

ARGENTINE COMMISSION for HUMAN RIGHTS

COMISION ARGENTINA POR LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS (CADHU)

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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES VOTES IMMEDIATE END TO U.S.

TRAINING OF ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES

The U.S. military training program for Argentina was ordered halted yesterday by the House of Representatives in a direct condemnation of the human rights violations by the regime of General Videla in that country.

The move came on an amendment by Rep. Edward Roybal of California during consideration of the Foreign Aid Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 1978. The amendment passed 223 to 180.

If agreed to by the Senate, the amendment will put an end to the 27 year-old training program through which more than 4,000 members of the Argentine Armed Forces have been trained in the U.S. and in the Panama Canal Zone. The controversial training program proposed by the Carter Administration for Fiscal Year 1978 would have included such courses as "Counterinsurgency and Psychological Warfare", "Military intelligence and counterintelligence", and, "Counterinsurgency and Jungle Operations".

This vote to cut off the training program reverses a May 23 House vote in which a similar amendment was defeated 200 to 187, and came just a week after the Senate voted on a motion by Senators Kennedy and Church, to end all forms of U.S. military aid to Argentina one year from now. This would include credits, cash sales, as well as the training program.

The State Department had firmly opposed any further cuts to the Security Assistance programs to Argentina arguing in favor of giving the Carter Administration "flexibility and leverage" to use diplomatic means to encourage respect for human rights in Argentina. State Dept. officials lobbied intensely various Senators and Representatives urging them to oppose these amendments.

A spokesman for the Argentine Commission for Human Rights said after the vote that the passage of the two recent amendments "indicates a recognition by a majority of U.S. legislators that the military aid programs in general and the training programs in particular, have contributed to the upsurge of military regimes in Latin America, regimes for which repression and human rights violations are a way of life. Although there are many officials in the U.S. Government who would favor continued support for military dictators in Latin America, it appears that a definite pattern of opinion is emerging among foreign policy-makers in the executive as well as the legislative branches, that favors a process of disengagement from the military regimes such as the ones in Chile or Argentina, and a new dialogue with democratic and civilian forces in those countries. The political, diplomatic and even financial costs of a close U.S. identification with these dictatorships has forced these policy-makers to begin to consider new options in Latin America. This, we feel, can only be constructive in the long run."

EXCERPTS FROM THE FLOOR DEBATE ON THE ROYBAL AMENDMENT TO CUT
OFF THE U.S. MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAM FOR ARGENTINA

(Approved 233-180 on June 22, 1977)

Archivo
Nacional de
la Memoria

Rep. Roybal (Calif.): "I present this amendment because it is illegal for this country to provide funds for this purpose. Section 660 of the Foreign Assistance Act specifically prohibits the use of military assistance funds 'to provide training or advice, or provide any financial support for police, prisons or any other law enforcement forces for any foreign government.' ...There is no doubt that there has been a state of siege in Argentina, not starting yesterday or last month, but a state of seige since November of 1974. All constitutional guarantees have been suspended. Arrests have been made without arrests or warrants. The right of habeas corpus has been abolished. There is also no doubt that the military is in control of all police functions, including border, provincial and military police. They are in charge at the present time of detention centers and prisons, of interrogations and door-to-door searches, and they have completely circumvented the once-established judicial system. Everyone in Argentina is tried by martial law courts or by a court that the military itself has created. All of this is not hearsay. Every word that I have spoken has been confirmed several times, first, by the CIA, and then, second, by the Dept. of State itself that has submitted to the Congress of the United States four reports confirming the fact that this is true...."

Rep. Studds (Mass.): "If there is any single basic rule in foreign policy, it should be that we mean what we say. This Congress has passed laws stating its intention not to provide military assistance to governments which systematically, consistently violate the human rights of its own people. We have had the votes to put that into law and the question now is whether we are going to give that law any substance and any meaning..."

