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TEXT

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PHUM, SOCI, CJAN, IT, GM, AR
COMBINE: COMPLETE

SUBJECT: EX-NAZI ERICH PRIEBKE DETAINED IN ARGENTINA;
MAY BE EXTRADITED TO ITALY

SUMMARY

1. ARGENTINE POLICE PLACED 81-YEAR OLD ERICH PRIEBKE UNDER HOUSE ARREST MAY 9. PRIEBKE IS ALLEGED TO BE A FORMER NAZI OFFICIAL WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE 1944 KILLING OF 335 ITALIANS AT THE ARDEATINE CAVES IN ROME. GERMAN-BORN, HE HAS BEEN A LONG-TIME RESIDENT OF THE SOUTHERN RESORT CITY OF BARILOCHE. HIS ARREST WAS A PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE. THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS INFORMED THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT THAT IT WILL REQUEST PRIEBKE'S EXTRADITION. ARGENTINA IS LIKELY TO

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GRANT THE REQUEST IF PRIEBKE NEVER BECAME AN ARGENTINE CITIZEN. THE DISCOVERY OF WHAT MAY BE YET ANOTHER EX-NAZI IN ARGENTINA, WHICH HAS RECEIVED WIDE LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY, HAS GIVEN RISE TO DEMANDS BY THE LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY THAT THE GOA TAKE STEPS TO ROOT OUT ANY REMAINING EX-NAZIS IN ARGENTINA. END SUMMARY

EX-NAZI DETAINED

2. ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL MEDIA, A FEDERAL JUDGE IN BARILOCHE ORDERED THE PREVENTATIVE ARREST OF ERICH PRIEBKE, A RESIDENT OF BARILOCHE SINCE 1968, THE OWNER OF A PRIVATE CLINIC AND SCHOOL THERE, AND A RESPECTED MEMBER OF THE GERMAN COMMUNITY. PRIEBKE IS ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE 1944 MURDER OF 335 ITALIANS AND OTHERS -- INCLUDING 75 JEWS WHO WERE SCHEDULED TO BE TRANSPORTED TO CONCENTRATION CAMPS -- AT THE ARDEATINE CAVES IN ROME. ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS ACCOUNTS, PRIEBKE WAS SECOND-IN-COMMAND TO THE NOTORIOUS SS COMMANDER HERBERT KAPPLER, WHO WAS CONVICTED TO A LIFE TERM FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE ARDEANTINE MASSACRE, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY ESCAPED PRISON. DUE TO PRIEBKE'S ADVANCED AGE AND POOR HEALTH, HE IS BEING HELD UNDER HOUSE ARREST UNTIL THE EXTRADITION FORMALITIES ARE COMPLETED. PRIEBKE'S WHEREABOUTS WERE DISCOVERED BY SIMON WIESENTHAL, WHO FIRST PICKED UP HIS TRAIL IN 1989. PRIEBKE'S CASE RECEIVED RENEWED ATTENTION FOLLOWING A RECENT INTERVIEW BY ABC NEWS' SAM DONALDSON.

ARGENTINA LIKELY TO GRANT EXTRADITION

3. THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS SUBMITTED A NOTE VERBALE TO THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT INFORMING THE ARGENTINES OF ITS INTENTION TO FORMALLY REQUEST PRIEBKE'S EXTRADITION. THE OUTGOING ITALIAN GOVERNMENT APPROVED THE EXTRADITION REQUEST AND THE PAPERS ARE NOW IN TRANSIT BETWEEN ROME AND BUENOS AIRES, ACCORDING TO THE ITALIAN EMBASSY HERE. THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS ASKED THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT TO INSURE THAT PRIEBKE DOES NOT DISAPPEAR WHILE ARGENTINA CONSIDERS THE REQUEST FROM ROME, ACCORDING TO LOCAL MEDIA. ARGENTINE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER FERNANDO PETRELLA TOLD THE PRESS MAY 9 THAT THE GOA WILL ACT ON THE ITALIAN REQUEST AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, ONCE IT HAS BEEN FORMALIZED THROUGH OFFICIAL CHANNELS. HE DESCRIBED THE GOA'S ROLE AS "PASSIVE" AND "AUTOMATIC," ONCE THE EXTRADITION REQUEST HAS BEEN RECEIVED. PETRELLA ALSO TOLD THE PRESS, IN A SUBSEQUENT INTERVIEW, THAT THE GOA IS SEARCHING ITS IMMIGRATION ARCHIVES TO DETERMINE WHEN AND HOW PRIEBKE ARRIVED IN ARGENTINA.

