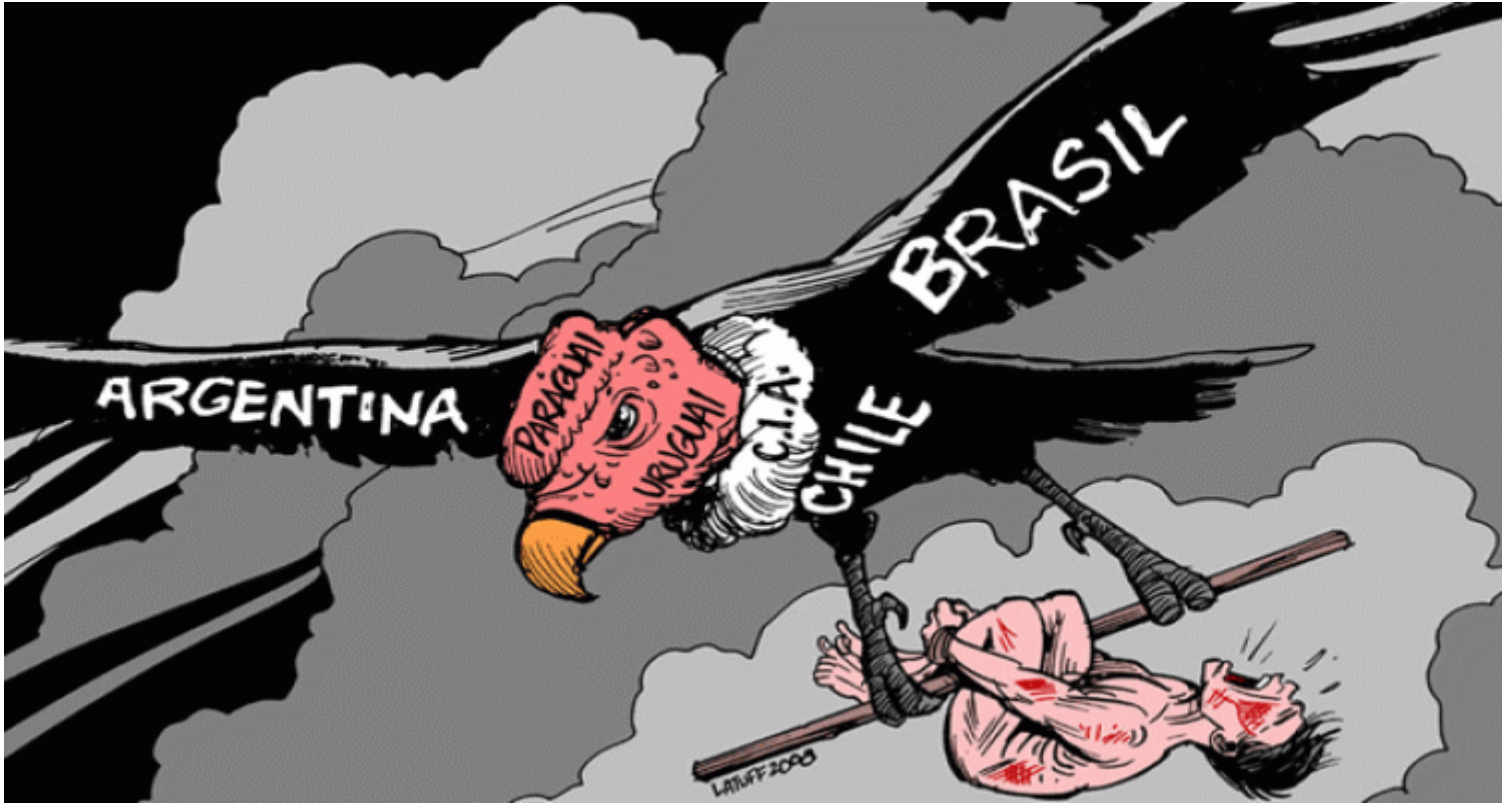


Argentinean Military Officials Guilty of Plan Condor Crimes



Buenos Aires, May 28 (RHC)-- An Argentinean court has found 15 military officials guilty for crimes committed under Plan Condor, a program launched in the 1970s designed to eliminate all opposition to right-wing dictatorships in South America.

The South America integration institution UNASUR said in statement this was a step forward to peace and justice in the region.

After three years of hearings, the court charged former military officials, 17 from Argentina and one from Uruguay, with kidnapping, torture and forced disappearance. Seven officials, including former dictator Jorge Videla, have been discharged for health reasons or have died during the hearings process.

Former Argentinean dictator Reynaldo Bignone was sentenced to 20 years in prison for conspiracy and illegal deprivation of liberty of 100 people. Officer Santiago Riveros was charged with 25 years and Uruguayan Manuel Cordero, the only foreigner on trial, was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

The rest of the military officials who are accused of crimes against humanity were sentenced to eight through 25 years in prison. Plan Condor involved hundreds of officers who worked in Chile, Argentina,

Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia.

The victims' lawyer Luz Palmas says declassified documents show that former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger kept correspondence with an Argentine minister. But controversially, Kissinger and other U.S. officials are not part of the current investigation.

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