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**Jorge Luis BATLLE Ibanez**

(Phonetic: BAH-zhay)

**URUGUAY***President (since 2000)**Addressed as: Mr. President* (b)(3)

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Lawyer and lifelong Colorado Party (PC) politician Jorge Batlle has struggled to improve Uruguay's troubled economy and to carve out a role for his small country in international affairs during his term, which ends in March 2005. (He is constitutionally barred from serving two consecutive terms.) Batlle's approval rating is below 10 percent, largely because of the country's worst economic performance in a century. Public opinion polls (b)(1) indicate that most Uruguayans have lost confidence (b)(3) in his ability to manage the economy (b)(3)

(b)(1) despite his difficulties, Batlle remains committed to implementing his market-friendly (b)(1) policies. He has sought closer relations with the (b)(3) United States to reduce Uruguay's vulnerability to economic gyrations in neighboring Argentina and Brazil, gain greater market access for Uruguayan products, and boost his own political prestige. Batlle has publicly acknowledged the US role in "rescuing" Uruguay by providing a bridge loan and support in international financial institutions for emergency financing in 2002. (b)(1) (b)(3)

(b)(1)  
(b)(3)**Under the Gun at Home** (b)(3)

Despite Batlle's desire for a larger international role and his willingness to tackle the economy's inefficiencies, entrenched political resistance to reforming Uruguay's popular social welfare system has stymied his efforts. After some early successes in pushing legislation through Congress, Batlle's efforts to privatize key state-owned enterprises have stalled in the face of opposition from across the political spectrum. (b)(3)

**Proud of Role as "Cowboy Number Two"**

(b)(3)

Batlle strongly supports the US antiterrorist position. He effusively praised President Bush's 2001 speech to the UN General Assembly session on counterterrorism and dubbed himself "Cowboy Number Two" to President Bush's "Cowboy Number One" to demonstrate his support. Batlle has increased his country's manpower contributions to international peacekeeping operations with the stated aim of freeing US soldiers from non-terrorism-related duties; in fact, Uruguay is the largest contributor of all the Americas to UN security operations. (b)(3)

(b)(1)  
(b)(3)

(b)(3)

(b)(1) His failure to consult with his former coalition partner, the National Party, contributed to the party's (b)(1) removal of its ministers from the cabinet in (b)(3)2 (b)(3)

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(b)(3)

Batlle was the first Latin American leader to call for the legalization of illicit drugs. The President claims that legalization would lower drug prices and damage the livelihood of narcotraffickers. In addition, he has openly chastised the US State Department for suggesting that money launderers exploit Uruguay's banking system. He asserts that Washington should focus on its own problems, alleging that the United States has the world's largest money-laundering system because of high US drug consumption. (b)(1) (b)(3)

#### Hedging His Bets on Mercosur

Batlle often expresses frustration with the slow pace of regional economic integration. He pushes his Mercosur counterparts to implement more "harmonious" macroeconomic policies that would bolster the bloc's ability to negotiate with the United

States, Europe, and other regional trade coalitions. He has been wary of Brazil's foot-dragging on negotiations for a Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement. Batlle also has complained that Brazil is politicizing Mercosur and attempting to control policymaking for all of South America. (b)(1) (b)(3)

#### Career and Personal Data

Batlle was born on 25 October 1927 in Montevideo. Several of his ancestors were presidents of Uruguay, including his late father, President (1947-51) Luis Batlle Berres. Batlle holds a law degree from the University of the Republic of Uruguay. He began his political career in 1945, when he joined List 15—a minority faction of the PC. From 1958 to 1967 he served in the Chamber of Deputies. Batlle ran unsuccessfully for the presidency in 1966, 1971, 1989, and 1994. During Uruguay's military dictatorship (1973-85), he was a representative of the PC in the Triumvirate, a clandestine party. After the restoration of civilian rule, he served as a senator from 1985 to 1989. Batlle was president of the PC from 1990 until (b)(1) when he was reelected senator, a post he held until his 1999 presidential win. (b)(3)

Batlle is married to his second wife, Maria de las Mercedes Menafrá; he has a daughter and a son from his first marriage and three grandchildren.

he enjoys reading, walking, and spending time in the countryside. Batlle has a passion for classic cars and is an avid fan of rowing and Nacional—one of the top soccer teams in Uruguay. The President, who is an agnostic, has received the Jerusalem prize from the World Zionist Organization for his religious tolerance. In addition to his native Spanish, he speaks English, German, French, and Portuguese fluently. (b)(3)