

Extrait du El Correo

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Dictature argentine : documents US Déclassifiés

- Notre Amérique - Terrorisme d'Etat - Argentine -

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Les documents US déclassifiés éclairent sur les exactions de la dictature argentine, le débat interne à la maison blanche sous Carter sur la politique des droits de l'homme. Kissinger visant à décrédibiliser le message sur les droits de l'homme en Argentine. 1078 pages d'archives issues principalement de la bibliothèque présidentielle de Carter, publiées par l'Administration Obama comme un important « Act of Declassified Diplomacy »

En Septembre 1980, l'ambassade des Etats-Unis à Buenos Aires a transmis une dépêche détaillée de six pages, titrée « Tactique de la disparition » au Département d'Etat des Etats-Unis d'Amérique. Bien que le régime militaire en Argentine avait déjà gagné la « guerre sale », il n'allait pas cesser d'utiliser « la disparition » comme sa forme préférée de répression, informait la dépêche. (Alors qu'au moins 22 000 personnes avaient disparu durant les trois premières années de la dictature). La lecture de cette dépêche montre que l'ambassade sur place à Buenos Aires a alerté le département d'Etat de l'ampleur des exactions, et suggérait d'associer le Vatican dans ce qu'elle jugeait un combat difficile pour inciter les militaires argentins à abandonner cette tactique.

Ces documents qui incluent des mémoires de la Maison Blanche montrent les désaccords internes entre le *National Security Council* (NSC) et le Département d'Etat sur la façon d'implanter le souhait du président Carter de faire des droits de l'homme une priorité de la politique étrangère US. Ils relatent la rencontre entre Videla et Carter, l'intervention de Carter pour faire libérer l'homme de presse Jacobo Timerman. Mais aussi les efforts de Kissinger pour contrer les visées de Carter dans ce domaine, alors qu'il avait plus que soutenu les dictatures d'Amérique Latine.

La révélation de ces documents, forts intéressants, ne doit pas cacher la vraie face de la politique des Etats-Unis de l'époque et ses finalités, et encore moins la dédouaner, même si sur place à Buenos Aires ou dans l'administration de Washington des voix se sont élevées, comme ils le montrent.
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Cette première tranche devrait être suivie de la déclassification de milliers de documents de la CIA, FBI et du Département de la Défense, dans les prochains mois. Seule la publication de tous les documents classés de cette sinistre période permettra de faire le jour sur toutes les responsabilités, sans une vision parcellaire. [El Correo de la Diaspora](#)

[« Declassified Diplomacy » : Argentina](#)

- ▶ Declassified U.S. Records Highlight Argentine Military Abuses, Internal Carter White House Debate over Human Rights Policy
- ▶ Kissinger Sought to Undermine Human Rights Message in Argentina
1,078 Pages of Records, mostly from Carter Presidential Library, Published

Obama Administration Credited with Important « Act of Declassified Diplomacy »

Document 1

White House, « President Carter/President Videla Bilateral, » Confidential, Memorandum of Conversation, September 9, 1977

Source : President Obama Argentina Declassification Project



Document 1 - White House. President-Carter & Videla bilateralseptember 9, 1977

During the signing of the Panama Canal treaties in Washington, President Jimmy Carter and General Jorge Videla sit down for a bilateral meeting at the White House to discuss « issues of common concern. » Carter urges Argentina to sign the Tlatelolco and NPT nuclear agreements. The president applauds Argentina's recent « achievements » in dealing with the problem of terrorism. But at the same time, « In the privacy of the room, » Carter suggests, he felt he could « express our concerns about the state of human rights in Argentina. » Carter presents Videla with a document prepared by a Washington human rights group on the undue detainment of 3,000 people, among them newspaper editor Jacobo Timerman, whose case Carter specifically raises with Videla. Though Videla acknowledges the list, he defends the detention of Timerman, blames « the terrorists » for disappearances in Argentina, and whitewashes the other « undesirable consequences » of war against subversion. Videla « stressed he would do his utmost to reestablish order and control, and meanwhile he needed the understanding of Argentina's friends, especially natural friends such as the United States. » According to the memorandum of conversation, « the meeting terminated with expressions of mutual goodwill. »

