

Los cables utilizados

[Página 12](#). Buenos Aires, 24 de febrero de 2011.

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 000858
USDOC for 4322/ITA/MAC/OLAC/APeacher
USDOC for 3134/ITA/USFCS/OIO/WH/MKeshishian
SIPDIS
SENSITIVE
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL, AR

SUBJECT: More than Malbec : Ambassador Donates Scholarships and Talks Development in Mendoza

Summary

1. Ambassador visited the Binational Center in Mendoza and presented certificates to 21 Mendoza high school students who have received scholarships to study English as part of the Embassy's Sarmiento-Mann scholarship program. Ambassador then met with influential Mendoza Governor Celso Jaque and received a thorough update on the Governor's broad-based approach for improving public security in the province. Jaque described the results of his first six months in office, his administration has made important strides in improving the work of the police, in fighting drugs, child labor and trafficking in persons, and has developed a long-term, strategic, plan for bringing improved public security to the province. Governor Jaque also detailed a series of progressive policy initiatives designed to improve education, promote economic growth and bring an overall better quality-of-life to his constituents. End Summary.

Sarmiento-Mann Scholarships to Study English

2. Following up on a successful visit to President Sarmiento's birthplace in neighboring San Juan province, Ambassador Wayne visited the Asociacion Mendocina de Intercambio Cultural Argentino Norteamericano (AMICANA), to present certificates to 21 local high school students who are studying English at the binational center as part of the Embassy's Sarmiento-Mann scholarship program. The visit afforded the Ambassador the opportunity to highlight the ECA/Embassy June 3 announcement of a 250,000 dollar investment by the U.S. Department of State that will allow the Embassy to expand the Sarmiento-Mann Scholarship program and provide scholarships for Argentine high school students throughout the country to study English as a second language. After presenting the certificates, Ambassador participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new wing of classrooms at the AMICANA facility and met many of the AMICANA students. The events received prominent press and TV coverage.

Governor Jaque's First Priority is Public Security

3. Subsequently, Ambassador met with Mendoza Governor Celso Jaque. The two have met on a number of occasions (Reftel) and in previous meetings Jaque has acknowledged problems with law and order in Mendoza and stated that his first priority as Governor is improving public security. He began the meeting by explaining his administration's broad-based approach to public security.

4. After only six months in office, Governor Jaque said his administration has made great strides in improving the work of the local police, but added that this will be a long term effort. They have invested in improved police training; have purchased police uniforms for both hot and cold weather, and no longer require policeman to purchase their own uniforms; have purchased bullet-proof vests, new vehicles and enough bullets to allow for target practice; and have re-established a 911 system for reporting emergencies. Governor Jaque stated his police force is interested in any assistance the U.S. can provide, particularly in the area of training. [Note: Embassy law enforcement agencies, led by DEA country office, maintain good relations with Mendoza law enforcement officials and have provided training to Mendoza security forces and judicial sector. End Note.]

5. Jaque explained that the provincial government has also taken a very active role in fighting drugs with a strong focus on prevention and treatment. His administration has set up the first centers in the province that are working to help kids get off drugs. They are creating programs to get kids into school, off street corners, and away from drugs. They are also working to better coordinate the efforts of the provincial and federal police forces in going after drug traffickers.

6. Jaque noted that the provincial government just signed an agreement with the national Ministry of Justice, Security and Human Rights to build a new federal prison in Mendoza that will largely be available for high security prisoners with provincial convictions. They also plan to build three more provincial jails in the next three years.

7. Jaque said that his administration is also aggressively seeking to combat child labor and trafficking in persons. His administration is taking an integrated approach to these related problems with the police, labor office and family affairs office all cooperating in pursuing wrongdoers and providing support for victims. Mendoza would be happy to receive any U.S. assistance or training on issues related to child labor or trafficking in persons.

8. Governor Jaque emphasized that this multi-faceted approach to providing public security is a long-term effort. He said he believes his administration has already helped to reverse the trend of increasing lawlessness that existed prior to his inauguration, even if he has not yet seen a major reduction in crime rates. He stated that he believes little-by-little the province will see improvements in public security and that this in turn presents tremendous additional opportunities for the province.

