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INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-15	AMAD-01	CIAE-00	SJK-01	C-01	DODE-00
	DS-00	EUR-01	HA-09	H-01	INRE-00	INR-01	L-03
	ADS-00	NEA-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OMB-01	PA-01	PM-01
	PRS-01	P-01	SCT-03	SNP-01	SP-01	SS-01	TRSE-00
	T-01	USIE-00	/047W				

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O 202200Z MAR 92
 FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4326
 INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
 AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
 AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
 AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
 AMEMBASSY LIMA
 AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
 AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
 AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
 AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
 AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
 AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
 AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
 AMEMBASSY CAIRO
 AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
 FAA WASHDC
 USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM
 USCINCLANT NORFOLK VA

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BUENOS AIRES 02799

CINCSO AND CINCLANT ALSO FOR INTAFF

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: ASEC, PTER, PREL, AR, IS
 SUBJECT: MORE ON ISRAELI EMBASSY BOMBING

REF: A) BUENOS AIRES 2692; B) BUENOS AIRES 2649
 (NOTAL)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON
 CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
 DECLASSIFY AFTER: 19 MAR 2017
 DATE/CASE ID: 14 DEC 2009 200906077

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SUMMARY

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1. (C) THE LATEST OFFICIAL DEATH TOLL IN THE ISRAELI EMBASSY BOMBING IS 24, WITH ONLY TWELVE VICTIMS IDENTIFIED AS OF LATE MARCH 19. AN ENORMOUS, PEACEFUL CROWD MARCHED THROUGH DOWNTOWN BUENOS AIRES MARCH 19 IN REPUDIATION OF THE ATTACK. THE IRANIANS HAVE OFFICIALLY DENIED COMPLICITY IN A DEMARCHE TO THE MFA. IMPRISONED "CARAPINTADA" LEADER SEINELDIN HAS BLAMED MENEM IN A SCATHING LETTER TIED TO THE ATTACK. AN MFA OFFICIAL HAS TOLD US THAT RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL WILL REMAIN STRONG; THAT ARAB STATES HAVE EXPRESSED SYMPATHY; BUT THAT NEIGHBORS OF THE DESTROYED EMBASSY, IN A STRANGE TWIST OF LOGIC, ARE ASKING WHY THE ISRAELIS WERE LOCATED IN A HEAVILY POPULATED AREA. END SUMMARY.

DEATH TOLL MOUNTS

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2. (U) INTERIOR MINISTER MANZANO ANNOUNCED LATE MARCH 19 THAT THE DEATH TOLL IN THE MARCH 17 BOMBING OF THE ISRAELI EMBASSY HAD RISEN TO TWENTY-FOUR, WITH ONLY HALF OF THE VICTIMS IDENTIFIED. AMONG THE BODIES RECOVERED ON MARCH 19 WAS THAT OF DAVID BEN-RAFAEL, THE ISRAELI DCM. BEN-RAFAEL WAS BORN, RAISED AND EDUCATED IN THE U.S., AND HELD DUAL CITIZENSHIP UNTIL FORMALLY RENOUNCING IT TO TAKE UP A DIPLOMATIC POSTING IN CHICAGO. HIS WIFE AND TWO SMALL CHILDREN ARE AMERICAN CITIZENS.

3. (C) A WELL-INFORMED JOURNALIST TOLD POLOFF MARCH 18 THAT THE BODY COUNT HAD BEEN BADLY COMPLICATED BY THE MUTILATING RESULTS OF THE BLAST. HE ADDED THAT THE NUMBER OF INJURED WAS PROBABLY CONSIDERABLY HIGHER THAN EARLY REPORTS, WHICH INCLUDED ONLY THOSE VICTIMS TREATED IN MUNICIPAL HOSPITALS AND PRIVATE CLINICS.

