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RELEASE IN FULL

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ACTION ARA-16

INFO OCT-00 ADS-00 AID-07 INR-10 EUR-12 SS-10 OPR-02  
CIAE-00 EB-08 DODE-00 H-01 NSCE-00 NSAE-00 COME-00  
SSO-00 SY-05 HA-06 L-03 LAB-04 TRSE-00 PM-09  
PA-01 CCO-00 STR-13 SIL-01 INRE-00 ANAE-00 A-02  
ICAE-00 SYE-00 SP-02 OC-06 SR-04 SPRS-02 /124 W  
-----142043 311717Z /40

O 311611Z MAR 82  
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2960  
INFO AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY  
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN  
USCINCLANT NORFOLK VA  
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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CINCSO FOR INTAFF

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

E.O. 12065: GDS 3/31/88 (KEANE, JOHN F.) OR-P  
TAGS: ELAB, ASEC, PINT, AR  
SUBJECT: GOA CRUSHES CGT DEMONSTRATIONS

REF: BUENOS AIRES 1815

1. (C) SUMMARY: WITH AN MASSIVE DISPLAY OF FORCE  
THE GOVERNMENT FRUSTRATED SCHEDULED RALLIES BY THE  
GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOR (CGT) AND CRUSHED A  
SERIES OF RELATED DEMONSTRATIONS. THE MINISTRY OF  
INTERIOR ANNOUNCED THAT 400 PERSONS WERE DETAINED,  
AS OF 8:00 PM ON MARCH 30, BUT CONSERVATIVE PRESS  
ESTIMATES ARE THAT THE TOTAL NUMBER DETAINED EXCEED  
1,000. THE INTERIOR MINISTRY SAID THAT THOSE

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DETAINED WOULD BE RELEASED ONCE THEY ARE IDENTIFIED.  
SEVERAL PEOPLE REPORTEDLY WERE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED BY GUNSHOT AT  
DISTURBANCES IN MENDOZA. THE GOVERNMENT ISSUED A  
STATEMENT CLAIMING THAT THE POPULATION "DID NOT  
SUPPORT" THE PROTEST, BUT WE THINK THIS IS A MIS-  
LEADING INTERPRETATION OF WHAT HAPPENED. MOREOVER,  
WE THINK THE GOA WAS TARNISHED BY THE EXCESSIVE ZEAL  
OF ITS POLICE. THE FACT THAT THERE WERE SIGNIFICANT  
DEMONSTRATIONS IN SEVERAL IMPORTANT CITIES MAY  
ENCOURAGE LOABOR TO TRY IT AGAIN.

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Marvin  
Russell, Senior Reviewer

IF REPORTS CIRCULATING MORNING OF MARCH 31 THAT THERE WAS ONE OR MORE DEATHS IN THE DEMONSTRATIONS ARE CORRECT, THERE COULD BE ADDITIONAL DISTURBANCES SOON. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) THE SECURITY FORCES USED A MAJOR SHOW OF STRENGTH AND OFTEN EXCESSIVE FORCE TO PREVENT RALLIES AND DISPERSE DEMONSTRATORS IN THE CITIES OF BUENOS AIRES, MENDOZA, TUCUMAN, CORDOBA AND ROSARIO ON MARCH 30. BETWEEN 1,000 AND 2,000 PEOPLE WERE DETAINED, ACCORDING TO SEVERAL ESTIMATES, INCLUDING SOME OF THE CGT LEADERSHIP A NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS, AND LEONARDO PEREZ ESQUIVEL, SON OF NOBEL PRIZE WINNER PEREZ ESQUIVEL. HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS HAVE DEMANDED THE RELEASE OF ALL DETAINEES. A NUMBER OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN INJURED. IN BUENOS AIRES, SOME PEOPLE WERE SHOT WITH RUBBER BULLETS FROM CLOSE RANGE, SUSTAINING WOUNDS, ANE PERSON WAS RUN OVER BY A POLICE CAR. IN THE CITY OF MENDOZA, SEVERAL PERSONS WERE REPORTEDLY INJURED INCLUDING SOME SERIOUSLY WOUNDED BY GUNSHOT, AT DISTURBANCES. AS LEAST ONE OF THE INJURED IS REPORTED IN SERIOUS CONDITION AND THERE ARE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT HE DIED LAST NIGHT. THE GOVERNMENT LAMENTED  
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THE OCCURRENCE, BLAMED IT ON "INTEMPERANCE" AND SAID IT WAS BEING INVESTIGATED. THE GOVERNOR OF MENDOZA PROVINCE, BONIFACIO CEJUELA, IS RUMORED TO HAVE SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION.

3. (U) IN BUENOS AIRES, THE PLAZA DE MAYO WAS CORDONED OFF IN EVERY DIRECTION AND SUBWAYS AND ROAD TRANSPORT WERE INTERRUPTED IN A 12 SQ. BLOCK AREA NEAR THE PLAZA. MOST STORES AND OFFICES WERE CLOSED. A DOZEN OR MORE POLICEMEN WERE STATIONED ON EVERY CORNER DOWNTOWN, WHILE ON THE KEY ARTERIES SUCH AS 9TH OF JULY AVENUE, THEY WERE BACKED UP BY FALANXES OF HORSE-MOUNTED POLICE, WATER CANNON, AND SCORES OF LARGE, ARMORED POLICE VANS WHICH CRUISED CONTINUOUSLY DISPERSING PEOPLE WITH TEAR GAS.