Jaque Views Public Security and Education as Key Steps to Promote

Economic Growth

9. Governor Jaque stated his belief that investment in education is both a way to attack crime and a way to prepare the province for increased economic growth. He related his ideas for improving public education by investing in the infrastructure of schools, particularly in rural schools, and explained plans for bringing internet connectivity to substantially wider parts of the province.

Travel to Atlanta and Washington

10. Governor Jaque then detailed a progressive list of policy initiatives his administration is pursuing. He explained the importance of lower middle-class citizens being able to afford homes and described a program the province has developed with several banks for offering subsidized mortgages to lower middle-class citizens. He said he believes this program is especially important for teachers so that good teachers can continue teaching and be fixtures in the community. He spoke expansively about various proposed projects including investments in infrastructure, hydroelectric dams and a new gas pipeline. He stated substantial investment continues in the wine industry and in the concentrated frozen grape juice market. He presented several ideas his government has for working with agricultural producers to increase productivity, including ideas for protecting fruit trees from damaging hail storms. He briefly described efforts to expand activities in the mining and petroleum sectors. He said that efforts to promote mining were hindered by a law passed last year by the federal government and that expanding exploration for petroleum was also complicated by the activities of the federal government. He indicated that his administration has had discussions with the federal government on these issues without elaborating.

10. Governor Jaque then described his ideas for promoting economic growth in Mendoza. He noted that he will be attending the Americas Competitiveness Forum that Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez will host in Atlanta in August. The trip is part of an overall plan to focus on economic development in the province. He said he hopes to meet with wide and divergent U.S. audiences both to promote exports of products from Mendoza to the U.S. and to discuss investment opportunities for American companies in Mendoza. He said he also plans to go to Washington during the trip to meet with representatives of the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

11. Governor Jaque discussed the activities of international trade offices that Mendoza has opened or plans to open soon in Atlanta (moving it from Miami), Sao Paulo and London and spoke of possibly signing an accord with the Chamber of Commerce in Atlanta. Ambassador encouraged Governor Jaque's administration to work with the Embassy, particularly the Foreign Commercial Service, to explore mutually beneficial investment opportunities. Ambassador alluded to U.S. companies with an interest in possibly investing in Argentina, but not having full knowledge of all the opportunities in Mendoza. Governor Jaque stated his administration looks forward to sharing further information with the Embassy concerning Mendoza's overall plans to attract foreign investment. At that point, he requested that Guillermo Migliozi, provincial Minister of Production, Technology and Innovation, join the meeting, introduced him to the Ambassador and advised that Minister Migliozi is the principal point of contact in his administration for international investment issues.

Promoting Ties to U.S. States

12. Governor Jaque lamented the lack of ties between Mendoza and states and cities in the U.S. He said he is eager to promote cultural exchanges between Mendoza and representatives of state and local governments in the U.S. and is keen on developing a sister-city relationship with a U.S. city. He mentioned possibly having a sister-city relationship in the future with an unnamed city near Atlanta where many Argentine ex-pats are residing. Ambassador voiced enthusiasm for this type of cultural exchange and urged Governor Jaque to speak to Argentine Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana about a program for promoting ties between the Argentine provinces and U.S. states.

13. Comment and bio note: Governor Jaque appears to be an energetic, committed, public official who genuinely cares about improving the lives of his constituents. He is eager to promote closer ties and cooperation with the U.S. He is focused on seeking solutions to problems and not on political ideology, and appears to view working with U.S. interests as a way to help improve the quality of life of the people in the province. His high-school age daughter will be studying for a year in upstate New York starting in August 2008, and he and his wife will be hosting a high-school student from the U.S. in their home for the year. This cultural exchange should only increase his familiarity and comfort with the U.S. He is a member of the Partido Justicialista (Peronist Party) and was elected in October 2007 with the active support of the Kirchners. Since that time he has been trying to balance between supporting GOA policies while also pursuing independent policies that will improve the lives of the people in Mendoza. The Embassy should be able to maintain an excellent working relationship with Mendoza provincial authorities while Jaque is in office. End Comment.

