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Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Chile

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153950. For Ambassador from Asst Secretary Meyer. Subj: Presentation of Secretary's Letter and Note to Foreign Minister. Ref: Santiago 4359.

1. Letelier in call on me August 20 showed what I took to be genuine nervousness over signs of decay in his own standing at home concurrent with recent downturn in US-Chilean relations. He mentioned his concern over recent criticisms of him printed in Ultima Hora.

2. He professed to agree completely with me that it is unhelpful to both our governments to have our relations conducted via the newspapers.

3. Letelier claimed to have made a positive effort to deflate press polemics in his handling of his own press backgrounder lunch on August 18. (Accounts of it which we have received from newsmen present confirm that it was relatively low-key and non-provocative.)

4. Letelier repeatedly emphasized the importance which GOC attaches to Boeing loan decision as a factor in our relations and as an influence on GOC's approach to other specific problems between us.

5. Following your clear and effective presentation to Almeyda on August 20 of USG points of view, I believe that the moment has arrived for a tactical change of pace on our part.

6. My thought is that, having made our points so effectively, we can now move toward a thoughtful and deliberate atmosphere for consideration of copper questions in particular which are involved in US-Chile relations in general. First and most important immediate goal is to slow the Chileans' headlong rush toward hard conclusions on copper. A stretch-out in the time schedule and concomitant reduction in the level of Chilean emotion could also provide a more conducive atmosphere for mutual exploration of prospects for pragmatic solutions.

7. While Toha is in charge do you anticipate a standstill?

8. I look forward to the current sitrep and your comments.