THOUSANDS MARCH

4. (U) AN ENORMOUS, PEACEFUL CROWD ESTIMATED AT

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BETWEEN 80,000 AND 200,000 MARCHED THROUGH DOWNTOWN BUENOS AIRES DURING THE LATE AFTERNOON OF MARCH 19 IN REPUDIATION OF THE ATTACK. THE MULTITUDE FAR SURPASSED THE NUMBERS THAT JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS SPONSORING THE MARCH WERE REPORTEDLY PREPARED TO HANDLE. AFTER HEARING REMARKS FROM PRESIDENT MENEM, ISRAELI AMBASSADOR SHEFFI, CARDINAL QUARRACINO, AND

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THE PRESIDENT OF THE JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS' UMBRELLA GROUP, THE CROWD MARCHED SILENTLY FROM BUENOS AIRES' OBELISK MONUMENT TO A SITE WITHIN A BLOCK OF THE ISRAELI EMBASSY.

5. (U) ARGENTINE POLITICAL PARTIES ATTENDED THE MARCH WITH A FEW NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS. THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS SOCIALISM (MAS) AND WORKERS PARTY (PO) DECLINED TO ATTEND BECAUSE OF PRO-PALESTINIAN SYMPATHIES. THE FAR-RIGHT MODIN PARTY OF FORMER CARAPINTADA ALDO RICO ALSO REFUSED TO HEED THE CALL TO MARCH, ARGUING LAMELY THAT THE PROTEST SHOULD HAVE BEEN ORGANIZED BY ALL RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS, RATHER THAN BY JEWISH GROUPS.

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MFA READOUT

6. (C) MFA ISRAELI DESK OFFICER TOLD POLOFF MARCH 20 THAT THE IRANIAN EMBASSY HAD MADE A DEMARCHE THE PREVIOUS DAY DENYING ANY ROLE IN THE ATTACK. HE SAID THAT THE TONE OF THE DEMARCHE WAS ONE OF CONCERN, RATHER THAN ANGER -- A VERY DIFFERENT APPROACH, HE ADDED, THAN THE IRANIAN RESPONSE AFTER THE RECENT GOA CANCELLATION OF A NUCLEAR SHIPMENT TO IRAN.

7. (C) OUR MFA CONTACT ADDED THAT COMMENT IN MOST OF THE ARAB WORLD HAD BEEN SYMPATHETIC, BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY. HE NOTED THAT SAUDI KING FAHD HAD PERSONALLY INSTRUCTED HIS FOREIGN MINISTER TO TRANSMIT HIS CONCERN TO PRESIDENT MENEM.

8. (C) MFA OFFICER SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN PLEASED BY PRESIDENT MENEM'S IMMEDIATE DECISION TO ASK FOR HELP [REDACTED] FROM MOSSAD. THE WORLD WAS WATCHING ARGENTINA'S REACTION TO THE BOMBING, HE SUGGESTED, AND

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 MENEM'S DECISIONS HAD ALLAYED PEOPLE'S FEARS. OUR FOREIGN MINISTRY COLLEAGUE SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN WITH MENEM SEVERAL TIMES SINCE THE BOMBING, AND THAT THE PRESIDENT'S ANGER AT THE ATTACK HAD BEEN GENUINE.

TARGETTING ARGENTINA

9. (C) ISRAELI DESK OFFICER SAID THAT HE "COULD NOT DISCARD" THE POSSIBILITY THAT RECENT CHANGES IN ARGENTINE FOREIGN POLICY HAD MADE BUENOS AIRES AN INVITING TARGET FOR THE ATTACK. ACCORDING TO THIS SOURCE, THE SKEWED MENTALITY OF THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATION RESPONSIBLE MAY HAVE DRIVEN IT TO RESPOND TO MENEM'S POLICY INITIATIVES. HE SAID THAT A COMMENT A SYRIAN HAD MADE DURING ONE OF HIS TRIPS TO DAMASCUS -- THAT MENEM WAS THE "MOST JEWISH ARAB HE HAD EVER MET" -- SEEMED TO HAVE GREATER SIGNIFICANCE IN RETROSPECT.