WAYNE

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 000152

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, KJUS, SNAR, PHUM, ASEC, KPAO, MASS, AR

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: MENDOZA GOVERNOR SEEKS CLOSER U.S. TIES

1. (U) Summary: Mendoza Governor Celso Jaque called on the Ambassador February 6, seeking increased contact and opportunities for cooperation with the Embassy and U.S. agencies on such issues as public security, counternarcotics, and public administration. Public security is a top concern for Mendocinos, and Jaque says he is committed to training and equipping provincial security agencies to meet the challenge. Ambassador assured Jaque of the Embassy's interest in supporting Jaque's efforts where possible and suggested possible opportunities for law enforcement training through LegAtt, the RSO, and DEA. Jaque said he wanted to improve public administration in Mendoza, establishing a new school of public administration, and has asked former Mendoza Governors to participate in the school and to form an Advisory Council on public policy. Ambassador said the Embassy would be glad to work with the Governor and his staff to explore ways in which the Embassy can help. End Summary.

2. (U) Mendoza Governor Celso Jaque and his Security Minister Carlos Aguinaga called on Ambassador February 6, to discuss increasing contact and cooperation with the Embassy in a number of areas. Jaque, a Peronist (P) politician, was recently elected Governor (October 2007) with the Kirchners' political support. Prior to that, he was a national Senator for Mendoza, elected in 2003.

Public Security a Priority

3. (U) Jaque stated that public security remains a serious concern in Mendoza. He pointed to a combination of drug abuse, social exclusion (poverty), and availability of illegal arms as the primary cause. He explained that he had created a new position, a Subsecretary for Security and appointed a retired provincial police chief, to be responsible for the daily administration of the provincial police. Jaque explained that there had been too much "political" management of the police and not enough professional management. He noted for instance that the provincial police's communication equipment was not compatible with that of federal law enforcement agencies. A contract to implement a GPS program, designed to track and coordinate mobile unit activities, was a disaster.

4. (U) Mendoza's vineyards and adventure tourism draw tourists from around the world, and Jaque said he wanted to make sure Mendoza remained a safe and attractive destination for this valuable trade, and that he was working with the major vineyards and local security forces on this issue. (Ambassador had pointed out a brazen robbery on a Mendoza winery hotel in which U.S. citizens were harmed.)

Looking for Professional Training

5. (U) The Governor explained that he would like to reform the training for provincial security forces. New officers receive general training but no specialized training in investigative techniques and other specific areas. LegAtt described a number of possible options for providing training to provincial police and prosecutors. He explained that the FBI conducts regular management courses to which foreign law enforcement students are invited, and that his office had coordinated training for prosecutors and judges in other provinces. Ambassador said that there were also training options available through Lima ILEA, and noted that the RSO was currently identifying Argentine law enforcement officials to participate in a one-week street security course in Peru.

Counternarcotics Cooperation

6. (U) In response to a question, Jaque stated that cocaine and marijuana use was not a major problem in Mendoza, nor did they see evidence of major trafficking rings, but that he was concerned about juvenile abuse of inhalants. Nevertheless, he said that he was concerned about the province's inability to monitor/inspect the significant semi-trailer traffic transiting the province to and from its international border crossings with Chile. He noted previous cooperation with the Embassy's DEA Country Office and said he would like to strengthen that cooperation. Jaque said he would welcome DEA's presence in Mendoza.

Ambassador noted that the Embassy's DEA Country Office had had a staffing gap for some time but was expecting the imminent arrival of a new Special Agent, who would have specific responsibility for Mendoza. Ambassador said that he would ask DEA to make sure the new Agent established communications with Mendoza authorities as soon as possible.