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Contributed by : National Security Archive, National Security Archive

Document 2

Office of the Vice President, « Memorandum of Conversation, Ambassador Gardner's Residence, Rome, Italy », Secret, Memorandum, September 5, 1978

Source : President Obama Argentina Declassification Project



Document 02. Office of the Vice President, « Memorandum of Conversation, Ambassador Gardner's

Residence, Rome, Italy », Secret, Memorandum, September 5, 1978

In a follow-up meeting with General Jorge Videla a year later to underscore U.S. concerns about human rights, Vice President Walter Mondale sees the junta leader in Rome, Italy. « We want good relations but there are strains now », Mondale states, and « human rights are a central concern ». Videla responds by accusing Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights Patricia Derian of sabotaging relations and intervening in Argentina's domestic affairs. He complains that even though U.S.-Argentine relations are made up of political, cultural and economic interactions, « now our relations are focused solely on human rights ». Mondale suggests that « if we can get on the road to progress in human rights, this whole other vista will open ». The vice president uses the advent of new human rights legislation, known as the « Humphrey-Kennedy Amendment », as leverage to compel Videla to take steps to improve human rights conditions. He presses Videla to finally agree to a visit by the OAS Commission on Human Rights, and offers to send Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Viron Vaky on an official trip to Buenos Aires before the Commission comes.

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Contributed by : National Security Archive, National Security Archive

Document 3

Department of State, « Henry Kissinger Visit to Argentina », Confidential, Cable, June 27, 1978

Source : President Obama Argentina Declassification Project



Document 3. Department of State, « Henry Kissinger Visit to Argentina », Confidential, Cable, June 27, 1978

The U.S. ambassador to Argentina, Raul Castro, reports on former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's visit to Buenos Aires. Ostensibly, Kissinger has been invited to watch the World Cup, but the Embassy suggests that the military junta is more interested in using him to defend their human rights record. In a meeting with General Jorge Videla, Kissinger claims that « Americans are not aware of Argentine history nor of its struggle against terrorism. » Kissinger goes on to applaud Argentina's efforts in combating terrorism. Ambassador Castro expresses concern « that Kissinger's repeated high praise for Argentina's action in wiping out terrorism and his stress on the importance of Argentina may have gone to some considerable extent to his hosts' heads. Despite his disclaimers that the methods used in fighting terrorism must not be perpetuated, there is some danger that Argentines may use Kissinger's laudatory statements as justification for hardening their human rights stance. »

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Document 4

National Security Council, « Kissinger on Human Rights in Argentina and Latin America », Confidential, Cable, July 11, 1978

Source : President Obama Argentina Declassification Project



Document 4. National Security Council, « Kissinger on Human Rights in Argentina and Latin America », Confidential, Cable, July 11, 1978

In this National Security Council memorandum, NSC staff member Robert Pastor expresses concern for Kissinger's « apparent desire » to undercut President Carter's human rights policy during a recent visit to Buenos Aires. Pastor describes Kissinger's praise of the Argentine « campaign against terrorism » as « the music the Argentine government was longing to hear » and suggests that Kissinger is preparing a speech « to speak out against the Carter Administration's human rights policy ». He advises national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski to arrange for Pastor to debrief Kissinger on his trip « to see whether he is really concerned enough about our human rights policy to launch a campaign [against it] and inform him of the effectiveness of our human rights policy in Latin America ».

