

CIA declassified docs show Europe wanted own 'Operation Condor'



Buenos Aires, April 22 (RHC)-- Declassified information from the Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA, shows that European governments during the 1970s wanted to learn how to conduct their own 'Operation Condor' from South American dictators who were systematically torturing and killing dissidents in the region.

In the documents opened to the public earlier this month, official statements from the United Kingdom, France, and what was then West Germany were looking for advice from South American dictators in mainly Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, and Chile to combat the "dangerous level (of) subversion" from the Left.

"The terrorist and subversive threat in Europe has reached such dangerous levels that (member countries) believe it would be better to combine their intelligence resources in a collaborative organization, as is carried out according to Operation Condor," European officials communicated to the Condor Plan secretariat in Buenos Aires, according to the files.

The declassified documents from the U.S. that politically supported the operation, reveal that the secretariat said: "They emphasized that if a similar organization were established (in Europe), all operations against the subversives would be coordinated in such a way that the intelligence service of one country would not operate unilaterally in another country."

Operation Condor was carried out by the military dictatorships in South America's southern cone in the 1970s and '80s in a concerted violent effort to rid the region of anyone the militaries perceived as a threat to their power and neoliberal policies, mainly, real or supposed Communists and socialists.

An estimated 60,000 people were killed by the Latin American states in the clandestine operation, 30,000 in Argentina alone. Another 30,000 were disappeared and 400,000 imprisoned during the Operation. However, as more information is disclosed by the CIA and investigated independently these numbers are expected to grow.

According to Spain's El Diario newspaper, a CIA document dated April 7, 1978, shows that European spies visited Operation Condor headquarters in Buenos Aires to gather information on how to implement similar policies of state torture and violence.

The document states: "Representatives of the intelligence services of West Germany, France and the United Kingdom visited the coordination secretariat of Operation Condor in Buenos Aires during the month of September 1977 to discuss methods to establish an anti-subversive organization similar to Operation Condor."

The document is part of a 47,000-page declassified archive specifically about the 1976-83 Argentinean dictatorship. "These documents are very important," says Gaston Chillier from the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS), a human rights organization in Argentina.

Chillier told reporters: "There are documents from six or seven different U.S. intelligence agencies and we hope to find information that will help us in the trials that are open against the criminals of the dictatorship." So far, more than 900 former Argentinean military members have been convicted for crimes during the Operation Condor era.

The documents also show U.S. communiqués about Condor deaths in Argentina and Uruguay.

"The Uruguayan government has been informed privately by Argentinean authorities that eight of the ten bodies found on the Uruguayan coast are the result of Argentinean anti-terrorist operations," states a cable from the U.S. State Department in May 1976. "The source ensures that the bodies were thrown into the Río de la Plata from helicopters after the interrogations carried out by the Argentinean authorities," reads the official U.S. statement.

Director of Human Rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Dianela Pi, said Friday her office will be requesting from Argentina the files they have in their possession.

The latest batch of declassified information was the third and last of the U.S.'s Argentina Declassification Project. The first two installments were made during the U.S. Barack Obama administration.

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