

January 10, 1985

**Memorandum from Brazilian Ambassador Roberto
Abdenur to Minister Saraiva Guerreiro,
'Brazil-Argentina. Nuclear energy'**

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Summary:

Report on the bilateral nuclear relationship between Brazil and Argentina from the Alfonsín presidency until the end of the Figueiredo Administration. The main theme is a possible joint declaration on the renunciation of nuclear explosives. Alfonsín and Foreign Minister Caputo are in favor, but elements within the Brazilian government remain opposed.

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SECRETARIA DE ESTADO DAS RELAÇÕES EXTERIORES.

MEMORANDUM para o Sr. MINISTRO DE ESTADO

Em 10 de janeiro de 1985

SECRETO

G/08

Brasil-Argentina.
Energia nuclear.

FV-3001

No primeiro contato que teve com o Chanceler Dante Caputo, em 3 de dezembro de 1983, ainda antes da posse do Governo Alfonsín, Vossa Excelência suscitou o tema do relacionamento entre os dois países na área nuclear. Conforme relato feito nos telegramas 001 e 002 da Série Chanceler de 4 de dezembro de 1983, da Embaixada em Buenos Aires, Vossa Excelência afirmou:

"Considerar de grande importância para cada um dos países, para seu relacionamento bilateral e para sua imagem perante a comunidade internacional em geral, que ambos pudessem dissipar, na América Latina, nos EUA e na Europa, qualquer idéia de rivalidade ou de segundas intenções em nossos respectivos programas nucleares, inclusive para não abriremos a quem quer que fosse a possibilidade de tentar jogar-nos um contra o outro.

Disse também, como coisa minha, que iria conversar no âmbito do Governo brasileiro sobre a possibilidade de que em algum momento Brasil e Argentina façam conjuntamente declaração em que, sem abrir em nada mão de suas posições de princípio quanto ao direito ao pleno acesso e uso da energia nuclear, deixem claro que não tem a intenção de produzir explosivos nucleares. Dante Caputo disse achar muito boa a idéia, e que a iria explorar de seu lado. Ficou entendido que oportunamente voltaríamos a tratar do assunto".

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2. Posteriormente a essa primeira conversa entre Vossa Excelência e o Ministro Caputo, meu envolvimento em numerosos assuntos do relacionamento Brasil-Argentina (comércio bilateral, movimentação política sobre a questão da dívida externa, conversações de "policy-planning") levou ao estabelecimento de relações estreitas de trabalho com alguns dos principais funcionários do San Martín, entre os quais o Subsecretário Jorge Sabato. Com vistas a explorar a possibilidade de uma declaração conjunta entre os dois governos na linha do que fora mencionado por Vossa Excelência ao Ministro Caputo, procedi a uma cuidadosa abordagem do tema em conjunto com o Subsecretário Sabato, ao longo dos numerosos contatos que mantivemos nos últimos doze meses.

3. Na primeira troca de idéias sobre o relacionamento na área nuclear, que tivemos em maio de 1984, à margem de reuniões realizadas em Buenos Aires sobre a temática do comércio bilateral e para conversas de "policy planning", Sabato expôs-me o sentido geral do Programa Nuclear Argentino, assinalando que, embora ainda disponha de algo como 35 mil mw de potencial hidroelétrico, a Argentina necessitará de cerca de 6 reatores de potência até o início do próximo século, com os quais deverá produzir cerca de 10% de sua energia elétrica. Ressaltou a importância de contar o país com plena autonomia na área nuclear. A esse respeito afirmou que o esforço de desenvolvimento tecnológico na área do enriquecimento por difusão gasosa foi realizado com base na percepção da viabilidade de alcançar o domínio desse processo a baixo custo, e com a vantagem de maximizar o rendimento dos reatores de potência a urânio natural, além da autonomia na produção de combustível para reatores de pesquisa. Afirmou que o enriquecimento de

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urânio seria feito apenas até o nível de 20%. Disse também que o Governo Alfonsín considerava de grande importância manter um relacionamento de cooperação e confiança com o Brasil nessa área, tanto pelo benefício que essa relação pode significar para ambos os países em termos do reforço de suas posições críticas ao regime nuclear tal como visualizado pelas grandes potências (TNP, salvaguardas full-scope, etc.), quanto pelos benefícios concretos que podem advir de maior intercâmbio entre cientistas e técnicos. Afirmou que o Governo argentino tinha a firme intenção de colocar o programa nuclear argentino no contexto de uma moldura legal abrangente, capaz de valer-lhe o apoio da opinião pública interna e internacional.

