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Argentina: Leader Of Attack On La Tablada Believed To Be Hiding In Uruguay

by John Neagle

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According to a Feb. 2 report by Notimex, the Argentine police have asked that Uruguayan authorities arrest Enrique Gorriaran Merlo, alias "Ricardo," who is believed to have led the Jan. 23 assault on the La Tablada infantry barracks. Gorriaran Merlo, former chief of the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), is reportedly hiding in Uruguay. As of Feb. 2, the Uruguayan Ministry of Defense said it had yet to locate him. The Argentine government is also looking for Carlos Albert Burgos and Francisco Provenzano, members of the political vanguard of the movement "Everyone for the Fatherland" (MTP). Burgos is the editor the MTP's publication "Entre Todos," and his son is among the 14 members of the attack force who surrendered and are now imprisoned in Argentina. Provenzano, secretary of the MTP and long-time member of the ERP, was incarcerated by Argentina's military rulers until 1983. Argentine press sources have reported that Provenzano's family had been informed of his arrest, and had been placed in a military jail. However, his name was not mentioned among the detained in lists published by the government. On Feb. 1, in Montevideo, the Front for Popular Resistance (FRP) claimed that the assault on La Tablada was the first in a series of attacks to discourage a military conspiracy to overthrow the Argentine government. President Raul Alfonsin has stated that the impetuous guerrilla action could have been the start of a civil war. The attack on La Tablada, he said, was intended to provoke a confrontation between civilians and the military, and create mutual distrust between the military and the government. Antonio Cafiero, governor of Buenos Aires province and president of the Justicialista Party (Peronists), rejected Alfonsin's allegations, and called them "a bit opportunistic." He said the president was attempting to incite alarm, since the country was hardly on the brink of a civil war.

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