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US completes releases of records on Argentina's dirty war

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WASHINGTON

The U.S. gave Argentina on Friday 5,600 newly declassified documents related to human rights abuses committed during the military dictatorship that ruled the South American country between 1976 and 1983.

The collection comes from 16 agencies and adds to the nearly 50,000 pages of documents already delivered as part of The Argentina Declassification Project, the largest government-to-government declassification effort in U.S. history.

During a ceremony at the National Archives Building, United States archivist David Ferriero handed several hard drives of scanned documents to Argentine Minister of Justice Germán Garavano.

Garavano later told reporters that the documents include details such as names of perpetrators and victims that may help Argentina's judicial system close at least some of the 400 pending investigations into 30,000 people disappeared by the dictatorship.

The latest records mark the fourth and final release by the U.S. government of documents pertaining to the period.

The review process, which began in 2002, gained traction with requests by Argentine President Mauricio Macri to former U.S. President Barack Obama and President Donald Trump.

A total of 380 US government staff from all the 16 agencies that participated devoted 3,200 hours identifying and reviewing relevant records, according to John Powers, associate director of the information security oversight office at the National Archives.

Powers said that only 3% of the released records are redacted and that only 1% of all documents related to the issue have not been turned over.

Carlos Osorio, an analyst with the nongovernmental organization National Security Archive, said the project represents a "new model of declassification diplomacy" and "stands as a uniquely valuable contribution to the cause of human rights, the cause of justice and the cause of our fundamental right-to-know."

The documents were presented as U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo began a four-day Latin America tour that takes him to Chile, Paraguay and Peru.