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Telegram From the Embassy in Chile to the Embassy in Venezuela

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Nota de Archivo: *Santiago. Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1967–69, POL 23–9 CHILE. Confidential; Immediate. Repeated priority to the Department, USCINCSO, and DIA. Rumors concerning plans for coups continued to surface through the end of the year and were reported in CIA Intelligence Information Cables TDCS DB–315/04881–69, November 18; TDCS 314/16272–69, November 21; TDCS 314/17198–69, December 11; and TDCS 314/17358–69, December 14; all are ibid., Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 773, Country Files, Latin America, Chile, Vol. I.*

4905. Subj: Military Unrest in Chile. Ref: Caracas 5744.

1. President Frei declared state of emergency in Santiago Province Nov. 19 during period of considerable tension brought on by rumors of impending military action against GOC. Rumors were occasioned in large part by open discontent in Armed Forces over long-festering problem of low military pay scale. State of emergency seems designed principally to permit GOC pressure news media and thus inhibit spread of alarming stories.

2. Also on Nov. 19, GOC announced new military pay schedule with generous increases at all levels. Our best info is that Armed Forces are satisfied at least for time being. Ex-General Roberto Viaux, leader of Oct. 21 Tacna regiment “sit-in” and self-appointed spokesman for the discontented, has continued stir things up through gratuitous comments to press on method of financing pay raise and other issues. Nevertheless his consistent denial of golpe intentions should be noted.

3. Civilian support for “military solution” appears confined to a few fringe elements such as extremist faction of Socialist Party and inveterate rightist plotters. More importantly, military have so far concentrated exclusively on institutional grievances—pay, equipment and make-up of high command—and have yet to demonstrate any concern for broader political issues. Although a few officers may harbor political ambitions, there is not hard evidence to date of a concerted movement in Armed Forces to overthrow GOC.

4. Tensions have abated markedly since Nov. 19 and we do not believe GOC is in any immediate danger. At same time, malaise among military is likely persist as long more fundamental problems remain unsolved. These relate to the institutional mission of the Armed Forces and to their place and role in a rapidly changing Chilean society. Key figures in GOC, including new civilian Min Def Sergio Ossa, seem to understand nature of such problems and to be looking for solution.

5. In discussion foregoing with GOV, you will wish bear in mind that some in GOC evidence doubts re true attitude of USG. Defamatory campaign of rumors and public speculation re CIA involvement in golpe plotting coupled with distorted reporting of Rockefeller recommendations have clearly had their effect in these quarters. Subject Department’s concurrence, I would recommend that you emphasize to GOV our unaltered support for Chilean democracy and our rejection of notion that “military solution” here would be anything but harmful to interests of USG and its hemisphere partners.