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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

9 October 1981

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MEMORANDUM

Argentine Assistance to BoliviaEconomic

Figures on Argentine economic assistance to Bolivia from July 1980 to the present are very tightly held by Buenos Aires officialdom both because of Argentina's deep political involvement in Bolivia's internal affairs and the manner in which Buenos Aires has provided the assistance. Moreover, although terms for the assistance are unavailable, it appears Bolivia will be unable to make repayment.

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The Argentines were one of the major financial backers of the 17 July 1980 coup by General Garcia Meza; in September 1980, the Argentines had contributed \$200 million to help finance the coup effort.

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This grant reportedly was entirely separate from subsequent Argentine assistance through balance of payments loans and subsidized purchases of Bolivian gas, major vehicles Buenos Aires has used to support the military regime in La Paz.

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This memorandum was prepared at the request of the Office of Intelligence Support of the Treasury Department. It contains information available as of 9 October 1981. It was prepared by the Office of African and Latin American Analysis. Questions and comments should be addressed to Chief, South America Division, Office of African and Latin American Analysis.

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Military

Argentina maintains a unique military assistance and advisory group in Bolivia that serves as a conduit for Argentine policy input and was instrumental in bringing General Garcia Meza to power. It operates independently of the Argentine Ambassador. [REDACTED]

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The MAAG [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] may have been considerably larger in the summer of 1980 at the time of the Garcia Meza coup. Aside from its political function, it also has provided training for Bolivian officers in anti-subversion intelligence techniques, with a

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heavy emphasis on "interrogation" (read "torture"). Argentina also provides standardized training courses to personnel from all three Bolivian services, but it has supplied little in the way of military hardware.

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Political-Diplomatic Support

Argentina appears prepared to support any government in Bolivia as long as it is a right-wing military dictatorship. Although it lobbied hard to obtain a normalization of relations between the US and the Garcia Meza government, it is not wedded to any specific personality. Rather, it will accept any alternative Bolivian government that will safeguard Argentina's interests by securing normal diplomatic relations with the US while implementing hard-line policies at home. It thus has urged the US to recognize the present Torrelío regime.

Motivation

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Military leaders in Buenos Aires perceive that political liberalization in neighboring Bolivia could lead to a left-wing government that might provide sanctuary for Montoneros or other terrorist groups bent on destabilizing Argentina. Thus, their current commitment, which includes substantial economic assistance that they can ill afford, is supportive of this logic. It is not, as they seek to portray it, a warm espousal of US policy objectives. For example, although they may pay lipservice to interdicting Bolivian drug traffic, it does not cause them major concern except insofar as this trade is an impediment to US recognition of and economic assistance to Bolivia.

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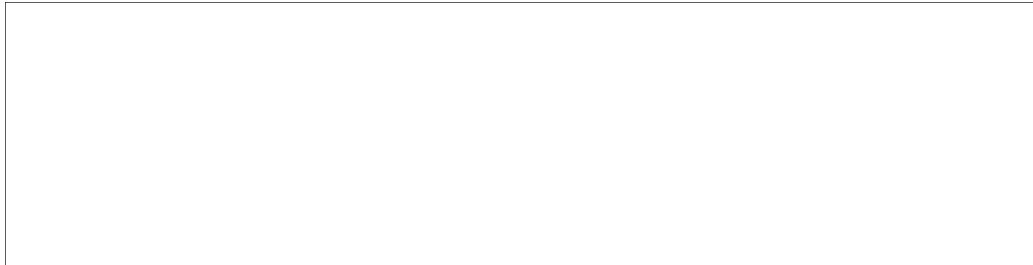
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[redacted]**BOLIVIA: The Argentine Connection**

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Despite repeated disavowals by Argentine leaders of complicity in the Bolivian coup, there is persuasive evidence that since last spring members of Argentina's military mission in La Paz have been deeply involved. [redacted]

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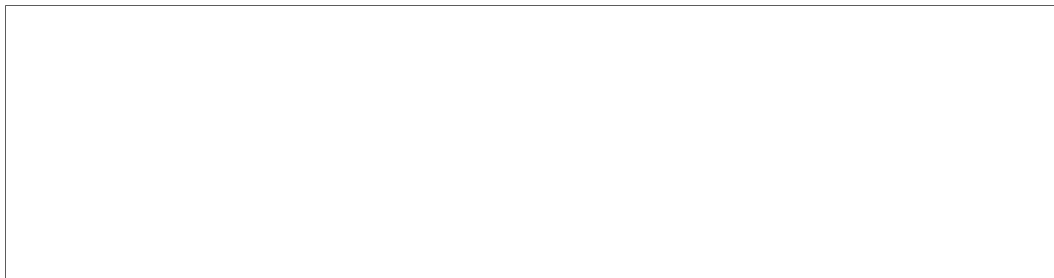
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There also are indications that once the coup plans were set, the Argentine Government may have had second thoughts about its involvement. Strong pressure from the US in May and June could have led Buenos Aires to instruct its Ambassador and military attaches in La Paz not to intervene in Bolivian affairs. From that point until the coup was actually carried out, however, Argentine intervention probably was not essential. [redacted]

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Argentine officers are reportedly again acting as advisers to members of the new Bolivian Government and are participating in the "interrogation" of some 2,000 political prisoners. They also are supplying food and weapons to the Bolivian military. [redacted]

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[redacted]

26 July 1980

ARGENTINA: Support of Bolivian Junta

Argentine leaders appear determined to prop up the military regime in Bolivia, even at the risk of jeopardizing recent improvements in relations with the US. [REDACTED] 3.5(c)

President Videla has for the first time publicly expressed sympathy for the new ruling group led by General Garcia Meza and implied that Argentina would provide food aid and financial credits. These are the latest in a series of supportive actions taken by the Argentines, whose military mission was deeply involved in planning the recent coup and presently is helping the junta consolidate its position. [REDACTED] 3.5(c)

The Argentines allegedly aided the coup plotters because they feared that a left-of-center civilian government headed by leading presidential candidate Siles would prove weak and ineffectual and lead to a Communist takeover. They insist that their own national security interests were directly threatened because a left-leaning Bolivia might have become a safehaven for Argentine terrorists. There is no evidence to support such a claim but it is consistent with Argentine apprehensions of creeping Communist penetration of the Western hemisphere.

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Argentina's recognition of the new regime on 28 July was followed by the postponement of a visit to Buenos Aires by a high-ranking US official--a visit eagerly sought by the military government as a continuation of high-level bilateral meetings begun last January to promote better understanding and cooperation. [REDACTED] 3.5(c)

Although President Videla may send a personal emissary to Washington to discuss the Bolivian problem, there is little reason to expect the Argentines to show flexibility. Though there may be minor differences of opinion in the Argentine government hierarchy, those officers who count believe strongly that in Bolivia at present there is no civilian alternative to a rightwing military junta.

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