4. (U) PEOPLE MILLING IN THE STREETS NOT FAR FROM THE PLAZO DE MAYO DID NOT APPEAR TO EMBOFFS TO BE PREDOMINANTLY THOSE ONE WOULD EXPECT AT A CGT RALLY.

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-----144174 311820Z /41

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 1835

THE MIX SEEMED TO BE THE NORMAL ONE FOUND DOWNTOWN  
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EVENING RUSH HOUR -- BUSINESSMEN,  
STORE EMPLOYEES, PUBLIC SERVANTS, SHOPPERS, LOCAL RESIDENTS, BLUE  
COLLAR WORKERS, STUDENTS AND CURIOUS ONLOOKERS AND THRILL-  
SEEKERS. THERE WERE EVEN A FAIR NUMBER OF SENIOR CITIZENS  
WHO SAID THEY WERE THERE TO PROTEST THEIR STRAIGHTENED  
CIRCUMSTANCES DERIVING FROM CURRENT ECONOMIC POLICY.

5. (U) AS PEOPLE STOOD AROUND IN SMALL BUNCHES AT  
STREET CORNERS OR IN PARKS, A FEW INDIVIDUALS SPREAD  
LEAFLETS, MOSTLY PERONIST, SANG PERONIST MARCHES OR

SHOUTED SLOGANS SUCH AS "PEACE, BREAD AND WORK," THE POLICE CHARGED THESE GROUPS OR DISPERSED THEM WITH TEAR GAS. POLICE ZEAL EXCEEDED THEIR JUDGMENT, AND THEY OFTEN TURNED A RATHER INDIFFERENT GATHERING OF BYSTANDERS INTO A HOSTILE CROWD.

6. (U) NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, PERONISTS AND OTHER  
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POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE DENOUNCED THE POLICE REPRESSION. THE FIVE-PARTY "MULTIPARTIDARIA" DECLARED THAT "THE CITY APPEARS TO BE UNDER SIEGE AND OCCUPIED BY POLICE FORCES."

7. (C) COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT PREVENTED MAJOR DEMONSTRATIONS AND PERHAPS AVERTED GREATER VIOLENCE THAN THAT WHICH OCCURRED, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE ENORMOUS DISPLAY OF FORCE AND HARSH REPRESSION WERE ONLY PARTIALLY EFFECTIVE, AND APPARENTLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. YESTERDAY'S EVENTS SUGGEST THAT THE RALLIES, AT LEAST THE ONE IN BUENOS AIRES, WOULD HAVE DRAWN A RESPECTABLE CROWD, HAD THE GOVERNMENT NOT INTERFERED. THE REPRESSION PROBABLY TURNED MANY WHO WERE INDIFFERENT INTO HOSTILITY TOWARD THE GOA. THUS, THE CGT GARNERED SYMPATHETIC PUBLICITY AND PROBABLY GAINED GROUND ON THE CNT-20 LABOR CONFEDERATION IN THEIR COMPETITION FOR ARGENTINE AND INTERNATIONAL LABOR SUPPORT. WITHIN THE CGT, HOWEVER, THE RELATIVELY HARD-LINERS ARE IN A STRONGER POSITION NOW. THE CGT MAY ALSO THINK IT IS IN A BETTER BARGAINING POSITION WITH THE GOVERNMENT, NOT ONLY ON ECONOMIC POLICY BUT ON THEIR BREAD-AND-BUTTER ISSUES, THE PACE AND FORM OF TRADE UNION NORMALIZATION AND THE FATE OF TRADE UNION CONTROL OF ITS SOCIAL PROJECTS, THE UNIONS' PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF INCOME.

8. (C) POLICE VIOLENCE HAS TARNISHED THE GOVERNMENT AND, IF IT TURNS OUT THAT ONE OR MORE DEMONSTRATORS WAS KILLED, OR DIES SUBSEQUENTLY OF WOUNDS AS A RESULT OF POLICE REPRESSION, THERE MAY BE MORE TROUBLE SOON. IN ANY EVENT, THE CGT AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WITH GRIEVANCES  
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MAY BE ENCOURAGED BY THE TURNOUT AND THE GOA'S ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO RELEASE DETAINED PERSONS QUICKLY. WE BEGIN TO SEE MORE LABOR AND OTHER SOCIAL STRIFE. AT A MINIMUM, WE WONDER IF THE DEMONSTRATORS

AND POLICE EXCESSES MAY HAVE SHORTENED THE PERIOD FOR THE  
ARMED FORCES ECONOMIC CZAR ROBERTO ALEMANN'S AUSTERITY  
PROGRAM TO SHOW RESULTS. SHLAUDEMANN

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