7. (SBU) Note: The new Governor minimized drug trafficking activity in Mendoza, perhaps out of ignorance. Historically (dating back to at least CY-2000), in joint investigations with DEA Buenos Aires Country Office, the Mendoza Provincial police have regularly arrested significant Colombian and Argentine traffickers residing in that area. Those organizations dealt with both multi-kilogram quantities of cocaine as well as heroin, sending their narcotics to Europe and/or the U.S. With the arrival of another DEA Special Agent next week, we can re-engage with provincial authorities and take the Governor up on his offer of increased cooperation on the counternarcotics front. End Note.

Demand Reduction, Treatment, and Detention Facilities

8. (U) Jaque explained that Mendoza's demand reduction programs/efforts had been under-funded and under-emphasized, something he hoped to reverse. He noted that there were no provincial drug treatment centers, only a couple of federally-run facilities that he described as "collapsed." The Governor said he wanted to open four provincial drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities.

9. (U) In 2006 and February 2007, the Argentine Supreme Court instructed the national and Mendoza provincial governments to report concrete measures taken to improve prison conditions that would address several rulings by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on the issue. Jaque said that one of the provincial prisons is temporarily under management by federal authorities. Jaque related that he had just met with the federal Minister of Justice and Security Anibal Fernandez and had requested that Fernandez continue the federal intervention for an additional eight months, to which he said Fernandez agreed. Jaque explained that the extension was required to ensure that reforms called for by the Supreme Court are implemented. He also said that the federal government was also going to build two new federal detention centers in Mendoza, but that the province would manage them. He said it was also a priority of his to build four new provincial jails - designed for a maximum of 50 detainees - with the focus being on social reinsertion, i.e., providing young detainees, in particular, with necessary job and life skills.

Civil Defense Needs

10. (U) The Governor explained that Mendoza has passed a public security emergency law that allows the Governor to reallocate budget funds for expenditures related to public security, cutting some of the bureaucratic hurdles (but not decreasing transparency, he stressed). The "emergency" declaration is for one year. Governor Jaque explained that he would like to purchase—or obtain gratis -- used civil defense items such as fire trucks and helicopters for the provincial security and civil defense forces. Ambassador said the Embassy would be glad to look into possible avenues that Mendoza could pursue. He also noted that contacts through sister city arrangements or through such organizations as the Rotary Club often can identify such used and excess equipment. (Note: Embassy's Military Group is investigating the possibility of obtaining equipment under the Humanitarian Assistance Program. End Note.)

Focus on Public Administration

11. (U) Finally, Jaque stressed the need for, and his focus on, improved public administration. He has asked former Mendoza governors—Rodolfo Gabrielli, Arturo Lafalla, Argentine former Ambassador to the U.S. Jose Octavio Bordon, Roberto Iglesias, and Vice President of Argentina Julio Cobos—to participate in an Advisory Council that will advise the Governor on strategic provincial issues and public policies. He has also created a School of Public Administration and has asked the former Governors to participate in this endeavor. Jaque said they would like to bring experts from the United States to give lectures and would like to promote visits and interchanges. Ambassador replied that the Embassy was very interested in this type of cooperation and outreach and would work with the Governor's office to explore ways in which to support his efforts.

WAYNE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 001673

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/22/2017

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, SOCI, AR

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR WAYNE MEETS CRISTINA'S RUNNING MATE, WITNESSES THE BOOM IN MENDOZA, ARGENTINA

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (U) In a well-publicized August 16-17 visit to the central-western province of Mendoza, the Ambassador met with Mendoza Governor and Cristina Kirchner's running mate Julio Cobos, who told the Ambassador he expected better U.S.-Argentine relations after the next elections—in which he expects his ticket to prevail. However, a Kirchnerista who is running to replace Cobos as governor gave a pretty negative view of Cobos's record as Mendoza's chief executive. The Ambassador also held a successful social outreach event at a school for the underprivileged, and attended a donation ceremony at another local school and participated in a roundtable at the Mendoza Binational Center with visiting U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. The visit received positive coverage in the local media. END SUMMARY.

