENOS AIRES

CLASSIFICATION: DATA
UNCLASSIFIED

12065
E.O. 11652:
TAGS:
SUBJECT:

ACTION: USINFO WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO: SECSTATE WASHDC
VOA/MIAMI
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS

ICA (2)
AMB
DCM
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SCI

(b)(3):10 USC 424
HILCRP

USICA FOR FGM/RC, AR
SECSTATE FOR ARA/PAF, ARA/ECA, HA
USCINCSO FOR SJ2C-AD

Human Rights Developments.- Press reports Tuesday said 17 people who had been detained in connection with the abduction and assassination of Elena Holmberg were released as police continued to investigate the death of the Argentine career diplomat. CLARIN and HERALD editorials praised the "strong, brave words" from Foreign Minister Pastor at Miss Holmberg's funeral, which "revealed the deep impact (the murder) had made in Argentine society, and the concern of the government about it." Both papers demanded fast action to stop the violence. HERALD said "there have been too many deaths in inexplicable

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Date: Oct 19, 2018

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(b)(3):10 USC 424

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and odious circumstances (read: murders for which leftwing terrorists cannot be held responsible) before this -- and, inexplicably, since the armed forces took power to restore law and order. Yet there is not a single case in which any one has been brought to justice or, even, named." CLARIN declared that the Holmberg case must be "investigated to its ultimate consequences" and "terrorism and assassination... no matter who is responsible, are confronting the authority of the state, which can only be based in the rule of law."

HERALD and CRONICA reported the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights sent a letter to President Videla stating "its deep concern about the lack of reaction and failure to respond to the problem posed by the large number of people who have disappeared after being kidnapped."

The Assembly also sent Videla a list of 4,381

"documented cases of people who disappeared after being kidnapped -- generally by armed men claiming to be

members of the security forces." The story added:

"The Assembly enclosed recent newspaper clippings reporting the finding of 17 bodies... on the beach at Santa Teresita, three alleged terrorists killed in a shoot-out

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in Rosario, another extremist shot in Mar del Plata, 'dubious' deaths in a psychiatric establishment in the Ontiveros colony in Santa Fe, the discovery of three charred bodies at La Salada, in the province of Buenos Aires, and the reported death from poisoning of two prisoners in an unnamed police station." The letter says the Assembly "has no way of knowing whether any of these cases have political implications but they are all of social concern." Also claims that "the kidnapping of people is continuing, although at a slower rate." On the same page, HERALD said the lifeless body of a young woman with her hair shaved was found Monday in the Salado river in Santa Fe.

HERALD Wednesday prints a letter from Mrs. Ana Etcheverry de Ricci in Bahía Blanca who says she is trying to locate her son, aged 21, who was kidnapped in La Plata March 30, 1977. She states "We cannot find any witnesses willing to testify because they are all afraid... My 12 telegrams to President Videla and Interior Minister Harguindeguy remain unanswered." She also says the courts have rejected her 11 habeas corpus requests.

HERALD Wednesday reprinted Stanley Hoffman story "Human rights positive for U.S." from New York Times.

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