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A MODEL CITIZEN

4. ARGENTINES ARE ASKING THEMSELVES HOW A FORMER NAZI WAR CRIMINAL COULD LIVE FOR 46 YEARS IN BARILOCHE, WHERE HE BECAME ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY AFFAIRS, WITHOUT HIS PAST BEING KNOWN. PRIEBKE TOLD A TV INTERVIEWER, WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES, THAT HE WAS "ANGUISHED" BY THE REVELATIONS ABOUT HIS PAST, AND THAT HE WAS "REPENTANT." HE INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT HE KILLED ONLY ONE PERSON IN ITALY IN 1944, THAT HE HAD TRAVELED TWICE TO ITALY WHERE HE MET WITH FORMER NAZI COLLEAGUES, AND THAT HE HAS VISITED THE U.S. 16 TIMES TO VISIT A SON WHO IS A NATURALIZED U.S. CITIZEN. (NOTE: CONSULAR RECORDS REVEAL THAT PRIEBKE FIRST RECEIVED A FOUR-YEAR U.S. NON-IMMIGRANT VISA IN 1976, AND THAT HE RECEIVED ONE FOUR-YEAR RENEWAL. IN 1984, HOWEVER, HIS APPLICATION FOR A VISA WAS DENIED, SINCE HIS NAME WAS DETERMINED TO BE A "PARTICIPANT IN NAZI PERSECUTIONS OR GENOCIDE." IN 1989 HE WAS AGAIN DENIED. HE COULD HAVE TRAVELED TO THE U.S. AFTER 1991 UNDER THE VISA WAIVER PROGRAM, SINCE HE STILL HOLDS A GERMAN PASSPORT. END NOTE) RELATED TO THE ARREST OF PRIEBKE, THE LOCAL PRESS ALSO SPECULATES ON THE PRESENCE IN SOUTHERN ARGENTINA OF ANOTHER FORMER NAZI, REINHARD KOOPS, WHO ALLEGEDLY USES THE NAME JUAN MAHLER AND WHO MAY HAVE GONE INTO HIDING IN NEIGHBORING CHILE. KOOPS/MAHLER ALLEGEDLY WAS INVOLVED IN THE BRIEF NAZI OCCUPATION OF ALBANIA.

CALL FOR ACTION

5. THE PRESIDENT OF DAIA, AN INFLUENTIAL UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION OF ARGENTINE JEWISH GROUPS, HAS CALLED ON THE GOA TO ENACT LEGISLATION THAT WILL FACILITATE THE WORK OF ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE SIMON WIESENTHAL FOUNDATION IN FERRETING OUT FORMER NAZIS IN ARGENTINA. DAIA PRESIDENT RUBEN BERAJA TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE ORGANIZATION'S PROPOSAL WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO PRESIDENT MENEM ON MAY 10. BERAJA CALLED THE PROPOSAL A "CONTRIBUTION," NOT "PRESSURE," AND DESCRIBED PRIEBKE AS "NOT JUST A BUREAUCRAT, BUT THE THIRD-RANKING NAZI OFFICIAL IN ITALY" AT THE TIME.

COMMENT

6. FOR THE ITALIAN EMBASSY HERE IN ARGENTINA, THE CASE "DROPPED FROM THE SKY." THE ITALIANS SAY THEY HAD NO PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF PRIEBKE'S PRESENCE IN ARGENTINA. ALTHOUGH PRIEBKE HAS ARGENTINE IDENTITY DOCUMENTS, IT IS STILL UNCLEAR WHETHER OR NOT HE EVER BECAME A NATURALIZED ARGENTINE CITIZEN. THE NIV HE

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RECEIVED IN 1976 WAS IN A GERMAN PASSPORT. THE GERMAN
EMBASSY HERE HAS CONFIRMED THAT PRIEBKE STILL HOLDS
GERMAN CITIZENSHIP. IF HE SUBSEQUENTLY ACQUIRED
ARGENTINE CITIZENSHIP, IT WOULD DIFFICULT UNDER
ARGENTINE LAW FOR THE GOA TO EXTRADITE HIM. THE
ITALIAN EMBASSY HAS TOLD US THAT IT WOULD COMPLICATED
THEIR EFFORTS TO BRING HIM TO ROME.

CHEEK

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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Page 4