Meeting with Governor and VP candidate Cobos

2. (U) On August 16, Ambassador Wayne met with Mendoza

Governor and National Vice Presidential candidate Julio Cobos, Cristina Kirchner's running mate. They agreed on the importance of relations between Argentina and the United States and on expanding those relations to include science, technology, culture, education, and commerce. Cobos shared his view on the importance of education and its connection to public security. Cobos added that Argentina needs to implement a strong campaign to educate people on the rule of law. He said that they need to "break the chain" of tolerating crimes, which will require a cultural change. Cobos explained that Mendoza has made several progressive changes in its education system, which is regarded as perhaps the best in Argentina, including giving indigent children free room and board at special schools housed in refitted military buildings. Cobos said he believes that by making sure these children are given an education, housing, and food, they are reducing the chances the children will become involved in drugs, alcohol, and crime. Ambassador Wayne noted Argentina's educational system strengths and stressed the need to continue investing in the youth of Argentina.

3. © Cobos was vague when describing campaign plans for his and Senator and First Lady Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner's vice presidential and presidential (respectively) candidacies. Cobos said he thought that their campaign platform would have three or four key points, probably including improving Argentina's foreign relations, education, and strengthening Argentina's infrastructure. He said that the Fernandez de Kirchner-Cobos administration will be unique in its inclusion of political figures from various backgrounds. He said that he believes the "concertacion" (as it is called locally) will open more positions than just the vice president slot to "Radicals K"—Radical party members who support President Nestor Kirchner. Cobos cautioned that the Fernandez de Kirchner - Cobos ticket first had to win in October, and then they could try to make sure the administration included a good mix of Radicals, Peronists, and Victory Front members. Cobos mentioned that he has had a lot of experience working with a mix of political groups in Mendoza. He said he thought relations between Argentina and the U.S. would improve under a Fernandez de Kirchner administration.

4th Air Force Brigade

4. (U) Ambassador Wayne visited the Air Force 4th Brigade where pilots train on the domestically-produced Pampas jet. Brigade Commander Sergio Mayor told Ambassador that the brigade trains pilots for all jets in Argentina using the Pampas aircraft that is manufactured by Lockheed-Martin Argentina S.A. in Cordoba province. U.S. exchange officer Major Douglas Sirk gave a presentation on the activity of the brigade, which includes training, control of air traffic along the northern and western borders, and search and rescue missions.

University of the River Plate Foundation

5. (U) Ambassador Wayne addressed a group of political and business leaders organized by the local University of the River Plate Foundation (FURP) members at the Park Hyatt Mendoza. Ambassador stressed the importance of relations between Argentina and the U.S. Questions from the FURP members mainly focused on Ambassador Wayne's impressions of Argentina and the USG's agenda for Latin America as a whole and Argentina specifically. Mendoza's Vice Governor Juan Carlos Jaliff and two candidates for governor of Mendoza, Cesar Biffi (Radical K) and Omar Demarche (Mendoza Democrat party), attended the meeting arranged by FURP president and political commentator Luis Rosales. Rosales also arranged for a private dinner at a local vineyard for the Ambassador and many of the Mendoza FURP members.

Meeting with Directors of the Mendoza Food Bank

6. (U) On August 17, Ambassador Wayne met with Mendoza Food

Bank president Bernardo Zunino and executive director Virginia de Luca. Zunino and de Luca explained the food bank's main activities and support structure. The food bank provides food and nutritional seminars for needy families in Mendoza, which, according to Zunino and de Luca, have not diminished in numbers even as poverty in Mendoza has decreased. The food bank has 12 corporate sponsors and works with approximately 40 more companies that donate food, supplies, and time. Although Argentina does not have "Good Samaritan" legislation to protect donors from legal action if a donation harms a recipient, the Mendoza Food bank receives monthly certification from the Argentine Institute of Normalization and Certification (IRAM), which is similar to norms of the International Standards Organization (ISO) for food handling. Thus, food bank donors are protected from legal consequences of donations since the food bank takes responsibility for ensuring donations will not harm recipients.