4. De minha parte, após afirmar que muito me interessava pelo relacionamento com a Argentina na área nuclear, em decorrência da participação que tivera na negociação do acordo de cooperação bilateral, sublinhei a determinação brasileira de alcançar autonomia no setor, tanto no que se refere à capacitação no projeto e construção de reatores de potência, quanto no que diz respeito ao domínio do ciclo de combustível. Observei que, embora tivessem sofrido uma desaceleração para melhor ajustamento às novas circunstâncias econômicas do país, o programa nuclear manteria sua continuidade. Acrescentei que me parecia importante que os dois países em algum momento comesçassem a examinar a questão de como evitar que a busca por cada um da autonomia no ciclo do combustível viesse a degenerar numa corrida nuclear no mau sentido da expressão. Observei que o âmago da questão estava ao meu ver na produção ou não de explosivos nucleares, pois, ainda que manufaturado por qualquer das partes um artefato nuclear para aplicação em fins pacíficos, isto por si só inevitavelmente acarretaria uma carreira nuclear de cunho arma-

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mentista, dada a impossibilidade de uma distinção prática entre o caráter pacífico ou militar de um explosivo nuclear. Sempre deixando claro que essa era apenas minha opinião pessoal e que só a ventilava entre nós, pois perante terceiros considerava eu essencial mantermos preservada a posição de princípio de defesa do direito ao completo domínio da energia e à sua utilização em todas as formas, acrescentei considerar desejável que se pudesse pensarem fazer algo no plano bilateral que deixasse inequivocamente claro não perseguirem os dois países, na sua busca pelo domínio do ciclo do combustível, a produção de explosivos nucleares. Afirmei que nesse sentido me parecia importante que a legislação sobre o programa nuclear argentino não contemplasse a hipótese de explosivos nucleares, pois isso por si só já suscitaria apreensões no Brasil e em outros países.

5. Sábato concordou com minhas observações, e disse que as teria em conta na tarefa de que fora incumbido, de coordenar a preparação do projeto de lei sobre o programa nuclear.

6. Em conversas posteriores, inclusive à margem da reunião de Cartagena sobre dívida externa, Sábato concordou com a idéia, que a ele apresentei mais uma vez a título puramente pessoal, de uma declaração conjunta na qual, depois de reafirmarem os dois Governos todas as suas posições de princípio quanto ao domínio e uso da energia nuclear, diriam fatualmente não contemplarem seus respectivos programas nucleares, em nenhum de seus aspectos, a produção de explosivos nucleares. Combinamos que, quando viesse a materializar-se a perspectiva de um encontro entre os Presidentes Figueiredo e Alfonsín, procuraríamos suscitar a idéia de uma tal declaração junto aos setores competentes de cada Governo, sempre no firme entendimento de que, caso uma das partes não julgasse cabível tal

MEMORANDUM to Mr. MINISTER OF STATE
ON THE 10TH OF JANUARY OF 1985

SECRET

G/08

Brazil-Argentina.

Nuclear energy.

The first time I met Chancellor Dante Caputo, on December 3rd, 1983, even before Alfonsín took office, Your Excellency brought up the matter of the relationship between the two countries in the nuclear field. According to the account given in telegrams 001 and 002 of the Chancellor Series on the 4th of December of 1983 from the Embassy in Buenos Aires, Your Excellency affirmed that:

"I consider it of great importance for each of our countries, for their bilateral relationship and their image in front of the international community in general, that both could dissipate, in Latin America, in the USA and in Europe, any idea of rivalry or ulterior motives in our respective nuclear programs, as well as not creating an opening through which someone could try to play us against one another.

You said as well, as my thing, that we would talk within the Brazilian government about the possibility that at some moment Brazil and Argentina could make a joint declaration in which they, without giving up on the principle of their right to full access and use of nuclear energy, make it clear that they do not have any intention of producing nuclear explosives. Dante Caputo said he thought it was a very good idea, and that he would explore the matter on his side. It was understood that we would return to dealing with the subject in due course.

2. Posterior to this first conversation between Your Excellency and Minister Caputo, my involvement in numerous matters of the Brazilian-Argentinian Relationship (bilateral commerce, political decisions on the question of external debt, "policy planning" conversations) led to the establishment of close working relations with some of the principal employees of San Martín, among them Sub-secretary Jorge Sábato. With the intention of exploring the possibility of a joint declaration between the two governments on the lines of what was mentioned by Your Excellency to Minister Caputo, I proceeded to carefully approach the theme together with the Sub-secretary Sábato, using the numerous contacts we maintained within the last twelve months.

3. During the first exchange of ideas on the relationship in the nuclear field that we had on May 1984, on the margin of the meetings held in Buenos Aires on the theme of bilateral commerce and for conversations on "policy planning," Sábato gave me a general sense of the Argentinian Nuclear Program, pointing out that, although it still has something like 35 thousand MW of hydroelectric potential, Argentina will need around 6 powered reactors up to the beginning of the next century, with which it should produce around 10% of their electric energy.

He stressed the importance of having the country in plain autonomy in the nuclear area. On this matter he affirmed that the effort of developing technology in the area of enrichment for gaseous diffusion was realized on the basis of the perception of viability of reaching the mastery of this process at a low cost, and with the advantage of maximizing the output of the power reactors to natural uranium, besides the autonomy in the production of fuel for research reactors. He affirmed that the enrichment of uranium would only be done until it reaches the level of 20%. He said as well that the Alfonsín

Administration considered it of great importance to maintain a relationship of cooperation and confidence with Brazil in the area, as much for the benefits that this relationship can signify for both countries in terms of backing up the Brazilians' and Argentinians' positions critical to the nuclear programs as envisioned by the great powers (NPT, full scope safeguards, etc.) as for the concrete benefits that could arise from the greater exchange between scientists and technicians. He affirmed that the Argentinian government had the firm intention of placing the Argentinian nuclear program in the context of a wide legal frame, capable of gaining him the support of internal and international public opinion.