10. (C) OUR MFA CONTACT ASSURED POLOFF THAT RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, WHICH HE SAID HAD BEEN DEVELOPING VERY RAPIDLY IN RECENT MONTHS, WOULD CONTINUE ON COURSE. HE WAS CONCERNED, HOWEVER, THAT THE LOSS OF BEN RAFAEL, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS A VERY EFFECTIVE DIPLOMAT, WOULD TEMPORARILY SLOW SOME OF THE MOMENTUM OF THE RELATIONSHIP. THIS SOURCE SAID THAT THE QUESTION OF RELATIONS WITH ARAB NATIONS POTENTIALLY INVOLVED IN THE ATTACK WOULD REMAIN FOR THE FUTURE.

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SEINELDIN COUNTERATTACKS

11. (C) IN AN EXTRAORDINARILY AGGRESSIVE AND DISRESPECTFUL LETTER TO MENEM, JAILED CARAPINTADA LEADER MOHAMMED ALI SEINELDIN LAMBASTED THE PRESIDENT AND BLAMED HIM INDIRECTLY FOR THE TERRORIST ATTACK. SEINELDIN, WHOM MANY REGARD AS INCREASINGLY IMBALANCED, ARGUED THAT MENEM HAD "IMPORTED CONFLICTS AND TERRORIST METHODS TOTALLY CONTRARY TO ARGENTINE NATIONAL BEING AND SENTIMENT." SEINELDIN ENDED HIS DIATRIBE WITH A PRAYER "THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO FIND THE LOST PATH OF OUR BELOVED COUNTRY BEFORE IT IS TOO

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LATE."

LONG-TERM REPERCUSSIONS?

12. (C) OUR JOURNALIST CONTACT, A LONG-TIME AND SERIOUS STUDENT OF ARGENTINE POLITICS, TOLD POLOFF MARCH 19 THAT THE MENEM GOVERNMENT WOULD PROBABLY BENEFIT IN THE SHORT TERM FROM THE SYMPATHETIC BACKLASH RESULTING FROM THE BOMBING. SO, HE ADDED, WOULD THE ISRAELIS, AND THE ARGENTINE JEWISH COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE. HE THOUGHT THAT ARAB RADICALS HAD SERIOUSLY DISCREDITED THEMSELVES HERE, AND PERHAPS THROUGHOUT LATIN AMERICA.

13. (C) THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF THE MARCH 17 INCIDENT, HE CONTINUED, COULD BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT. THE CITY AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO FIND ENORMOUS FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO REBUILD THE ISRAELI EMBASSY, TO DEMOLISH AND REPLACE OTHER BUILDINGS DAMAGED IN THE BLAST, AND TO COMPENSATE NEIGHBORS WHO HAD LOST THEIR HOMES. AFTER THE INITIAL

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SHOCK HAD PASSED, PEOPLE WOULD BEGIN TO ASK WHY
SECURITY AROUND THE EMBASSY WAS SO POOR, AND WHY THE
RESCUE EFFORT HAD BEEN SO HAPHAZARD.

14. (C) THE ARGENTINE ARAB COMMUNITY, THE
JOURNALIST-ANALYST CONTINUED, WOULD ALSO UNDERGO GREAT
CHANGES. THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO SIT ON THE FENCE
ANY LONGER; LIKE ANGLO-ARGENTINES WHO BEGAN TO CALL
THEMSELVES "JUAN" AFTER THE FALKLANDS/MALVINAS WAR, HE
SAID, THEY WOULD HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER THEY WERE
ARABS OR ARGENTINES. MOST OF THESE HIGHLY ASSIMILATED
ARABS WOULD CONFIRM THEIR ARGENTINE IDENTITY, BUT SOME
MIGHT BECOME RADICALIZED.

15. (C) MFA ISRAELI DESK OFFICER, RAISING
INDEPENDENTLY POSSIBLE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES,
REPORTED THAT A BACKLASH AMONG ARGENTINES WHO LIVED IN
THE WEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD SURROUNDING THE EMBASSY HAD
ALREADY BEGUN. HE HAD HEARD, HE SAID, SEVERAL OF THEM
QUESTIONING WHY THE ISRAELIS, WHO KNEW THEY WERE A
TERRORIST TARGET, HAD PLACED THEIR EMBASSY IN A
CROWDED RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD.

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