

# News Release



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## NDI REPORT MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS ON CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN ARGENTINA

WASHINGTON, D.C, FEBRUARY 6, 1989 -- The greatest threat to Argentina's democratic transition is the continuing inability to integrate the armed forces into civilian society. This is the conclusion of a report released today by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), a Washington-based political development institute.

The 33-page report, "Civil-Military Relations: The Argentine Experience," is based on the findings of a three-day conference last December in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The seminar, sponsored by NDI, was held just days after rebellious military officers staged their third revolt against President Raul Alfonsin's five-year-old government.

The conference was attended by Argentine political leaders, military officers and academics as well as civil-military experts from the Dominican Republic, Israel, Panama, Spain, Uruguay, the U.S., and Venezuela. It was the first in a series of seminars and related projects that NDI is sponsoring to promote a constructive dialogue on civil-military issues in Latin America and elsewhere.

"There is perhaps no greater threat to fragile democratic systems than the inability to integrate the military forces of a nation into the civil society," said NDI's chairman, former Vice President Walter F. Mondale.

"As Argentina wrestles with extremist forces -- groups stimulated to act by the failure to reconcile the civil-military relationship in a democratic context -- we believe that the pages of this report contain within them the beginnings of a solution," he added.

Conference participants focused on the role of the executive and legislative branches in military policy, the defense budget and the military's role in the economy, and the armed forces' integration into civil society.

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The report noted major obstacles that have slowed progress toward military-civilian reconciliation in Argentina. These include the "lingering preoccupation on all sides" with the prosecution of military officers for past human rights abuses, and the shortage of institutions working to foster dialogue between the civilian and military sectors. "As a result mistrust remains strong on both sides. Civilians fear a return to repression ... [and] the armed forces fear the destruction of their institutions and the permanent loss of prestige."

The report was critical of those who would advance "zero-sum calculations" in which only one side can win and the other must lose. The report said both civilians and the military must be realistic in the demands they place on each other. "They must strive not only to advocate their own views, but to understand and synthesize the views of others," it said.

Despite differences on several issues, the conferees reached a consensus on constructive actions taken thus far by the Argentine government and on further steps needed to ensure the development of healthy civil-military relations. Among the key recommendations, the report called for:

- o a military doctrine for the Argentine armed forces which focuses on the defense of the country's territorial integrity and not on the arbitration of national policies, interests and values;
- o civic education programs within the armed forces, and the use of existing educational institutions to integrate civilian and military communities;
- o possible changes in recruitment policies, training, promotion and terms of service to reduce the caste-like nature of the military profession;
- o training of legislative staff in defense matters in order to reduce the executive branch's oversight burden;
- o greater civilian training in and control of intelligence gathering and internal security affairs; and
- o reliance on the police rather than the military in anti-drug efforts.

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"Democracy demands of the Argentine military nothing less than a fundamental reassessment of its purpose and place in the country," the report added. "But the foundation of true democracy cannot rest on concessions and changes made by the armed forces alone."

Civilian leaders, it said, "must show they can capably perform the tasks they have told the military it must no longer do ... And they have an obligation to consult with the armed forces on matters of legitimate concern to them, such as military doctrine, force structure, personnel policy and the budget for defense."

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