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Amembassy BUENOS AIRES

June 21, 1977

Terrorist Estimates - Argentina

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RSO recently met with senior member of the Federal Security Service. Source stated that the combatant effectiveness of the terrorist organizations has diminished drastically but the political organization is still active and effective and will be for some time. The military element will take at least a year or maybe more before it is completely eliminated. Source stated that when the leadership of the Montoneros left Argentina lower ranking persons were immediately promoted to fill these vacated positions. Major overall leadership roles were assigned to military leaders so that they could successfully run operations in Argentina even while being separated from the leadership in Europe. Many middle echelon personnel have been redirected into recruitment, logistics and other support activities to fill the numerous organizational losses they have suffered. The combat elements have been seriously crippled and there is an urgent need to refill these ranks. Efforts at recruitment are still being directed at the universities and the labor elements. However, the government has made it very difficult for Montoneros to conduct any activities at the university level and their attempts at inducing labor support have not paid dividends. The rank and file of labor find the Montonero dialogue too heavy to handle and the pitch not attractive. Most of the people recruited are still middle class, fairly well educated persons who have unfulfilled psychological needs, or are romantically attracted to terrorist activities or are recruited by their boyfriends or girlfriends.

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Source stated that the main efforts of the Montoneros will be increasingly directed at political objectives. They are expected to increase their efforts on the international front. Presently, the Montonero press secretary is spending several hundred thousand dollars per month in Europe on propaganda efforts. They still have considerable financial resources abroad which they obtained through the kidnapping of executives and through extortion. These funds cannot be used to provide support for operations in Argentina because the conduits that were used for passing the money have almost all been destroyed.

Source stated that militarily the Montoneros will concentrate on attacks on soft targets where little risk is involved and where success will give them some national or international recognition. The attack on Foreign Minister GUZZETTI is a prime example. Additionally, bomb attacks will continue as they can be conducted with little risk. Source stated that all terrorist attacks must be approved in advance. An individual cell, generally five men with a "responsible," does not have authority to initiate independent action. A member who finds a suitable target discusses it with his "responsible" who views all the possible alternatives involved in the attack, i.e. is the target worth it? are there better targets available? He then requires a cell member to obtain additional information concerning the target and the target environment. If the target appears suitable, the action request is then passed to a superior official who weighs the risk and the value of the attack. If he feels the risk is worth the effort, he will then give permission for the cell to act and arrange for support, liaison and backup security for the operation. If it is a particularly valuable target or there is a high risk involved, the final decision may be passed up to the Military Secretariat. Source stated that even though this is a cumbersome procedure, it is the only way the Montoneros can assure that they don't waste their military capability on unproductive attacks. Even the loss or capture of one terrorist is serious. Captured personnel almost invariably provide information on other members of their cells.

Source stated that defections from the Montoneros are numerous. Many are tired of the combat and see it as a dead end. Some are going to the margin - (stepping out of action) - some are surrendering. Those that surrender

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are given good treatment and there are strict regulations as to how they are to be handled. In some cases, efforts are made to turn them around to use against Montoneros. Some of the terrorists who surrender collaborate closely with security forces, interpreting documents, providing information and, in some instances, helping to wage a psychological war. These persons are protected by the Security Service, given a cloak of secrecy and sometimes have even been allowed to leave the country. Source stated that recently it has been very difficult to obtain prisoners during actual operations because in most instances the terrorists are quite prepared to shoot it out with the security forces and they have been taking much larger doses of cyanide before capture. The security forces previously had some success using antedotes to the cyanide but now the dose is so strong that there is no way to prevent death.

Source stated there has been a recent trend for the Marxist based organizations in Argentina to try to cooperate with each other. The ERP would like to control all Marxist groups in the country and while they are more intelligent and were better organized, they have never enjoyed broad based support among the masses. The Montoneros had the cloak of Peronism to hide behind, generated much more public support and are stronger politically. The ERP does not have the Peronist political movement to hide behind. Source stated there is little likelihood of any meaningful long range cooperation between the two. However, they expect all terrorist elements to direct principle efforts at creating an international incident at the World Soccer Cup in 1978. This would create worldwide attention. This is a main objective. Source stated attacks on diplomatic personnel are extremely unlikely because the terrorists feel the U.S. position on human rights helps them and any attack on U.S. government people would be counter-productive. Source stated that recently there have been strong efforts to prevent excesses in repression of subversive activities. However, as the country is involved in a battle for survival, the security forces will not let anything stand in the way of effectively eliminating the terrorist threat as the struggle is a matter of life and death.

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