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Argentina: Alfonsin Wants To Step Down On June 30; President-elect Says He Will Take Power In August

by John Neagle

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During the past week, representatives of President Raul Alfonsin's Radical Civic Union party, and President-elect Carlos Menem's Justicialista (Peronist) party reported that an accord on the early succession of Menem would be announced very soon. Under the constitution, Menem is scheduled to take office Dec. 10. June 10: When asked about the new transfer date, Eduardo Menem, president of the Senate and adviser to his brother, said, "I would say the first half of August." The Peronists, who will not have a congressional majority until newly elected legislators are installed in December, want agreement on economic and social policies with the Radical party. Peronist demands include a six-month extension of the state of siege declared two weeks ago, a new currency, streamlining of the tax system, and "resolution" of pending cases against military officers accused of human rights violations during the 1976-83 dirty war against leftists. Radical party officials have insisted that a "blanket" military amnesty will not be part of the political package between Alfonsin and Menem. [At least 8,961 Argentines vanished after being arrested by security forces and are presumed executed, according to a commission appointed by Alfonsin. Independent human rights groups say the actual number may be two or three times as high.] Justice secretary-designate Julio Oyhanarte said Menem would be sworn in Aug. 10 once the legal footwork was completed to move up the inauguration. Interior minister-designate Eduardo Bauz said it was unlikely the turnover of power would take place in July, as first proposed. Oyhanarte said Alfonsin had ruled out unilateral resignation because that would obligate the congress to elect a provisional president for six months. Oyhanarte said Menem would be able to rule until the Dec. 10 inauguration of Peronist deputies through the proposed pact between the current Peronist minority in congress and other parties. The future justice secretary also said he would form a commission to reform the constitution to reduce the presidential period from six to four years. Antonio Salonia, the designated education minister, said the inauguration of Menem could take place as soon as late July or early August. Menem confirmed that his party had plans for a new currency, but refused to comment on anti-inflation and deficit reduction plans. Measures reportedly being developed by the economy minister-designate, retired business executive Miguel Roig, include an across-the-board wage hike and easy access to Central Bank credit. Unidentified sources close to Roig told Notimex that the Peronists' program called "Plan Cero" includes reductions in "unproductive" public spending, an emergency plan to deliver goods and services to the needy, adjusted public utilities prices, a high exchange rate to spur exports and reduce imports, and a voluntary price fixing agreement with large private companies. The new currency will be baptized the "federal," or the "argentino." June 11: Eduardo Menem, Senate president and adviser to his brother, said Alfonsin might step down in the first half of August. In an apparent solution worked out last week, Radical and Peronist sources said the Electoral College would meet early to confirm Menem's victory and Congress would modify the law that sets the transition day. That would allow Alfonsin to step down without resigning. In addition, Radical Civic Union congresspersons would agree to support whatever legislation Menem deemed necessary to stabilize the economy. June 11: By Sunday, Menem had completed the selection of his eight-member cabinet. Included are two non-Peronists: Roig, the Economy Minister designate, and

Domingo Cavallo, a Harvard-trained economist who is to be Foreign Minister. The State Intelligence Secretariat, a domestic security agency, will be headed by a journalist, Juan Bautista Yofre, the political editor of *Ambito Financiero*, a financial daily. Menem's choice for Labor Minister, Jorge Triaca, told reporters last week that there would be no general strikes during the first two years of the Peronist government. Saul Ubaldini, leader of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT), responded: "Striking is a constitutional right." Menem's choice for Defense Minister, Italo A. Luder, was deemed acceptable by Aldo Rico, a former lieutenant colonel who took part in several military uprisings. In an interview with Spanish news agency EFE, Rico said, "Luder is a man of Peronism's highest level who has already declared himself in favor of a definitive political solution for the problem of the war against subversion." In an interview published by daily newspaper *Clarín*, future Defense Minister Luder said that the Alfonsín government had already established amnesty for military officers: "We cannot enter into an artificial debate now on whether to accept amnesty or not, because amnesty already exists." He was referring to the legislation approved by the national congress in December 1986 and April 1987. The earlier legislation exonerated from responsibility soldiers accused of human rights violations whose cases had not been brought before the courts prior to February 1987. The 1987 legislation benefitted soldiers who acted strictly under orders from officers. However, Luder asserted that it was the Alfonsín administration's responsibility to resolve pending cases against 21 generals and others officers before the Peronists take power. He added that other "military issues" related to divisions within the armed forces evidenced in the three military rebellions since 1987 should not be left for resolution by the Peronist government. Luder, who in 1975 authored a decree which permitted the armed forces to "participate in the anti-subversive struggle until subversive actuation is annihilated," said he supported the actuation of the military in domestic intelligence operations. June 12: On Monday evening, in a 15-minute broadcast to the nation, Alfonsín announced that he will resign June 30. "I have decided to resign effective June 30, 1989. Alfonsín said that the country's economic situation had forced his resignation. Earlier in the day, Interior Minister Juan Carlos Pugliese announced the Electoral College will convene June 21, more than seven weeks ahead of schedule, to confirm the presidency of Menem. Later, official news agency *Noticias Argentinas* reported that Alfonsín's personal representative, Rodolfo Terragno, said Menem had refused to take office on June 30. Terragno added that the president-elect indicated he was willing to assume the presidency in August. Terragno said that under the constitution, in the event of the resignation of both the president and vice president, the Senate president would become acting chief of state. At present, Eduardo Menem holds this position. (Basic data from *Notimex*, 06/10-12/89; AP, 06/11/89, 06/12/89; AFP, 06/11/89; *Noticias Argentinas*, 06/12/89; *New York Times*, 06/11/89)

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