7. (U) Zunino and de Luca mentioned that they do not receive assistance from the local Walmart, which they claim destroys its excess inventory of perishables instead of donating it probably out of concern about legal liability. Ambassador Wayne said he was aware of Walmart donations in other provinces and offered to follow up with Walmart about the possibility of donations to the Mendoza food bank.

Eva Peron Boarding School for the Underprivileged

8. (U) On August 17, Ambassador Wayne visited the Eva Peron

Boarding School for underprivileged children and made a donation of books for the school's library. Approximately half of the students reside at the school during the week and return to their families for weekends. The teachers and administration were interested in ways to increase cultural exchanges for the students. Ambassador Wayne explained the GLOBE program provides a forum for virtual classroom exchanges via the internet and offered to help the school learn more about accessing the program.

Briefing on Mendoza's Economy

9. (U) Ambassador Wayne visited the Mendoza offices of the Mediterranean Foundation (FM), an Argentine economic think tank, and received a briefing on the economic forecast for Mendoza. Mendoza has experienced an impressive 13% growth rate for the past four years, but FM predicts that this will not be sustainable. FM believes that Mendoza's growth depends on three key factors: whether the GoA can maintain (1) a "consumption boom" fueled by income transfer and market

intervention policies; (2) low domestic oil and gas prices and high export prices; and (3) a favorable real exchange rate. FM sees the consumption boom continuing in the near term, but as world oil prices continue to climb, domestic production will continue to fall. FM said that domestic business profits started to fall in 2005 as wage and input price increases cut gross revenue margins. According to FM, the real exchange rate is currently appreciating as domestic inflation goes up, which will affect the tourism and commerce sectors of Mendoza's economy.

10. (U) FM believes that the agroindustrial sector in Mendoza will face significant decreases in its market. They base this on signs that the 370% growth in the prune industry was temporary (unexplained increase in Russian consumption of Argentine prunes and a poor harvest in the U.S. in 2005) and that Mendoza is showing signs of overproduction of grapes in the wine industry.

11. © FM reports that inflation in Mendoza is around 14%. Ambassador Wayne asked why inflation in Mendoza and neighboring provinces is so much higher than in Buenos Aires. FM explained that the real inflation rate in Buenos Aires and for the country is probably around 14% as well, but that, for political convenience, the GoA has adjusted these numbers down. FM said that since 1912 there has been a 95% correlation between the inflation rates in Mendoza and for the nation. FM said that it is impossible for all regions of Argentina to have increasing inflation except Buenos Aires city and province.

12. (U) FM explained that Mendoza provincial government policies and actions can really only affect about 5% of Mendoza's economy. FM believes that the province should work to facilitate the growth of business by reducing bureaucratic obstacles currently in place that make opening legitimate enterprises a slow and costly exercise. FM said that the paperwork and fees to legally register a new business are so prohibitive and time-consuming that they are an incentive to maintain businesses in the informal economy.

13. (U) FM touched briefly on the energy sector crisis in Argentina, saying that this has been the first year the problem affects everyone in Argentina. Mendoza has problems transporting sufficient natural gas to meet demand, with current pipeline capacity inadequate. FM said that energy

shortages in Mendoza has forced some vineyards to operate at night when there are less demands on the energy grid. FM fears that the energy issue has already begun to affect exports from Mendoza.

Candidate for Governor Offers a Critique

14. (U) Ambassador Wayne met with Senator and gubernatorial candidate Celso Jaque to discuss his views on the key issues in Mendoza and his main campaign messages. Also present were emboffs, Zuccardi Vineyards owner Jose Zuccardi, IV grantee and Jaque advisor Diego Bossio, and architect Cristian Racconto. Jaque is running as the Victory Front party (FPV—President Kirchner’s party) candidate for governor of Mendoza (elections on October 28). Jaque frankly shared his vision for improving the province of Mendoza. He said that the principal problem in Mendoza is a lack of strong institutions, followed by corruption. He believes Mendoza’s current leadership (Governor and vice presidential candidate Julio Cobos and vice governor Juan Carlos Jaliff) have mismanaged Mendoza’s abundant resources and perpetuated the poverty and misery of many Mendozans.

