

U.S. orders Argentine Air Force decapitated

by Gerardo Terán Canál

In early August, headlines in the Argentine press focused on revelations that the U.S. embassy in Buenos Aires, former Ambassador Terence Todman, and the Foreign Ministry had brought about the “beheading” of the Air Force by removing Commodore Miguel Guerrero, the aerospace engineer who was the brains behind the Condor II intermediate-range missile project. Defense Minister Oscar Camilión announced that Guerrero had been placed on a six-month leave of absence and would probably be subsequently retired. Also, immediately following the naming of Brig. Juan Paulik as the new Air Force chief of staff, replacing Brig. José Juliá, the Air Force announced the retirement of another six brigadiers, most of whom had been linked to the development of the Condor II missile.

Commodore Guerrero’s removal is the final chapter in the offensive launched by the United States against Argentina immediately following the 1982 Malvinas War. The purpose of that campaign was to punish Argentina’s Armed Forces for having dared to challenge Anglo-American interests, and particularly to smash its efforts to attain technological or scientific independence. The Bush administration was ferocious in its demand that the Condor II project be dismantled, and the Clinton administration has continued that policy. President Carlos Menem’s acceptance of this policy of “technological apartheid” was the Anglo-Americans’ condition for permitting Argentina to participate in their new world order.

The role of Defense Minister Camilión shouldn’t be underestimated. He is a member of a Washington-based policymaking entity, the Inter-American Dialogue (IAD), which has formulated the Clinton administration’s violently anti-military policy for Ibero-America. Camilión has publicly admitted that the United States demanded Guerrero’s firing.

Aside from military protests, there was virtually no other resistance offered from any quarter of the government to U.S. demands for the Condor’s dismantling. On the contrary, it was the two most recent occupants of the post of foreign minister—Domingo Cavallo and Guido Di Tella—who served as the battering rams for former Ambassador Todman, who led the charge for the Condor’s destruction. The Harvard-trained Cavallo went from the Foreign Ministry to the Finance Ministry, from where he has faithfully implemented the International Monetary Fund’s austerity dictates. President Menem himself, speaking during a ceremony on Flag

Day last June 20, affirmed that “the Condor issue should be definitely forgotten; it has been completely deactivated. . . . Now we can really say that our house is in order, because Argentina is in order.”

When Menem said that “our house is in order,” he was obviously referring to the orders given by the United States. According to the daily *Clarín* on Aug. 2, the “virtual firing” of Commodore Guerrero is due to the fact that he “complicated relations with the United States.” Several U.S. delegations which visited the Condor’s production plant at Falda del Carmen, Córdoba, “openly complained about the reception given them by Guerrero, who even rejected some of the members of those delegations, accusing them of being ‘spies’ rather than scientists.”

The 1992 book *Carnal Relations: The Real History of the Building and Destruction of the Condor II Missile*, reveals the level of blackmail used against Argentina. During one cabinet meeting in April 1991, Finance Minister Cavallo insisted that “the U.S. won’t support our economic plan or our requests for standby credits from the International Monetary Fund until Argentina gets rid of the Condor.” The book also includes the transcription of a conversation between then Ambassador Todman and then Defense Minister Antonio Erman González, in which Todman demanded the destruction not only of the Condor II but of all the technology associated with it. “My country wants Falda del Carmen destroyed and I want to be there when it happens,” Todman stated.

When González responded that Falda del Carmen was part of Argentina’s “national patrimony,” the U.S. ambassador complained that “the U.S. mission which was there last December and January saw dangerous things. . . . We want them eliminated, just as was done with [Saddam] Hussein’s missiles after the Gulf war.” Undersecretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Bernard Aronson also threatened Argentina with the “Iraq treatment” if it didn’t follow U.S. orders, according to this account.

Joining the First World?

All the Condor’s parts have been transferred to the United States via Spain, and the 60-plus buildings built to special security specifications emptied. The men behind the project, such as Commodore Guerrero, are being tossed on the scrapheap. As for the Air Force technicians, the Menem government has decided to put them at the service of the new world order. During the 1991 Gulf war, Carlos Menem humiliated Argentina’s Armed Forces by sending them to participate in the “international coalition” which waged war against Iraq. They had to serve under the command of their historic enemy, Great Britain. Now, at the invitation of the U.N., Menem will send Air Force technicians to Iraq to help impose its “technological apartheid” on that nation. These men will work with U.N. inspection teams to help dismantle two Tamuz 2000 missiles which were reportedly built using Condor technology.