Rep. Krebs (Calif.): "...We have the same type of regime in Argentina that we saw in the thirties in Italy, Germany, Japan and Spain. Despite the fact that we are talking about a very small amount of money, I think it is time we sent a message to Argentina. It has been stated by one of the Members that an adequate record has not been established by the committee. I think the record has been established by the Government of Argentina and it is time that this House deal with the situation and send a message to the Argentine Government."

Rep. Drinan (Mass.): "Based on my experiences and observation in Argentina and my contacts since then, I can assure my colleagues that the human rights violations perpetrated by the military junta and its allies are truly appalling. Perhaps the single most outrageous single action of the Videla regime is its refusal to publish a list of the thousands of individuals who have been imprisoned without charge or trial for political reasons. The families of these individuals have no way of knowing whether their relatives are alive or are among the many who have been abducted and murdered by the government-sponsored terror squads which operate with impunity. Even among the nations which are universally recognized as violators of human rights, the refusal of the Argentine authorities to release a comprehensive list of political prisoners is a singularly outrageous action."

Rep. Lehman (Florida): "Mr. Chairman, how many more stories like this one are waiting to be told? How many more victims are dead or still languishing in prisons? As of March 23, 1977, Amnesty International listed 489 persons who have disappeared in Argentina since the coup of March, 1976. Estimates of such disappearances range from 2000 to 5000 cases. Let us not condone these travesties of human rights by continuing to provide military training assistance to Argentina. I urge the adoption of the Roybal amendment."

Rep. Bonker (Wash.): "Mr. Chairman, yesterday for the first time I had the opportunity to see the personal dimension of what goes on and the extent of the brutality, when a young girl came into my office....She was taken out of her home into captivity in a remote part of the city. She was subjected to brutal repeated torture and without cause. Mr. Chairman, once we grasp the personal significance of what is going on in Argentina I do not think there is any way we can rationalize our continued support for military training there..."

SENATE CALLS FOR TERMINATION OF U.S. MILITARY AID TO ARGENTINA

AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 1978

In a major floor action on June 15, the Senate voted to halt all U.S. military assistance to the Argentine military junta by September 30, 1978, approving an amendment by Senators Kennedy, Church, Abouresk, Anderson, McGovern and Humphrey.

In introducing their amendment, Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Church made strong condemnations of the human rights violations by the Videla regime in Argentina.

Church referred directly to several instances where U.S. citizens had been arrested and tortured in Argentina, and said:

"The time has come to signal clearly to the rest of the world that the Congress does care about the kinds of government to which she tenders military assistance. Those governments practicing torture against political prisoners and other forms of repression should recognize that they can no longer take American aid for granted.

"Certainly the evidence is strong that Argentina is one of the worst torture chambers in Latin America, rivalling Chile and Uruguay -- countries to which the Congress has already prohibited military assistance.... This tragic story from Argentina lies closer to Washington than the thousands of miles between our countries would suggest, for in plain truth the military equipment used to suppress the citizens of Argentina comes directly from our military assistance programs."

Kennedy spoke directly against the argument made by Carter Administration officials that aid should not be cut for reasons of "flexibility":

"There are countries and institutions where we can and do have substantial influence and where flexibility is translated into influence. But there are also countries where any limited influence we might have is dwarfed by systematic violations of human rights. Argentina is in the second category, not the first.

"In our relations with nations, there are backwaters where our policies are dominated by military relationships with military regimes similar to the Argentine junta. In other cases, we either have access to or are broadening our access to political and economic sources of influence. Argentina should be in this second category, not the first. (Emphases added)

"I do not believe for a moment that the people of the United States want to be implicated in any way in the Argentine junta's repression of basic human rights. Nor do I agree with those who say our influence depends on maintaining our military relationship. The standing and influence of this country will be enhanced, not impaired, by moving from military to political and economic channels for pursuing our objectives."

The Kennedy-Church amendment affects the following forms of U.S. military aid: Foreign Military Sales credits (loans); FMS cash sales; commercial sales, and military training.