15. © Jaque said that Mendoza currently has 22,000 children not attending school. He said that the cheap cocaine byproduct “paco” has begun to show up in Mendoza and he fears it will lead to more addiction and more crime. He criticized the province’s lack of a strategy to address demand for drugs, the supply of drugs, nor the faulty police work in counter drugs in Mendoza.

16. © In commentary on the public security crisis in Mendoza, which has brought National Gendarmerie to the streets, Jaque was particularly critical of police training in Mendoza. He said that in the six-month training course, cadets only fire their weapons five times. He said this leads to police on the streets whose fire-arms training is insufficient to know when to draw their weapons and when to withhold fire. He added that the cadets must pay for their own bullets, but that their salaries are not augmented for the extra cost. Jaque said that if the police continue to be paid insufficient wages and to be expected to pay for their own ammunition, the officers will end up living in the same tough neighborhoods as the “delinquents” they are charged with policing. Jaque said that Governor Cobos’s recent success in bringing 120 extra gendarmerie troops to Mendoza will not help the crime situation in the province. Jaque was clear that he believes the police must be local; they must know the neighborhoods and their residents. He mentioned that Cobos’s administration had purchased a number of new patrol cars, but when Jaque went to see the cars, he found that many had burnt-out motors and flat tires. He cited this as a blatant example of Cobos’s mismanagement of the province.

17. © Jaque was adamant that the province has so many natural and industrial resources that there should not be any significant poverty, indigence, or hunger. He said that if he is elected in October, he will begin negotiating a new consensus in the province before his accession to power in December. He believes that the government and the economy of Mendoza should be decentralized to provide improvements to the quality of life for all Mendozans, not just those who live in the capital. He pledged to continue Cobos’s record of good relations with the federal government, which he named as the only positive aspect of Cobos’s administration.

Press Coverage

18. (U) Local press coverage of Ambassador Wayne’s trip highlighted his meetings with a broad range of politicians and business leaders during his visit. This was particularly mentioned by the city’s two leading newspapers, Los Andes and Uno, in their coverage of Ambassador’s speech to FURP members. Local newspaper, TV, and radio also covered the Ambassador’s book donation at the Eva Peron school. At the national level, the press carried the news of the Ambassador’s meeting with Governor Julio Cobos, who had only two days before formally launched his candidacy in Buenos Aires as Fernandez de Kirchner’s running mate.

WAYNE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000196
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2039

TAGS: PREL, PGOV, ECON, PINR, AR

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: MENDOZA GOVERNOR PRAISES BILATERAL COLLABORATION ON PUBLIC SECURITY

Classified By: Ambassador Wayne for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

1. © Summary: Mendoza Governor and Peronist party member Celso Jaque praised bilateral collaboration on improving security and combating drug trafficking during a February 12 meeting with Ambassador Wayne. Jaque cited crime reduction as his top priority and regarded a focus on prevention as a means to that end. The Governor updated the Ambassador on his efforts to soften the impact of the international crisis on the province’s fruit producers. Jaque said he will travel to the United States in June to request modifications of Mendoza’s program with the Inter-American Development Bank to better assist the province’s fruit producers and processors. He also updated the Ambassador on how this year’s legislative elections are shaping up in his province, Argentina’s fifth most populous electoral district. End Summary.

2. (SBU) Ambassador Wayne met with Mendoza Governor Celso Jaque on February 12. The Governor was accompanied by his personal secretary, Matias Montes, and Under Secretary for Public Management Rodrigo Ruete. Ruete had recently returned from his January 12-31 International Visitor trip to the United States, which he described as an invaluable learning experience. Commercial Counselor and poloff (notetaker) also attended.

