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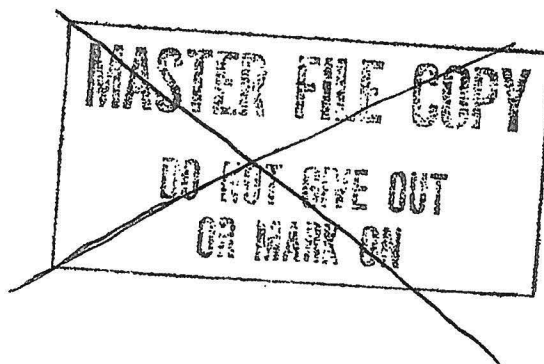
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#129

Galtieri of Argentina: Decisive and Unyielding

An Intelligence Memorandum

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*Information available as of 17 April 1982
has been used in the preparation of this report.*

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Galtieri of Argentina:
Decisive and Unyielding [REDACTED]

Summary

President Leopoldo Galtieri of Argentina has staked his political survival and Argentina's national honor on the outcome of the Falkland Islands crisis. Fiercely nationalistic, the 56-year-old general values firmness and decisiveness [REDACTED]

Fueled by strong popular support, Galtieri can be expected to stand firm on Argentina's demands, despite the fragile nature of his military-civilian coalition and concern about Argentine ability to defeat the British fleet. Knowledge that anything less than a clear-cut military or diplomatic victory would lead to his fall will intensify his determination.

The above information is [REDACTED]

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Intense Nationalist

Throughout his career, Lt. Gen. Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri has led with decisiveness, firmness, and determination. The 56-year-old President of Argentina, Commander in Chief of the Army, and member of the ruling three-man junta, is highly motivated—both by nationalistic sentiment and psychological predisposition—to act forcefully in asserting Argentine territorial claims. The Argentine seizure of the Falkland Islands fulfilled both a long-held nationalistic goal and the need to unite the divided Argentine populace behind the unpopular military government.

Galtieri has long been among those in the military who strongly support the return of the Falkland Islands, the Georgias, the South Sandwich Islands, and the Beagle Channel. He has stressed Argentine sovereignty in the South Atlantic and the country's historic rights to the islands in this area. In June 1981, in obvious reference to the Falkland Islands and to the possible existence of offshore oil there, he said: "we are not inclined to permit the smallest interference in the search for and exploitation of the wealth of our continental shelf from those who agree to return to us islands which are Argentine by historic heritage and legitimate right." Galtieri also believes that the military establishment must assert these rights and guarantee Argentine sovereignty. "It is the Army's *raison d'être*," he has said, "to consolidate the internal security of the country, its borders, and geopolitical future."

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Despite tepid international backing, Galtieri is convinced of the rightness of the Argentine position, and, although he would accept a diplomatic solution, he will not back away from his demands for sovereignty over the islands. He knows that to show a lack of resolve or determination in the face of the approaching British fleet or to accept a negotiated settlement that omitted control of the Falkland Islands would cost him his office. Moreover, potential opposition from within his fragile coalition of military and civilian leaders prevents him from accepting anything less than a clear-cut victory. [REDACTED]

**Authoritarian
Background**

Born into the working class, Galtieri no doubt acquired his strong respect for authority through his Roman Catholic training and his deep nationalistic pride from his community. These values drove Galtieri to look beyond his humble origins to develop a grand vision for his future. At 17 he chose to enter the Army because it was the only channel for upward mobility for him. Moreover, it symbolized the grandeur of all that was best in the Argentine national character. [REDACTED]

In 1943 Galtieri entered the Argentine Military Academy, Argentina's West Point. There he was taught to view the military as the guarantor of the integrity of the nation and was imbued with nationalistic, anti-Communist, and pro-Church attitudes. He identified with the military establishment and developed the personal ties that would direct his career development. [REDACTED]

Galtieri's career received significant boosts as a result of his relationship with former presidents and junta members Rafael Videla and Roberto Viola. In the late 1970s Galtieri followed closely in the footsteps of Viola, often serving as Viola's deputy and then succeeding him. It was Viola who selected Galtieri to succeed him as a junta member and Commander in Chief of the Army. [REDACTED]

Galtieri supported Viola in his bid for the presidency, and by this act, apparently felt that his debts to his mentor had been paid in full. Dismayed with Viola's indecision and temporizing, and apparently convinced that he was the better man for the job, Galtieri worked behind the scenes to undermine his former mentor. When Viola was incapacitated by a heart ailment in November 1981, Galtieri made several unsuccessful attempts as junta spokesman to obtain Viola's resignation. Faced by Viola's intransigence, the junta met in December, deposed Viola, and named Galtieri to complete Viola's term. [REDACTED]

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**Decision Is Strength—
Indecision Is Weakness**

Galtieri prides himself on his ability to be decisive and to take action. His iron will and unbending determination are hallmarks of his character. He equates indecision, temporizing, and compromise with weakness. As commander of the II Army Corps during 1975, Galtieri vigorously conducted a successful campaign against the well-entrenched leftist insurgency in Rosario Province.

