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SUBJECT: JEWISH COMMUNITY VIEWS ON THE AMIA
INVESTIGATION AND THE MENEM ADMINISTRATION

1. SUMMARY: A RECOGNIZED SPOKESMAN FOR THE ARGENTINE
JEWISH COMMUNITY DESCRIBED RELATIONS WITH SENIOR GOA
OFFICIALS AS QUITE GOOD, THOUGHT THE AMIA BOMBING
INVESTIGATIVE MAGISTRATE WAS BEING GIVEN ADEQUATE
RESOURCES, BUT NOTED THAT INSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESSES
HAVE IMPEDED PROGRESS ON THE INVESTIGATION. HE
REQUESTED USG SUPPORT FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT
THE JEWISH COMMUNITY'S VIEWS ON THE CASE TO REGIONAL

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ANTI-TERRORISM CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST. END SUMMARY.

2. ON JUNE 2, DURING CODEL KOLBE'S VISIT TO ARGENTINA, CONGRESSMAN ELIOT ENGEL AND HIS WIFE PAID A COURTESY CALL ON RUBEN BERAJA, PRESIDENT OF THE DELEGATION OF JEWISH ARGENTINE ASSOCIATIONS (DAIA) AND THE UNOFFICIAL BUT AUTHORITATIVE VOICE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN BUENOS AIRES. THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE DAIA WAS PRESENT. ADDITIONAL U.S. PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED ROGER NORIEGA, A STAFFER FROM THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, ARA/BSC DIRECTOR DONALD PLANTY, AND LABATT RANDOLPH MARCUS.

THE AMIA BOMBING INVESTIGATION

3. BERAJA SAID THAT IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TERRORIST ATTACK ON THE AMIA (JEWISH ARGENTINE MUTUAL ASSOCIATION), THERE WAS AN OUTPOURING OF SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT ON DOWN. HOWEVER, SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, BECAUSE OF ITS CLAMOR FOR AN EFFECTIVE INVESTIGATION, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY RECEIVED VEILED THREATS TO TONE DOWN ITS PROTEST; BERAJA CITED TV NEWS REPORTER BERNARDO NEUSTADT, A MENEM CRONY, AS A PROMINENT FIGURE WHO WARNED THE COMMUNITY "NOT TO WAKE THE DORMANT BEAST," I.E., ANTI-SEMITISM. BERAJA HAD COMPLAINED DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT MENEM, AND SUCH PUBLIC COMMENTS CEASED. BERAJA ALSO CRITICIZED AMBASSADOR GRANILLO CAMPO WHO, FOLLOWING HIS APPEARANCE BEFORE A U.S. CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE LAST YEAR, LEFT THE ROOM AS BERAJA WAS ABOUT TO MAKE HIS OWN STATEMENT.

4. AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL, BERAJA THOUGHT THE GOA LEADERSHIP HAS DEMONSTRATED THE WILL TO ACHIEVE RESULTS AND THAT JUDGE GALEANO HAS BEEN GIVEN AMPLE RESOURCES TO UNDERTAKE A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION. UNFORTUNATELY, AFFIRMATIONS OF WILL WERE NOT MATCHED BY CONCRETE PROGRESS. THE INVESTIGATION HAS BEEN HINDERED BY THE INEFFICIENT AND POORLY EQUIPPED STRUCTURE OF THE POLICE FORCES. THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM, TOO, WAS SLOW AND CUMBERSOME. NEVERTHELESS, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY WILL CONTINUE TO PRESSURE THE GOA TO KEEP THE INVESTIGATION ON TRACK. ANY LESSENING OF THIS PRESSURE, BERAJA FEARED, AND THE INVESTIGATION COULD FADE AWAY.

5. BERAJA ALSO EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE FORTHCOMING REGIONAL ANTI-TERRORISM CONFERENCE. HE SAID THAT THE DAIA WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A PRESENTATION AT THE MEETING AND HOPED FOR USG SUPPORT. ON JUNE 14, HE MENTIONED HIS INTEREST TO THE PRESS.

6. BERAJA ALSO ASKED CONGRESSMAN ENGEL FOR INFORMATION ON THE PROPOSALS AND DEBATE OVER NEW U.S.

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ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION. ON THE LEBANESE DETAINED IN PARAGUAY, HE THOUGHT THEY PROBABLY HAD LINKS WITH HIZBALLAH BUT DOUBTED THEIR CONNECTION WITH THE AMIA ATTACK.

7. SINCE THE AMIA BOMBING, BERAJA SAID, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HAS ADOPTED A SERIES OF MEASURES TO IMPROVE SECURITY FOR ITS MEMBERS AND ITS FACILITIES. THEY HAVE DEVELOPED CIVIL DEFENSE TEAMS AND ACTION PLANS IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES. THE DAIA IS IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE POLICE, THE ARGENTINE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, AND JUDGE GALEANO.

8. BERAJA EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR U.S. SUPPORT AND THE TANGIBLE ASSISTANCE THE USG HAS PROVIDED SINCE THE BOMBING. HE IS AWARE OF ATA ASSISTANCE AND THOUGHT IT PARTICULARLY VALUABLE THAT SOME TRAINING PROGRAMS INCLUDED A HUMAN RIGHTS COMPONENT WHICH IS SO IMPORTANT HERE.

- THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN ARGENTINA

9. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AND THE MENEM ADMINISTRATION ARE GOOD, ACCORDING TO BERAJA. "MENEM IS SENSITIVE TO OUR CONCERNS AND IS FAVORABLY DISPOSED TO US." MENEM, HE ADDED, ATTRIBUTES HIS POSITIVE VIEW TO THE FACT THAT HE WAS NURSED BY A JEWISH MOTHER AS A BABY. "OF COURSE, HE IS ALSO A GOOD SEDUCER," BERAJA COMMENTED HALF-JOKINGLY.

10. THE JEWISH COMMUNITY TODAY NUMBERS BETWEEN 250,000 AND 300,000. ABOUT 80 PERCENT LIVE IN THE BUENOS AIRES AREA. ANTI-SEMITISM, BERAJA NOTED, IS NO LONGER FASHIONABLE IN ARGENTINA -- A VERY REAL IMPROVEMENT IN ATTITUDES SINCE THE MID-40'S. THE DAIA, WHICH WAS FOUNDED 60 YEARS AGO TO COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM AND PRO-NAZI SENTIMENT, IS NOW LOBBYING THE ARGENTINE CONGRESS TO ESTABLISH A SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE OFFICE TO TRACK DOWN EX-NAZIS STILL LIVING IN ARGENTINA. THE PROPOSAL HAS BEEN PASSED BY THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES AND AWAITS SENATE ACTION.

COMMENT

11. THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HAS DECLINED IN SIZE IN RECENT YEARS, MAINLY DUE TO INTERMARRIAGE. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS HIGHLY ACTIVE POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY, AND CULTURALLY. JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS HAVE NEVER BEEN AS FREE TO MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD AS NOW. ARGENTINA'S RETURN TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT HAS CREATED THE ATMOSPHERE FOR THIS, AND MENEM'S PRO-ISRAEL STANCE HAS ALSO BEEN A MAJOR FACTOR.

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JEWISH-ARGENTINE LEADERS ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE
SOLIDARITY DEMONSTRATED BY THE U.S. HAS BEEN VITAL IN
HELPING RESTORE THE MORALE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY
AFTER THE 1992 AND 1994 TERRORIST BOMBINGS.
CHEEK

ADMIN
END OF MESSAGE

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