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Document 5

National Security Council, « U.S. Policy to Argentina », Secret, Memorandum, March 5, 1979



Document 5 - National Security Council, « U.S. Policy to Argentina », Secret, Memorandum, March 5, 1979

In a policy memo to national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, his deputy, Robert Pastor, calls the human rights situation in Argentina « the worst in the hemisphere. » « Increasingly, » Pastor's report states, « he people who disappear have vague associations with the 'political left' rather than with terrorism. » However, Pastor advises that Brzezinski intervene to prevent the State Department from increasing pressure and sanctions against the Argentine military. « When we take punitive steps toward Argentina, » he argues for caution, « we not only enrage the right-wing ideologues, we also arouse the business sector and the media in the U.S. » Instead, he advocates a continuation of the current « cool and correct posture » and using diplomatic communications to encourage the regime « to clean up its act. »

Another NSC deputy, Jessica Matthews, suggests that in the near term « nothing will work » unless domestic conditions change in Argentina. She advocates a « consistency » in overall U.S. policy toward human rights which would require Washington to vote « no » on multilateral loans to the regime.

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Document 6

White House, « U.S. Policy to Argentina », Secret, Memorandum, March 20, 1979



Documents 6 - White House, « U.S. Policy to Argentina », Secret, Memorandum, March 20, 1979

At the request of national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, Robert Pastor drafts a memo to be given to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance urging him to « reconsider your position on Argentina ». The memo, to be sent over Brzezinski's signature, presents Pastor's arguments that increasing sanctions on Argentina for gross violations of human rights is not « the most effective approach » to curtail abuses. Instead, the memo argues that « our policy should remain cool and correct » because « punitive » steps will « invite criticism from moderate and conservative sectors in the U.S. » and not be « effective » to change the behavior of the Argentine military. Brzezinski's letter suggests that even if Vance wants to pursue a tougher policy he delay implementation until after the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights visits Argentina and issues a credible report on the human rights situation there. Fearing leaks, Pastor recommends in a cover memo that Brzezinski share these arguments with Vance over the phone or in a face-to-face meeting rather than sending the memo to the State Department.

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Document 7

White House, « Jacobo Timerman », Confidential, Memorandum, November 2, 1979



Document 7 - White House, « Jacobo Timerman », Confidential, Memorandum, November 2, 1979

A confidential memorandum from national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski seeks to dissuade President Carter from meeting with Argentine torture survivor Jacobo Timerman. Carter had personally intervened on Timerman's behalf during a meeting with Argentine junta leader General Jorge Videla in 1977. But Brzezinski argues that meeting with Timerman after his release could be seen by Argentine military « moderates » as an « unfriendly (rather than an appreciative) gesture » and make them « less likely to be accommodating to future [human rights] cases ». Timerman's release, according to the memo, « was the culmination of a vicious struggle between moderates and hardliners in the Argentine military » which « provoked a coup » attempt that was unsuccessful. In lieu of a meeting, Brzezinski suggests that Carter send a presidential letter « conveying your congratulations ».

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Document 8

Department of State, « The Tactic of Disappearance », Confidential, Cable, September 26, 1980



Document 8 - Department of State, « The Tactic of Disappearance », Confidential, Cable, September 26, 1980

In a confidential cable from the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, U.S. diplomats evaluate the Argentine tactic of disappearance as a method for fighting « terrorism ». « Based on everything we know », the report states, « we believe that detainees are usually tortured as a part of interrogation and eventually executed without any semblance of due process ». The Embassy gives little hope that the tactic will cease to be used by the regime because, put plainly, « it worked ». The document provides a rare analysis of the additional reasons that the Argentine military refuses to stop disappearing opponents, including the need to avoid all accountability for executing them. The authors recommend a series of vague efforts to convince the junta that a military court justice system could substitute for extrajudicial murder. « If the military could be shaken out of their belief that death is the only reasonable punishment for terrorists, the Armed Forces might see the advantage in using the military courts ». They also recommend involving the Vatican to persuade the junta to cease the practice of disappearance. « The church and the Pope have far more influence here than the USG ».

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For further information, contact :

- **Carlos Osorio** : cosorio@gwu.edu
- **Peter Kornbluh** : peter.kornbluh@gmail.com

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