[REDACTED] Galtieri found Viola so indecisive and ineffective that he participated in his ouster by the junta in 1981. [REDACTED]

Shortly after assuming the presidency on 22 December 1981, Galtieri stated that he intended to approach the solution of Argentine problems as he would winning a war, fighting on a series of fronts: some minor, others major. Describing his decisionmaking process, Galtieri stated, "I listen, I mediate, I solve, I order!" [REDACTED]

Galtieri has moved decisively on several fronts, working to stabilize the economy, moving ahead with plans for political liberalization, and adopting a more aggressive foreign policy. He appointed civilians to key cabinet and gubernatorial posts and a liberal economist to head the expanded Ministry of Economy. The minister is directly responsible for reducing Argentina's soaring inflation rate and revitalizing the economy. To obtain backing for his program, the President met with political and labor leaders, promising them that he would implement a new political party statute and other measures aimed at restoring a more democratic government. He moved closer to the United States [REDACTED]

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To assure implementation of his programs, Galtieri, in an unprecedented move, retained his post as Commander in Chief of the Army and as member of the ruling three-man junta when he became President. He believes that without both posts, he would become the "fourth man" on the junta, acting as head of the government but not having any real power. He currently intends to extend both his presidential term beyond 1984, when Viola's term would have ended, and his military term beyond December 1982, when his current term expires. Because they believe that Galtieri is the only man capable of implementing needed programs, senior officers in all three services thus far back him and support his efforts to avoid mandatory military retirement. [REDACTED]

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Galtieri's economic stabilization programs have, however, generated considerable opposition from labor and political leaders, as well as from many businessmen and industrialists who would suffer from the reforms. The President has responded by repressing some illegal demonstrations, although allowing others, and by maintaining a dialogue with his opponents, even if unfruitful. [REDACTED]



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Hard Taskmaster

Priding himself on being decisive and firm, Galtieri is harshly critical of those who do not display these attributes. He is a hard worker and expects the same of those around him. He spends long hours at the office, arriving around 7:30 a.m. and remaining there often until after 2:00 a.m. His closest advisers and friends are military men who meet Galtieri's standards for leadership, such as Secretary General of the Presidency, Gen. Hector Iglesias, Minister of the Interior, Gen. Alfredo Saint Jean, and Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Jose Vaquero. These aides are not "yes men," and appear comfortable in Galtieri's presence and ready to offer advice when asked. [REDACTED]

A Commanding Presence

Blonde, blue-eyed and handsome, the 6'3" Galtieri has been described by some high-ranking US Government officials as "majestic." He is proud of his striking appearance [REDACTED] He can project warmth and friendship as the occasion warrants. An affable and engaging conversationalist, he uses his hands to gesture and touch in the Latin style. In conversation with Americans he does not hesitate to use his limited English but frequently lapses into Spanish. [REDACTED]

Viola once called Galtieri "a *caudillo*," the acme of heroic leadership in Latin America—the man on horseback. In line with his *caudillo* image, he cares for his people and acts quickly to protect them—a quality that accounts for much of the devotion he receives from his military followers. [REDACTED]

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Galtieri is a heavy drinker, sometimes consuming four or more scotches before lunch. When drinking he becomes more outspoken and argumentative and is given to occasional angry tirades. Galtieri is also a heavy smoker which, combined with his heavy drinking, heightens the risk to his health. He suffered a heart attack in 1973 at age 47 from which he appears to have recovered. The heart attack has not deterred Galtieri from continuing his intense, hard-driving ways. [REDACTED]

Galtieri would like to play a major role in global politics. His past success in combating insurgency and potential success in the Falklands against a British presence in Latin America would achieve a long-sought respect and glory for Argentina and unify the country behind Galtieri. Such a result would also provide an expanding, influential role for Argentina in Latin America. [REDACTED]

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