

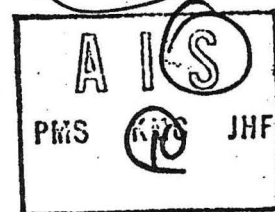


INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

#4-77



Office of the Secretary of Defense

Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS

Date: 16 APR 2018 Authority: EO 13526

Declassify: X Deny in Full: _____

Declassify in Part: _____

Reason: _____

MDR: 17 -M- 2211

+5 USC
§ 552

In reply refer to:

I-23531/75

8 JUL 1975

NO

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Staff Reduction in MilGroup Argentina -- ACTION MEMORANDUM

(S) On 4 April 1975, by message at Tab B, which you approved, State and DOD agreed to proceed with a temporary reduction in MilGroup Argentina from 20 to 13 to lessen US personnel exposure to terrorist activity. This reduction followed a previous drawdown from 29 to 20, which occurred in July 1974 for the same security reasons.

(S) This issue had been the subject of earlier correspondence from Dep Sec State. Dep Sec Def, on 9 December 1974 (Tab C), did not concur with the reduction from 20 to 13 and proposed that the removal of dependents from Argentina should be considered before making further reductions of official US personnel. However, Dep Sec State on two occasions in March (Tabs D and E) reaffirmed State's position on the reduction which resulted in approval of Tab B by Defense.

(S) On 13 November 1974, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, forwarded a memorandum for the Dep Sec Def wherein he strongly recommended (Tab F) that there be no further reductions below 20. Since State/Defense agreement to the MilGroup reduction of 20 to 13, the JCS by memorandum of 23 June 1975 (Tab G) have again voiced strong opposition to the reduction to 13, and have requested your reconsideration of the Defense position on this matter. The JCS note the following: (1) the Argentine Air Force Commander and the Argentine Navy Deputy Commander for Policy and Strategy have taken serious exception to these reductions; (2) the Argentine Air Force Commanding General has stated that he will be compelled to ask for total withdrawal of the US Air Force Mission if the current reduction is implemented; (3) the authorized strength of 27 US military personnel is based upon valid mission requirements;

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SEC DEF CONTR No. X-

Argentina 09/13

8 Dec 75

WAG

Classified by DAI/MSH
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION SCHEDULE OF
EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652. AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED
AT TWO YEAR INTERVALS. DECLASSIFIED ON 11-11-00

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(4) the "temporary" reduction to 20 personnel diminished mission capability significantly, particularly in the opinion of the Argentine military; (5) to reduce MilGroup strength further to less than 50 per cent of authorized strength degrades mission effectiveness to an unsatisfactory level; (6) the Argentines may draw erroneous conclusions about overall US policy between Argentina and Brazil -- the latter has 40 US military personnel with three general officers; and (7) the JCS are concerned that the US MilGroup reductions will be perceived as a weakening of US resolve in the face of a threat.

(S) The Defense Intelligence Agency has reported (Tab H) that the terrorist threat to US personnel in Argentina will probably continue at a high level. Argentinian terrorist groups retain the capability to conduct terrorist acts, most probably kidnappings as opposed to murders of US personnel. Reductions in the number of US personnel would immeasurably enhance the security; however, from a strict security standpoint, consideration should be given to removing dependents from Argentina -- not principals. If dependents are removed and principals then relocated into a more confined area, needed security coverage in response to the threat could be materially increased at an overall reduction in cost. Additionally, by removing dependents in lieu of principals, the Argentine military views would be satisfied, and the terrorist targeting possibilities would be reduced.

(S) In view of the strong position taken by the JCS and the likely negative political reaction of the Argentina military, recommend you sign the memorandum at Tab A to the Secretary of State requesting that the reduction in MilGroup strength from 20 to 13 be reversed, that US military presence in Argentina be returned to authorized strength as soon as the situation permits, and that consideration be given to the removal of US dependents.

(U) Director, DSAA concurs *RM Fish*.

