

**437. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (McFarlane) to President Reagan<sup>1</sup>**

Washington, December 2, 1983

SUBJECT

Argentine Certification

*Issue*

Whether to certify to Congress that Argentina has made significant improvements in human rights.

*Facts*

With the recent elections, Argentina's human rights situation has improved dramatically and certification will signal our strong support for the return of democracy. Certification would be effective upon installation of the Alfonsin government on December 10. The U.K. and Chile will be especially concerned about the Argentine certification. A memo from George Shultz (Tab A) provides a recommended certification scenario. The first step would be a letter (Tab B) from you to Mrs. Thatcher. Cap Weinberger opposes certification (Tab C).

*Discussion*

Cap Weinberger's concerns focus on the reaction in the U.K. On balance, the strategy outlined by George Shultz, in my view, adequately addresses Cap's concerns. Moreover, the question is not whether but when we will certify Argentina. The game plan includes, *inter alia*, Congressional consultation in advance, and dispatching Dick Walters to explain our position to President Pinochet.<sup>2</sup> I recommend approval, and OMB concurs.

*Recommendation*

That you approve the strategy for Argentine certification (Tab A) and sign the proposed letter to Mrs. Thatcher (Tab B).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Latin America/Central, Argentina (11/20/1983-12/31/1983). Secret. Sent for action. Prepared by Lilac. A copy was sent to Bush. A stamped notation at the top of the memorandum indicates that Reagan saw it. The memorandum was found attached to a December 5 memorandum from McFarlane to Shultz informing him that Reagan approved Shultz's recommendation on Argentine certification.

<sup>2</sup> Walters met with Pinochet in Santiago twice on December 12. A record of their first conversation was transmitted by Walters in telegram 7139 from Santiago, December 12. (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D830731-0491) A summary of their second meeting was transmitted by the Embassy in telegram 7184 from Santiago, December 14. (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D830737-0184)

<sup>3</sup> Reagan approved the recommendation.

## Tab A

### Memorandum From Secretary of State Shultz to President Reagan<sup>4</sup>

Washington, November 28, 1983

#### SUBJECT

Argentine Certification

I believe you should certify to Congress that Argentina has made significant improvements in human rights upon installation of the Alfonsin government on December 10, with public announcement of our intention December 7. The human rights situation there has improved dramatically, and certification will signal our strong support for the return of democracy in Argentina. The Argentine Armed Forces would prefer that certification take place while they are still in power. Our assessment is that, considering all the factors involved, certification should take effect upon installation of the new government. In our announcement of this decision, we will note the contribution of the Bignone government on successfully carrying out the return to democracy.

The UK and Chile are concerned about the political repercussions of certification, but their biggest fear is that subsequent arms sales to Argentina will threaten peace in the region. While certification makes US arms sales to Argentina once again possible it would not result in large, immediate weapons sales. The Argentines have bought heavily in Europe and are short of funds. In addition, President-elect Alfonsin is committed to slashing the military budget. We would handle any new requests on a case-by-case basis with particular attention to the effect of each sale on regional stability.

Mrs. Thatcher has spoken out very strongly against arms sales to Argentina. Until the government of Argentina announces an end to hostilities over the Falklands, we would consult closely with the British on arms sales requests. In her November 14 Guildhall speech, Thatcher stressed that the US is the ultimate guarantor of UK security and that

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<sup>4</sup> Secret.

occasional differences cannot obscure our shared values.<sup>5</sup> This is a retreat from her earlier tough rhetoric and should not be ignored.

As a first step I have attached a letter from you to Mrs. Thatcher informing her of our scenario for certification. General Pinochet of Chile will also be disturbed. We plan to take steps to reassure him of our desire for close relations, even though we cannot now justify certification of Chile. If you approve we will send the letter to Mrs. Thatcher, begin consultations with Congress and shortly send you letters for President Pinochet, President Bignone and the actual certification document for your signature. Thatcher has asked that we delay certification, at least until the inauguration, to help her deal with domestic political pressures.

## **Tab B**

### **Letter From President Reagan to British Prime Minister Thatcher<sup>6</sup>**

Washington, December 2, 1983

Dear Margaret:

As you know, Argentina has made steady progress in strengthening its protection of human rights. The fair, open and honest elections on October 30 are the latest manifestation of this progress. When President-elect Alfonsín takes office on December 10, Argentina will have completed its return to democracy.

