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Memorandum From William J. Jorden of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

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U.S. Covert Action Programs in Chile

The attached memo from Bill Colby outlines the covert action programs carried out in Chile since 1970. Two items of major significance stand out:

(1) We did not directly support either of the democratic candidates who opposed Allende in the 1970 elections;

(2) We never supported any program aimed at his overthrow.

The entire thrust of our activities was to keep non-communist political forces [less than 1 line not declassified] alive and healthy enough to pose some opposition to the United Party coalition (Communists and Socialists). Funds also went to keeping media voices of opposition (press and radio primarily) alive. [less than 1 line not declassified]

You will, of course, want to be very careful about handling any questions designed to bring into the open any covert action programs conducted or supported by us. To get into this, even in executive session, will open a Pandora's box. Once a precedent of discussing CIA activities before the Foreign Relations Committee is established, no programs in other countries will be immune. And with so many Senators and staff present, the likelihood of leakage is almost certain.

We have good reason to believe, of course, that there was a deliberate campaign by Allende's followers to squeeze out the opposition, especially the media. Supplies of newsprint were rationed and prices were raised. Advertisers were pressured to give their business to pro-Government newspapers and radio stations. Advertising income for the opposition media fell significantly. But all of this is difficult to prove convincingly. I have no doubt that publishers and radio owners will be making a convincing case in public in the future on this matter. But the available facts at this moment make the case tenuous in terms of legal evidence.

For these reasons, I believe any questions about undercover activities by the U.S. in Chile should be handled something like this:

"Gentlemen, as you know, I have tried to be as forthcoming and frank in these hearings as I can be. And that will be the pattern for the future. However, the question that has just been asked raises delicate matters involving intelligence operations that I think it is better not to get into in this forum. I will be happy to discuss the matter with the Committee established by the Senate to deal with these questions. And I know some members of that group are included in this Committee.

“I do want to give you this assurance: first, we did nothing to oppose the election of Mr. Allende in 1970 or to support his opponents in that election; second, we never—in any shape or form—supported any move at any time to overthrow the legal government of Chile. We did not encourage or back any coups.”