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Minutes of a Meeting of the Washington Special Actions Group

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Chile

Chairman—Henry A. Kissinger

State

Kenneth Rush

Jack Kubisch

Defense

V/Adm. Raymond Peet

Robert F. Corrigan

JCS

Adm. Thomas H. Moorer

V/Adm. John P. Weinel

CIA

William Colby

David Phillips

Treasury

William Simon

John Hennessy

NSC

B/Gen. Brent Scowcroft

Richard Kennedy

William Jorden

James Barnum

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

It was agreed that:

. . . a working group, under the leadership of Mr. Jorden and Mr. Kubisch, would prepare a comprehensive paper on Chile's economic and military needs over the short, middle, and long term;

. . . a brief paper would be prepared by Mr. Kubisch on what the Allende government was like during its rule;

. . . Mr. Kubisch would take the lead in coordinating public disclosures of US policies and actions toward the new regime.

Mr. Kissinger: (to Mr. Colby) Could we get a quick rundown on the situation?

Mr. Colby briefed from the attached text.

Mr. Kissinger: (referring to Mr. Colby's briefing) What triggered this now? What was the urgency for the coup at this time?

Mr. Colby: There was nothing in particular. It has been spreading for months. There has been a general buildup of dissatisfaction, and I think the military felt the country was descending into chaos and decided to act.

Mr. Kissinger: You should have told them about my confirmation hearing. What has been the response to our overtures toward the new government, Jack? (referring to Mr. Kubisch).

Mr. Kubisch: We told General Pinochet that we want to keep up our informal contacts with the new government and also told him of our general good-will toward his government. He was pleased, and also wants to cool things for the time being. His government will want some emergency medical supplies and other things. We have already established private relations with the new government.

Mr. Kissinger: The question is, at what point we change from unofficial to official contacts. We'll keep looking at the situation over the weekend and see how things develop. Unofficial contacts have been established already. Bill, (to Mr. Colby) do you have any contacts?

Mr. Colby: No, not at this point. The problem is that the Chilean intelligence service was run by the Cubans. The service will need some fleshing out first.

Mr. Simon: Our intention, as we see it, is that we can use the coup as a bargaining point to settle the expropriation and debt resettlement issues.

Mr. Kissinger: No. I don't want to go after that now. The first thing for us not to do is to give the appearance that we are putting the pressure on them.

Mr. Kubisch: I agree. If we send a team down there to help, this would get the idea across that we want to help, but we should wait on specific matters until the dust has settled.

Mr. Kissinger: What we need is some face-saving formula. The Chileans have got to reschedule their debt, don't they?

Mr. Simon: Debt rescheduling is one thing, compensation for expropriation is another.

Mr. Kissinger: I think that compensation for the expropriation of ITT (International Telephone and Telegraph) is unlikely.

Mr. Simon: I wasn't referring to ITT specifically. Other companies have indicated an interest in talking about their claims.

Mr. Rush: I think we have to look at the political implications of this. We have to be very careful not to give the impression that our help was designed to overthrow Allende. We have to be careful to point out that we had nothing to do with the coup, which is true.

Mr. Kissinger: I wish you hadn't said that.

Mr. Hennessy: I think we have to look at it from the standpoint of our credibility. We have to determine how best we can help.

Mr. Kissinger: I agree.

Mr. Rush: I think the best way to protect our companies in Chile is to adopt a hands-off policy, let them work it out themselves with the new government.

Mr. Kissinger: We will need something to meet our legislative commitments.

Mr. Rush: I think that our best chances for gaining compensation is to postpone any actions until after the coup has quieted down and this thing is off the front pages.

Mr. Kissinger: Let me make this proposal, that we agree to no economic request until we are farther down the road. Let's get a working group together to devise an overall strategy—short term, middle term, and over the longer run. Then when a message is sent in asking for something we know what we are talking about.

Mr. Kubisch: Good! I talked to Quigley of Anaconda Copper recently. He is happy with the situation and figures they can work with the new government.

Mr. Kissinger: Let's just let the situation develop and see how the new government consolidates itself. Can we get that working group together, perhaps under Bill (Jorden)?

Adm. Moorer: There probably will be some military questions as well, such as equipment and so forth.

Mr. Kissinger: Tom (to Adm. Moorer) what is your view on the present situation?

Adm. Moorer: I think we ought to let the new government get its feet on the ground first. We can deal with the gut issues later. I think these people can be dealt with. They are a conservative group, and I think we can talk turkey to them.

Mr. Kissinger: We want to avoid the impression of being over-eager. We'll get a paper on the short, middle, and long term requirements. How long will it take to put together?

Mr. Kubisch: We have a basis already, all we have to do is flesh it out.

Mr. Kissinger: Let's aim for a Wednesday meeting. I think we have done quite well on our position to the public; have left a positive impression. But, I am bothered by the statement of the Defense spokesman to the press that we had rumors of the coup in advance and that our ships in Peru had been warned ahead of time not to go into Chilean waters. I think that we should have better coordination on our answers to the press. It is the truth that we had nothing to do with the coup, isn't it?

