

The Washington Post

Wednesday, June 11, 2003; Page A31

World In Brief -- The Americas

Powell Visits Argentina

By Brian Byrnes

BUENOS AIRES – Conceding that the establishment of a Free Trade Area of the Americas by 2005 is a “very ambitious directive,” Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said the United States would consider other trade agreements “of a bilateral or regional nature” in Latin America.

“We are looking at a Central American free trade area and we are examining relations with Mercosur to see what might be possible there,” said Powell following a meeting with the Argentine President Nestor Kirchner. Mercosur is the regional trading bloc of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Powell stopped in the Argentine capitol on his way back from the Organization of American States conference in Santiago, Chile. Last week, the United States and Chile signed a trade agreement that will eliminate or reduce many tariffs.

Powell’s visit was without incident, a stark contrast to last August when then-U.S. Treasury Secretary Paul H. O’Neill was greeted by hundreds of angry Argentines burning American flags and denouncing policies of the United States and the International Monetary Fund.