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Objet: 'Declassification Diplomacy': Lessons Learned on The Argentina Declassification Project (ADP)
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'Declassification Diplomacy': Lessons Learned on The Argentina Declassification Project (ADP)

National Security Archive-organized Debriefing Papers on the ADP Posted on H-Diplo, Preeminent website for Diplomatic History

Archive Hails 'Declassification Diplomacy' Project as Precedent-Setting for Future Use of Declassified Documents to Advance U.S. Foreign Policy and Human Rights



Washington, D.C., September 22, 2021 –In an effort to advance a novel foreign policy tool known as “Declassification Diplomacy,” the National Security Archive today posted key administrative papers on the Argentina Declassification Project (ADP), begun by President Barack Obama and completed during the Trump administration. The records, which include the original White House “taskers” initiating the project, supplement a special set of essays written by the key government and nongovernment players involved in the ADP that were published last week in a joint Archive project, by the leading diplomatic history website, H-Diplo.

The H-Diplo posting on September 16, “The Argentina Declassification Project: A Model of “Declassification Diplomacy” to Advance Human Rights—and History,” provides a behind-the-scenes set of after-action reports on one of the most consequential discretionary declassification projects in recent memory. In his introduction to the essays, Archive Senior Analyst Peter Kornbluh described them as extraordinary “debriefings” on the ‘lessons learned’

from the ADP that “will provide future officials, policy actors, academics, and right-to-know activists with a detailed, multi-faceted assessment of how the project began, progressed, and dramatically concluded.”

The H-Diplo forum includes presentations by former Obama White House officials, State Department historians, NSC records managers and Argentine diplomats who played a key role in organizing and advancing the ADP. The centerpiece of the forum is a detailed memoir by John Powers, the former NSC Director for Access and Information Management who supervised the ADP for the first two years. “The ADP can serve as an exemplar for future declassification projects,” Powers concluded in his essay, “Reflections on Leading the U.S. Declassification Project for Argentina: Challenges, Triumphs, and Lessons for the Future.” The ADP “demonstrated how important records can be for processes of justice and accountability.”

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