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Telegram From the Embassy in Chile to the Department of State

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4870. Subj: CIA and the Golpe. Ref: Santiago 4449 and 4488.

1. Fon Min Valdes called me in today for what was virtual re-run of my sessions with Silva last month (reftels). Said he was speaking for President Frei and on his instructions.

2. According Valdes, Frei increasingly concerned by large volume of reports from reliable sources re CIA involvement in golpe plotting. Sources allegedly include unspecified Embassies of “friendly countries.” (Perhaps as result look I gave him at that point Valdes hastened to say he was not repeat not referring to Soviets.) Understandably, CIA must be diligent in keeping USG informed and many of these reports probably arise from those efforts. Nevertheless, enough information is at hand to give “impression” that CIA could be involved in promoting a coup.

3. Valdes elaborated in his usual devious manner by quoting unnamed persons as believing that USG has decided on military solution because of Alessandri’s age and unacceptability either Tomic or any candidate of the left. Said such “people” saw golpe instigators as being of two types: Socialists who are stirring up lower military ranks and extreme rightists working at higher levels. Both can be handled, but danger comes from “foreign instigation”—presumably of latter.

4. Valdes went on to note that GOC keeping a sharp eye on which Chileans are visiting Washington these days. Said that while he had heard of absolutely nothing improper re our reception of these travelers, comings and goings of certain types had added to “impression” that something was afoot. In this context, Fon Min referred to meetings of Senators and Deputies last night in which grave concern expressed re CIA, Washington visitors, Rockefeller recommendations on security matters and the like.

5. In response, I reminded Valdes of my two lengthy interviews with Silva and of Ambassador’s letter to President Frei. Said I was going to repeat our previous response to these incredible charges, and did so point by point (reftels). Emphasized that I took full responsibility in Ambassador’s absence for all USG personnel in this country and if GOC had any specific persons or actions in mind they should let me know.

6. Re efforts keep ourselves informed—which I conceded is exactly our intention—said we know who are spreading these unfounded CIA rumors that individuals involved are by no means all Communists, and that some, motivated by intense anti-Americanism, are “well-placed.” I also dwelt at some length on irrationality of thesis that USG desires “military solution” here or anywhere in Latin America.

7. Valdes did not offer usual protestations of faith in USG policy but agreed that what I said made sense. He declined present any specific charges and said he wanted avoid “scandal” which would come with request for expulsion of any particular individual. Concluded with request purportedly from President Frei, that I “restrain” those involved in this matter.

8. I reiterated my acceptance of responsibility for our people’s actions, past, present or future. Told him he had my categoric assurance that there was simply nothing to these accusations. Warned him this would go down badly in Washington, as it did with me. Re Washington travelers bit, said that as old Dominican hand I knew that game backward and forward. Recounted story of one Lajara Burgos who returned from such a trip to announce to Santo Domingo press that he had blessings of Pentagon and State Department as prospective PRD Presidential candidate.

9. Valdes and I concluded this latest round on polite but somewhat less than cordial terms. Fon Ministry Director General Pablo Valdes, who is both a lackey and a cipher, sat in on meeting. His only contribution was a sad and baleful countenance.

10. Comment: One of principal culprits in spreading CIA stories is Fon Ministry Political Advisor Eduardo Palma. I had him in mind in making Valdes aware that we have identified tale-bearers. Also had Valdes himself in mind when I remarked on irrationality of theory re USG’s new pro-military policy—a theory Valdes has reportedly been vigorously propagating.

11. We have had numerous reports last few days of buzzing in PDC circles about CIA and golpe. In part this reflects familiar tendency to externalize problems—to seek scapegoat for difficulties of government’s own making. Also demonstrates Party’s well-known susceptibility to Communist ploys. Finally, Party and government are feeling unloved, especially by USG. This is ridiculous in view of insistence on Chilean “independence” but Department will understand characteristic ambivalence involved.

12. We know of no specific activities on our part here which could be interpreted in any rational fashion as involvement in coup plotting. I have asked appropriate elements of our Mission to pursue information on military situation with due discretion but vigorously, and do not believe we should change that course of action. Real golpe, which I do not expect at least in immediate future, would be very much against our interests here. We should be in position to use whatever influence we have to counter such a threat.

13. I recommend that I be instructed to go back hard at Valdes with frank message that USG finds these continuing accusations intolerable.