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Argentina: 18 Retired Generals & Admirals Facing Human Rights Abuses Charges To Be Pardoned

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In an interview broadcast on official television channel 7 late Sept. 17, President Carlos Menem announced that 18 retired generals and admirals charged with human rights abuses will be pardoned. Menem said the cases of six other people, including two former presidents already convicted and sentenced, will be considered at a later date. Menem made no reference to former guerrilla leader Mario Firmenich, now serving a 30-year sentence for kidnapping and murder. Unconfirmed reports have indicated his case might be considered along with those of the convicted military men. At present, 16 retired army generals and two navy admirals are facing trial in civilian courts on hundreds of charges, including kidnapping, torture and murder. In 1984, the six others were convicted of similar charges and are incarcerated at a military prison. Former Gen. Jorge Videla and former Navy commander, Adm. Emilio Massera, members of the first military junta after the 1976 coup, received life sentences; former military president Gen. Roberto Viola, 18 years; former Navy commander Adm. Armando Lambruschini, 12 years; and former Buenos Aires province police chiefs, Gens. Ramon Camps and Osvaldo Riccheri, 15 years and eight years, respectively. A government commission appointed by former President Raul Alfonsin concluded that at least 8,900 Argentines disappeared in the 1976-83 period, and were presumed dead. Menem did not mention the date pardons will be issued. Interior Secretary Oscar Fappiano said the pardons would become official after Menem returns from a visit to the US, scheduled for Sept. 30. (Basic data from AP, Notimex, 09/18/89)