In view of this and other relevant factors, I will be certifying to the U.S. Congress that Argentina has made significant progress in human rights and that making Argentina eligible for arms transfers is in the U.S. national interest. Our announcement will be made on December 7, just before the U.S. delegation arrives in Buenos Aires for the

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<sup>5</sup> Reference is to Thatcher's November 14 speech in the City of London's Guildhall in which she "recalled that Europe had been spared the horrors of war for 40 years, and that it is the strength of the [NATO] Alliance, of which Britain is a loyal member, that keeps the peace today. 'Friends, like families, differ at times,' she added, 'but nothing alters these basic truths—that the United States is our ultimate defensive shield, the guarantor of Western freedom, and the best hope for the world's oppressed. To that conviction we hold. We are confident that any differences that may occur will always be infinitely less important than the purposes and loyalties which bind us together.'" (Telegram 24618 from London, November 15; Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, D830667-0404)

<sup>6</sup> No classification marking.

inauguration. Certification will be effective upon installation of the new government.

I know this announcement will be a delicate question in Great Britain. However, as I suggested when we last met, and as subsequent consultations between our two governments have indicated, it is now appropriate and accurate to certify that Argentina has made significant progress in human rights.

We will be informing U.S. Congressional leaders and Presidents Bignone and Pinochet of our decision on December 6. Because of our special relationship and the importance you personally place on this question, I am notifying you first of our decision.

The decision was based on the following considerations. During the past year, the Government of Argentina has made significant progress in complying with internationally recognized principles of human rights. Argentina's human rights performance now meets the test for certification required by U.S. law.

Certification is not equivalent to arms sales. We will evaluate each request very carefully on a case-by-case basis, taking into account any threat that may be posed to peace in the region. We would consult closely with your government on any major sales.

Significant sales are not expected. Argentina has replaced most of its losses from a variety of sources and President-elect Alfonsín is committed to a significant reduction of the military budget. Moreover, Argentina's difficult economic situation will not support major arms acquisitions. In any event, should Argentina so desire, arms are readily available from other sources, including the Soviet Union.

In my view, our normalization of relations with Argentina will be in the interests of the United States and Great Britain. Certification will help strengthen U.S. influence with Argentina and enable us to work more effectively to assure regional stability. The climate for dialogue and negotiation will be improved.

I sincerely appreciate your eloquent and timely statement at the Guildhall. I wholeheartedly agree with your assessment of the special relationship between our two nations and the importance of our shared interests and purposes.

Margaret, be assured that I continue to place the highest value on your personal advice, counsel and friendship.

With warm wishes,  
Sincerely,

**Ron**

## Tab C

### Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Weinberger to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (McFarlane)<sup>7</sup>

Washington, November 28, 1983

#### SUBJECT

Argentine Certification (U)

(C) I do not believe we should issue the certification at this time for a number of reasons:

(1) As you know, Prime Minister Thatcher has repeatedly expressed her concern about certification and arms sales, insisting that US arms for Argentina would be "the single most difficult thing for me." Despite our careful and academic explanations, in the minds of the British general public, certification is considered to be a license for unrestricted US arms sales to the Argentine military. Mrs. Thatcher firmly believes that even a short delay of a few months after the new civilian government takes control in Argentina would be helpful in gaining UK public acceptance of Argentine certification.

(2) None of us know whether the new government in Argentina will show any marked improvement in either human rights or in its attitude to a new invasion of the Falklands. This government has not yet even taken office.

(3) With the INF deployments underway in the UK, this is a time of increased sensitivity in US/UK relations and has far-reaching consequences for the NATO Alliance.

(4) I also fear that certification will add fuel to the smouldering unhappiness that the British have (quite erroneously) about our invasion of Grenada. We need to be sensitive to the fact that in the present politico-military environment, Argentine certification puts an unnecessary strain on an already troubled relationship.

(5) Nor would certification, without arms sales, help our relationship with Argentina.

(6) Finally, there are other countries who have helped us more, such as Chile, with far greater claim to certification now than Argentina.

(C) I understand Secretary Shultz has sent a memorandum to the President recommending that he certify to Congress that Argentina

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<sup>7</sup> Secret.

has made progress in human rights and deserves to be certified. Argentina may make some progress in human rights, but they haven't yet. Indeed there are even reports that their military will not permit the new government to take office. Our need for continued UK cooperation in both the INF deployments and the reconstruction of a viable Grenada, and on many other matters, far outweigh the US interest in such an early certification of Argentina.

(U) Request you convey my concerns to the President before he makes his decision on Argentine certification.

**Cap**