Security a Top Priority

3. (SBU) Jaque cited reducing crime as his top priority, stressing that the province has to work on prevention programs to reduce its high incarceration rate. The Governor indicated that, in January alone, there were 23 murders, almost all of which were perpetrated by family members of the victims. He said he would like to create a more specialized law enforcement system, which would include personnel charged with prevention issues and others with policing the streets. He said the province will build a women's prison and a federal prison that will house 1500 inmates. (This is part of an ongoing effort by Mendoza authorities to comply with a Supreme Court order instructing the provincial government to report concrete measures to improve prison conditions and address several rulings by the Inter-American Court on Human Rights.) He added that the province has established a return-to-school program for unemployed youth between the ages of 14 to 18 and reported that last year 4000 teenagers were able to attend school thanks to the program's scholarships. Jaque said the province, which has also established five drug addiction centers, is working closely with schools, NGOs, and the Catholic Church on drug prevention programs.

Kudos for DEA Support

4. © The Ambassador said that although economic concerns remain the USG's number one priority, the new U.S. administration offers an opportunity to improve and deepen bilateral relations, a message the Ambassador said he recently conveyed to Foreign Minister Taiana and Vice Minister Taccetti. Jaque said he is quite pleased with the bilateral collaboration his province has received to date. He praised the close support from DEA in helping the Mendoza police establish a taskforce with the Mendoza Airport Security Police and Customs. Jaque added that Mendoza's Security Minister just visited Buenos Aires to put the finishing touches on the taskforce, which the Governor expects will be up and running shortly. He added that although they have good border controls, they hope to continue collaboration with ICE and DEA in this area. He added that Minister of Justice Anibal Fernandez is working on acquiring detectors that would tighten border security and on purchasing additional surveillance vans.

On the Mendoza Economy and U.S. Investment

5. (SBU) Jaque said the international economic crisis has not yet significantly affected the province. Nonetheless, he stressed that he is focused on countering its potential impact on Mendoza farmers by making assistance to producers a provincial government policy. Noting that prices of all fruits have dropped significantly, Jaque said his province has employed subsidy programs to assist producers of peaches, cherries, pears, apples, and grapes. In addition, he is focused on protecting Mendoza's garlic industry, which he said produces 95 percent of Argentine garlic (San Juan province provides the remaining 5 percent, the Governor claimed) and employs 4,800 workers. Jaque said he will travel to the United States in June to request modifications of Mendoza's program with the Inter-American Development Bank to better support the province's fruit producers and processors.

6. (SBU) The Governor said he hoped the U.S.-based bottle-making plant, Owens Illinois, will remain interested in building a plant in Mendoza. He indicated that they are still waiting Owens Illinois' decision as "we have done everything we can and the ball is now in their court." He welcomed additional U.S. investment to Mendoza.

2009 Legislative Elections

7. © Jaque said Mendoza will hold their legislative elections the same day as the national congressional midterms (anticipated for the third week in October) when the province will elect senators, deputies, and councilpersons. He said there will be at least three candidate slates in the race and added that Vice President and former Mendoza governor Julio Cobos and the Mendoza Radical party have not resolved their differences since Cobos left the Radical party to serve in the Kirchner government. He described the province as quite "conservative," remarking that voters tend not to support candidates backed by coalitions.

BIO Note

8. (SBU) Born on September 24, 1960 in Malargue, Mendoza, Jaque earned an accounting degree from the University of Cuyo. He served as National Senator for Mendoza from 2003 until December 2007 when he assumed his current post. Jaque was a provincial deputy from 1991 to 1995 and from 1994 to 1995 a chairman of the Treasury and Budget Committee in Mendoza's legislature. He served as Mayor of Malargue for two consecutive terms (1995-1999 and 1999-2003). From 2001 to 2003, he was the Peronist party vice-president in Mendoza. He married Liliana Landete in 1989 and has two daughters. One of their daughters is participating in a student exchange program in Georgia and the Jaques have had a U.S. high school student living with them this year.

Comment

9. (SBU) As usual, Jaque was quite talkative. We are encouraged by his praise for DEA support and desire for greater collaboration with the Embassy.

WAYNE