4. On my part, after asserting that the relationship with Argentina in the nuclear field was very interesting to me, due to the participation I had in the negotiations of the bilateral cooperation agreement, I underlined the Brazilians' determination to reach autonomy in the sector both in terms of what you refer to as qualification in the projection and construction of power reactors, as well as what you said in respect to the domination of the fuel cycle. I observed that, although it had suffered a deceleration to better adjust to the economic circumstances of that country, the nuclear program would continue. I added that it appeared important to me that the two countries at some time examine the question of how to prevent the search for autonomy in the fuel cycle from degenerating into a nuclear race in the worst sense of the expression.

I observed that the core of the question in my view was preventing the production of nuclear explosives, because, if either side manufactured a nuclear device meant for peaceful applications, this in itself would only inevitably lead to a nuclear race, given the impossibility of a practical distinction between the peaceful or military character of a nuclear explosive. I always left it clear that this was only my personal opinion and that I would only air it between us, because in front of third parties I considered it essential that we maintain the position of defending the principle of the right of complete domination of energy and its utilization in all its forms, I added it would be desirable to do something on the bilateral plane that made it unequivocally clear that the two countries would not pursue, in their search for the domination of the fuel cycle, the production of nuclear explosives. I affirmed that in this sense the Argentinian nuclear program did not contemplate the hypothesis of nuclear explosives, because this in itself would only raise apprehension in Brazil and in other countries.

5. Sábato agreed with my observations, and said that he would have them in mind completing the task he was tasked with, coordinating the preparations of the projects of law on the nuclear program.

6. In posterior conversations, including at the margins of the Cartagena reunion on external debt, Sábato agreed with the idea, which I presented to him again in a purely personal manner, a joint deceleration in which, after which the two governments reaffirmed their principal positions on the domination and use of nuclear energy, they would factually state that their nuclear program did not contemplate, in any of its aspects, the production of nuclear explosives. We agreed that, when it came to making the prospect of a meeting between the Presidents Figueiredo and Alfonsín happen, we would try and raise the idea of such a declaration together with the competent sectors of each government, always with the firm understanding that, if one of the sides judged the idea impossible or that in some way it could be badly interpreted by the other, or otherwise hurt any other aspect of the bilateral relationship.

7. Characterizing the perspectives of a meeting between Presidents Figueiredo and Alfonsín when the presence of Sub-secretary Sábato in Brasilia for the General-Assembly of the OAS, was the matter of the conversation between Your Excellency and the Minister Danilo Venturini at the lunch I was at. Your Excellency on the occasion exposed him to the matter, describing its evolution and showing the

positive significance that such a deceleration would have for the credibility and acceptance of the nuclear program on our own Brazilian public, besides the positive repercussion that it would have together on the international community. Your Excellency then handed to Minister Venturini, for his contemplations, copies of the annexed documents, that constitutes a synopsis for an Informative to the President of the Republic, with the presentation of ideas and a draft of what could be a declaration for the two presidents on the referred lines.

8. Minister Venturini from the beginning had a receptive reaction to the idea, who affirmed that he had come out of concern, to get rid of certain misinterpretations and mistrust on what are the true objectives of the Brazilian nuclear program.

9. Your Excellency afterwards mentioned the matter to the President of the Republic, who as well had in principal a positive reaction on the general idea. On the occasion Your Excellency informed the President of the Republic that, as I was on the eve communicating by phone with Sub-secretary Sábato, President Alfonsín had approved the initiative. To Minister Venturini, according to this said Your Excellency, the President of the Republic confirmed that he had no objections in principal, but said he wished to see the idea examined by various sectors interested in the Brazilian nuclear program.

10. Later Your Excellency informed me that the matter had been examined and that, nevertheless having been favorable in many sectors, had not yet reached a consensus regarding the matter, given certain doubts raised about the opportunity of such a declaration at this moment and as to the risk of interpretation that it could bring consequences to our basic positions in the nuclear area.

11. While talking with Sub-secretary Sábato I informed him of what preceded, telling him that:

a) the idea had found general acceptance, including in high levels of Government;

b) it had not, however, come to obtain the necessary consensus, given that in some sectors doubts appeared regarding concern on the opportunity and interpretations that, even if mistaken, could weaken the political positions of that country in the field of nuclear energy;

c) naturally not making the deceleration at the presidential meeting, in no way meant that Brazil was contemplating the production of explosives;

d) the matter, as we agreed, was not the object of any formal contact between the two Governments, having been only a hypothetical exercise between the two of us.

Respectfully,
(Roberto Abdenur)