

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT

NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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1 Enclosure
1. RSO, Amembassy
Memorandum dtd 780201,
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B2

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21. This IR contains 2 pages.

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BI Sec 1.4C

COMMENT: (C) This report is being forwarded to ensure appropriate dissemination within DIA. The report provides latest estimates of remaining vestiges of the Montonero organization and shows a continuing decrease in numbers and operational capability. It cautions that while terrorist elements are almost wiped out in most areas, they could be rebuilt or augmented by consolidating small elements in one location. Cordoba is cited as an historically unstable area and a place in which the organization could be brought back to life. Montonero morale is considered low with most of the top leadership in exile. They are given the capability of attacking soft targets such as business executives and security forces which do not practice good security practices. They probably will not attack US government officials since the Montoneros feel they are being indirectly supported by strong US policy on human rights. However, possibility of an attack on official US government personnel cannot be dismissed considering fact that operation of terrorist elements lacks strong central control and coordination. Report concludes that terrorism, albeit diminishing, will remain a threat at least through 1978.

[Redacted]

BI Sec 1.4C

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Memorandum

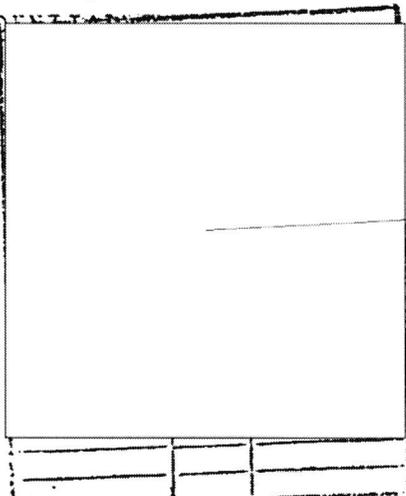
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TO : Chief, A/SY/OPS/FO

FROM : RSO:RJKelly
BUENOS AIRES

B2

SUBJECT: Monthly Status Report for January 1978



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1. Threat Assessment

B1 sec 1.4C

A. During the month of January, RSO met with members of the Argentine security services in order to develop a country-wide security profile for the coming months. The security services estimate that there are between 300-450 Montonero combatants in Argentina. They are presently supported by between 450-600 non-combatants. These figures are down considerably from August when it was estimated there were between 700-900 combatants and between 1,000-2,000 non-combatants. The general disposition of the Montonero columns, presently called detachments, is in the northern and northeastern areas of the country. The major concentrations are in the industrial areas and southern province of Buenos Aires.

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The Montonero forces are deployed as follows. Detachment 5, in the area of Tucuman, is estimated to be composed of 15-20 members. Detachment 7, in the northern-most areas of Formosa and Chaco, is composed of approximately 15-20 members. They have little combative potential and are not considered important. Detachment 9 in the provinces of Mendoza and San Luis, is estimated to have 15-20 members. It has little capacity for rebuilding or strengthening its forces. Detachment 11 in Cordoba has been reduced to 5-10 members and is almost completely destroyed. However, given the importance of Cordoba, it is probable that the Montoneros may send in forces from other locations in order to strengthen their position. Cordoba has a potential capacity for rebuilding the Montonero structure. There has been a long history of unrest and social and economic discord in Cordoba and the workers and students are highly combative. Detachment 14 operates in the area of Santa Fe. This column has between 10-20 members.

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At present it has no significance. Detachment 15 operates in the area of Rosario and has approximately 60-80 members. It is well organized and has good political and military capability. It is involved in labor union activism and also provides logistic support to the Federal Capital-Zone. Detachment 17 functions in Corrientes and Entres Rios, the northeastern area of Argentina. This detachment has approximately 15-20 members. It is completely isolated from the national leadership.

The main Montonero forces are in Buenos Aires province. Detachment 19 functions in northern Buenos Aires province. It had between 100-200 members in August but has been seriously weakened due to successful security service operations against them. They are presently estimated to have no more than 20 members. Their main objective is to preserve what remains of their detachment. Detachment 21 functions in the western area of Buenos Aires province. In August it was estimated they had 90-100 combatants. They are now reported to have only 20-40. The main area of operations is labor unions. To date they have had very little success. Detachment 23 functions in the Federal Capital (the center of Buenos Aires). In August it had 140-150 combatants. The present estimate is 30-50 members. Although it has suffered severe losses over the past several months, it still has some military capability. Detachment 25, in southern Buenos Aires province, is the most important unit. In August its strength was estimated at between 200-210 and presently is has been reduced to 60-80. However, with Rosario and La Plata, it is one of the most important, if not the most important, remaining Montonero detachment. Its main area of work is directed at dissident factory elements in the industrial area of the city. Since August, the Montoneros have been trying to reinforce this detachment without major success. Until recently, Detachment 25 provided the basis of production for the National Military Secretariat and in conjunction with Rosario produced explosives to be used in Montonero operations. However, this capability was recently destroyed. Detachment 27 functions in La Plata which is to the south of Buenos Aires (city). Its strength is estimated at between 40-60 persons. To date, their attempts to rebuild this detachment have not been successful. However, due to a large university population, La Plata has always been a fertile area for Montonero recruitment.

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The Montoneros have suffered a loss of their main logistic bases and there is no evidence that they are manufacturing their own weapons locally, as was the case in the past. Weapons are generally obtained through attacks on police personnel, robbery and sometimes by purchasing them. Their capacity to manufacture explosives has been greatly reduced due to successful security operations in southern Buenos Aires province and in Rosario. Security forces believe that Montonero explosive technicians were sent abroad, presumably to the Middle East. The Montoneros are also very short of funds and members now are responsible for sustaining their own means of support. Their combat morale is very low and desertions are very much on the increase. There is a great sense of insecurity and some resentment against their superior council which is living abroad. Most of their operations chiefs are in Mexico or Brazil and many of the remaining Montoneros in Argentina feel a sense of dislocation from the movement.

Their possibilities of action are limited to soft targets, selective attacks against business executives and management officials, and the security forces when opportune. The main units for these attacks are composed of 3-4 people, now referred to as guerrilla units. Due to their depleted forces, lack of logistics and intelligence support, it is very difficult for them to plan acts against hard targets or even against business executives who follow good security practices. To date, there is no evidence of targeting against U.S. government personnel. There is a general belief that the Montoneros would not target representatives of countries or agencies that have strong human rights programs because the mainstay of Montonero political strategy at the international level depends on the indirect support of these countries/agencies. However, given the lack of direct leadership, coordination and political sophistication at the guerrilla unit level, the possibility of an attack upon a U.S. target of opportunity cannot be dismissed.

The RSO feels that the main terrorist efforts will continue to be directed against members of the business community. These efforts will be diluted due to the weakness, dispersion and lack of communication between their forces. However, these same factors increase the likelihood that some of the guerrilla units will continue to elude total annihilation by the security forces. Consequently, the terrorist problem will be with us on a somewhat diminished scale at least for the rest of the year.

B1 sec 14C