

Congressman Continues to Seek to Identify Hundreds of Argentine Children Born In Captivity & Taken Away From Biological Mothers

Washington, DC -- Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today slammed Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives for refusing to allow an up or down vote on a provision he authored that would have compelled the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) to report to Congress on any information the U.S. intelligence community has about the human rights violations of the military government in Argentina from the mid-1970's to mid-1980's. The measure also called for information to be revealed about that government's rise to power and the location and true identity of Argentine children born in captivity during that period who were taken away from their biological mothers.

In a brazen partisan vote, the House Rules Committee led by Republican Chairman David Dreier refused to allow the Hinchey amendment to come up for a vote as part of the Fiscal Year 2013 Intelligence Authorization Act. In a hearing this afternoon, Republicans ruled that the Hinchey amendment would not receive a vote in the House during debate on the Intelligence bill expected on Thursday despite the fact that the exact measure has always been given the opportunity to receive an up or down vote in the full chamber. Many of the past efforts by Hinchey to pass the amendment have been successful in the House, but later been stripped during House and Senate negotiations over a final bill. The Republicans on the Rules Committee did not offer an explanation for their decision.

"It would be one thing if my colleagues in the House voted against this measure, but the House Republican leadership has silenced the voice of all those in this Congress by refusing to allow them to vote yes or no to shed light on the horrific atrocities committed by the Argentine military regime of the 1970's and 1980's," Hinchey said. "Today, the true identity of hundreds of children whose parents were murdered and are now adults has been kept secret and it's incumbent upon the U.S. intelligence community to share what information it has to lift this veil of secrecy that has hovered over the victims and descendants of terrible human rights abuses. It's shameful that the Republican majority in the House has simply refused to allow a vote on this measure. When Republicans took control of the House last year, they pledged a new era of openness. Yet today's decision demonstrates a clear lack of openness and slams shut an opportunity to help hundreds of victims of human rights abuses in Argentina. The U.S. has an obligation to help reveal the truth about these past atrocities in Argentina. All Americans should be outraged by this unjust step to prevent a vote in the House."

Given the close relationship with their Argentine counterparts in the intelligence, security, and military community, it's believed that the American intelligence community is likely to have invaluable information to support ongoing justice investigations and the search for the children born in captivity.

During the 1970's and 1980's, hundreds of Argentine women were abducted by security forces and their children, some of whom were conceived through rapes by those security force members, were born into captivity. Those children were then given to members of the Argentine security forces while the mothers are believed to have been killed. The identity of nearly 100 of those children has been discovered, but the whereabouts of the majority of them remains unknown. Hinchey's amendment sought to shed light on the unknown fate of these children, who would be in their early 30's today.

In 1976, amidst social unrest and a deep political crisis in Argentina, a military coup installed an extraordinarily cruel dictatorship. Illegal detentions, torture and summary executions of dissidents became routine. Cross country operations to capture and assassinate dissidents were organized by Argentina in cooperation with Southern Cone military regimes in what was known as Operation Condor. Over the years, as the victims of the repression increasingly went missing, a new tactic of the Argentine security forces was revealed. It is estimated that nearly 30,000 people disappeared in Argentina between 1976 and 1985. Many of these victims, known as "the disappeared" or "los desaparecidos," were abducted, tortured, and then dropped far out into the ocean.

Hinchey has offered a very similar provision as part of the Intelligence Authorization bill in previous years. Last year, House Republicans allowed the full House to vote on the measure, but it was narrowly rejected. It did pass the House in previous years. However, the measure was never approved by the Senate. Hinchey's measure was supported by the Argentine government and numerous human rights organizations. In November 2011, Hinchey wrote to President Obama requesting that he use executive authority to declassify the relevant documents. Despite the failure of Congress to act, Hinchey will continue to press the administration to help promote human rights and closure in Latin America.

This is not the first time Hinchey has sought to make public the role and knowledge of U.S. intelligence agencies pertaining to human rights abuses in Latin America. In 1999, Hinchey

succeeded in passing legislation that required the CIA to report to Congress on its involvement in the 1973 coup of Chile's democratically elected President, Salvador Allende. Following the coup, President Allende was assassinated and General Augusto Pinochet began his 17-year dictatorship. The report, now known as the Hinchey Report, makes a clear case that the United States - at the very highest levels of our government - was deeply involved in the destabilization of Chile's government and economy over a period of nearly twenty years. The Hinchey Report revealed that, beginning in the early 1960's and continuing through the late 1970's, the U.S. funneled millions of dollars to opposition groups to prevent the rise to power of the Chilean left. The CIA admitted its participation in an unsuccessful 1970 plot to prevent President Allende from taking office and its knowledge of the 1973 coup that led to Allende's death and the rise of Pinochet.

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