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Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Chile

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130820. Ref: Santiago 2979. For Ambassador from Meyer.

1. I regret that my absence in Bogota and John Crimmins' almost total absorption in the Mitrione/Fly case have delayed this reply.

2. Let me try to explain our concern about Phase 2 and Frei's participation in it, a concern which was expressed in my earlier message and which you seem to be misunderstanding despite the meeting of minds which Crimmins thought you and he had attained in your conversation.

3. Phase 2 as presented by you is a very specific political operation designed to try to forestall Allende's designation by Congress through the buying of the votes of key Congressmen. Phase 2 is a continuation of Phase 1 in that both are efforts to keep Allende from becoming President. The NSSM 97 exercise is addressed to US policy and strategy in the event of Allende's accession. Of course, NSSM 97 can affect judgments about Phase 2 in the sense that conceivably we may determine that the threat to our interests is so great and our counter-strategy and policy so ineffective that the assumption of the risks and uncertainties of Phase 2 is worthwhile. That remains to be seen, however.

4. Phase 2 in the judgment of everyone here in Washington is an extremely delicate, difficult and dangerous operation, if only for technical reasons. It is, to quote Bill Broe, a "security nightmare." Moreover, its possible effectiveness (i.e., its prospects for achieving the result we all desire, the blocking of the Allende accession), is still to be assessed. The calculus of feasibility, risk and effectiveness will be the heart of any decision to approve or reject Phase 2.

5. We would be rather stupid—as well as unconscionably indifferent to your reporting—if we did not appreciate that Frei's political judgments are very important in the continuing effort. My injunction upon the Embassy was in no rpt no way intended to inhibit you from keeping in as close touch with him as you considered necessary in order to keep yourself and us informed about his running analysis and to stiffen him as necessary in his apparent anti-Allende resolve, the latter being the purpose, as I understand it, of the "conditioning" you advocate. Crimmins tells me that he thought you and he had specifically cleared this general point up.

6. My cautionary guidance and the parallel guidance given to the Station by CAS Headquarters—which was in no way stimulated by us but rather represents an independent judgment independently arrived at—were and are intended to assure that none of us even intimates to any Chilean or anyone else, or leads them to infer plausibly, that we may contemplate a Phase 2 operation. We have already heard through CAS and elsewhere that there is already loose talk—totally unconnected

with the Embassy—going about that Americans are going to make their move between September 4 and October 24. Despite its possible inevitability and also its vagueness, this sort of thing makes us nervous recognizing as we do, and as you do, that nothing could play more into the hands of the Allende forces or contribute more to producing the exact result we all want to avoid than an indiscretion on Phase 2. I know that you and the Station Chief are hampered by these restraints, but I see no other prudent course, given the stakes.

7. To sum up, I certainly expect, and have expected all along, as Crimmins told you, that you would be dealing with Frei on the elections and on his intentions toward them. If your “conditioning” of him leads him to take actions on his own in consonance with our interests, great. But this process has to stay very well short of permitting him to believe or to deduce that we are contemplating a covert political operation of a Phase 2 nature.

8. In this sense, I approve the specific request you make in para 11.

9. If this reply does not satisfy your needs, please let me know, being as precise as you can about your problem.