Mr. Rush: That is the truth, we had nothing to do with it.

Mr. Kissinger: Can we all please say the same thing next time. I [learned to] read where the Chilean Navy used the presence of our navy to start the coup. Is this true?

Adm. Moorer: No. Our ships were nowhere near Valparaiso.

Mr. Kubisch: As I recall, the ships were going to leave Monday night. They turned around, and the coup was launched. The Chilean Navy may have used this as an excuse.

Adm. Moorer: It was coincidental. The ships were already on their way.

Mr. Kissinger: Is it true that our fleet was going to be there on Tuesday morning?

Mr. Kubisch: They were to, but they turned around. It was part of the UNITAS exercise.

Adm. Moorer: It's ridiculous to connect the two, the UNITAS exercise was scheduled with the Chileans for months, and it has been a year in the making.

Mr. Kissinger: Could somebody explain that the next time something like this happens.

Adm. Moorer: It's ridiculous to cancel UNITAS in advance on the theory there might be a coup.

Mr. Kissinger: I know, but the story could have been developed that the Navy used the exercise as a cover to start the coup.

Adm. Peet: The ships were scheduled to leave the 10th (of September). The coup was on the 11th.

Mr. Kissinger: I suppose the opposite could be true too. Suppose the coup was supposed to come off, but didn't. It's like the Davis thing (referring to Amb. Davis). I asked him to come in on consultation and for him to pick a quiet period. He judged that this was the time, and that was ordered a couple of weeks ago.

Adm. Peet: Even the key people in the Chilean Government did not receive warnings.

Mr. Kissinger: We've had them for months.

Mr. Colby: There was either an intelligence gap or a communications failure.

Mr. Kissinger: Why didn't we tell Chile that a coup was coming?

Mr. Kubisch: Some warning of a coup was given in confidence. They (the Allende government) knew what we knew—even more.

Mr. Kissinger: When I get up on the Hill Monday, and they ask me about this, what am I going to say, that there weren't any specific warnings coming through?

Mr. Colby: We had a precise indication the night before the coup. You can say that we had a series of warnings, but didn't know until Monday that they were going ahead.

Mr. Kubisch: The leaders of the coup were very cagey, they refrained from tipping us off. The leadership did not tell us when it would happen.

Adm. Moorer: You can say we had indications but no warning.

Mr. Kissinger: What is happening at the UN? On what basis are the Cubans asking for a Security Council meeting?

Mr. Colby: The attack on the Cuban ship, attacks on the Cuban Embassy in Santiago.

Mr. Kissinger: What is our position? Are the Cubans actively pursuing their case?

Mr. Kubisch: We would like to see the Security Council deferred until Chile gets a good spokesman there to explain what happened. We think Chile could present a better case with a good spokesman.

Adm. Moorer: This is off the subject, but two C–130s carrying ammunition for UNITAS were dispatched on a routine basis.

Mr. Kissinger: Yes, that was routine, we said that the other day. What is the reaction to the coup of the other Latins, Jack? (to Mr. Kubisch)

Mr. Kubisch: Mexico and Peron (of Argentina) have condemned the coup.

Mr. Kissinger: I understand that Echeverria was quite taken with Allende. He was perhaps closer to Allende than anyone else.

Mr. Kubisch: Peron says the US was not involved, but he privately believes we had something to do with it. The general reaction throughout Latin America is that, in time, this could be a very good thing. From our standpoint, it is excellent. On the Venezuelan initiative, for example, (on Cuban re-admittance to the OAS) Venezuela needed one more vote. Now they need two.

Mr. Kissinger: I need somebody to give me a brief paper on what the Allende government was like. Bill (Mr. Jorden) and Jack (Mr. Kubisch) maybe you could get together on that. I have the impression that it was rather anti-US wasn't it?

Mr. Kubisch: On a multilateral basis, yes. Bilaterally, less so.

Adm. Moorer: I might add that—on Peron—that we have a report from a high-level contact in Peron's cabinet that Peron said he was glad the coup took place. He thinks he can now deal better with his own opposition.

Mr. Kissinger: Do we know for sure that Allende committed suicide, or was he killed?

Mr. Colby: It's still kinda either/or. I wished he would have asked our permission.

Adm. Moorer: He was shot in the mouth, wasn't he?

Mr. Kubisch: Yes, and he was right-handed.

Mr. Colby: We know he had about ten drinks in the morning and was loaded by noon. He has quite a history of being a boozer, under stress.

Mr. Hennessy: In this paper, can we make the point about minimal support to the other government with projected trends and not absolute programs?

Mr. Kissinger: Yes. Let's get the paper by the end of the day. I have the impression that Chile is in bad shape.

Mr. Simon: It's an economic disaster.

Mr. Kissinger: Jack (to Mr. Kubisch). I want you to take the leadership on these public disclosures. I want a coordinated position on these matters. On the paper, we'll get the short, middle, and long term projections on economic aid, humanitarian aid, military programs, debt re-scheduling. Let's have another meeting Wednesday, the paper by Tuesday. Bill, will you take the lead?