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Robert Ellsworth
Robert Ellsworth
Assistant Secretary of Defense
International Security Affairs

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Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
Secretary of State
Washington, D. C. 20520

Dear Henry,

(S) US presence in Argentina was substantially reduced last year in an attempt to dilute the threat by terrorist groups to the security of US officials. As a part of this effort, the number of military personnel assigned to the US MilGroup was temporarily reduced from 29 to 20 in July 1974. Additionally, in April 1975, COMUSMILGP, Argentina was downgraded from a general officer to a colonel in order to comply with Public Law 94-11. Recently, at the urging of the US Ambassador, a further reduction of US MilGroup personnel, from 20 to 13, was directed.

(S) I have reevaluated the situation in light of current developments and believe that reduction of the US MilGroup to 13 will be counterproductive to US interests in Argentina and will damage our ongoing efforts to renew confidence in US resolve around the world. The currently authorized MilGroup strength of 27 US military personnel is based upon mission requirements, which have not changed. The "temporary" reduction to 20 personnel has diminished mission capability, particularly in the opinion of the Argentine military. To reduce MilGroup strength to less than 50 per cent of authorized strength unquestionably degrades mission effectiveness to an unsatisfactory level. Furthermore, at a time when the Argentine military is growing more suspicious of Brazil's aspirations for greater military power, both conventional and nuclear, the contrast between the US military manning level in Brazil (40 -- including three general officers) and the reduction to 13 (with no general officer) in Argentina may cause the Argentines to draw erroneous conclusions about overall US policy toward the two countries.

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(S) The Argentine Minister of Defense has not objected to the "temporary" reduction to only 13 US military personnel in the MilGroup. However, this attitude is not shared by other key Argentine military leaders. The Commanding General of the Argentine Air Force, General Fautario, has stated that this latest reduction would compel him to request the withdrawal of the US Air Force Mission. General Fautario cites the bilateral mission agreement between the United States and Argentina, which this unilateral reduction clearly violates. Articles 3 and 7 of the US-Argentina Mission Agreement require that any variation in personnel strength in the Mission must be "mutually agreed upon between the Department of Air Force and the Ministry of Aeronautics." (It should be remembered that General Fautario led the effort to retain the US MilGroup last year when the former Army commander had called for its expulsion.) We would also anticipate negative reactions to further reductions by the commanders of the Argentine Army and Navy.

(S) The Defense Intelligence Agency has advised that the terrorist threat to US personnel in Argentina will probably continue at a high level. Intelligence reporting confirms that the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) is known to be currently targeting official US personnel. Additionally, more public support is likely to be generated for the terrorists as a result of the deteriorating economic situation in country. In spite of recent setbacks at the hands of government security forces, the two major Argentinian terrorist groups retain the capability to conduct terrorist acts, most probably kidnappings as opposed to murders of US personnel, as they seek to attain their long range goals. The threat to US personnel is real, and reductions in the number of possible targets would immeasurably enhance the security of US personnel. However, the continued presence of official US dependents in country has a direct effect on this matter. From a strict security standpoint, consideration should be given to removing dependents from the country -- not principals. If dependents are removed and principals then relocated into a more confined area, security coverage in response to the threat could be materially increased at an overall reduction in cost, the Argentine military views would be satisfied, mission tasks could be more effectively accomplished and the terrorist targeting possibilities would be reduced.

(S) I must conclude that the withdrawal of seven additional US military members from Argentina at this time would not serve the best interests of the United States. It is in violation of our mission agreements with Argentina

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and clearly places the continued presence of the US MilGroup in jeopardy at a time when Argentina's internal security situation and US interests warrant a continued US military presence. The security posture of US military personnel could be significantly increased with the removal of dependents from the country.

(S) I would appreciate your assistance in reversing the reduction action now in progress, retaining at least 20 military personnel in the MilGroup, and effecting a return, as soon as conditions permit, to the authorized manning level of 27 US military personnel.

Sincerely,

Distribution:

Orig + 2 - Addressee

cy - SecDef

DepSecDef

ASD (ISA)

PDASD/ISA

DASD/ISA (SA)

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Prep'd by: CWDick/rro/7Jul75
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