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Memorandum From Viron P. Vaky of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)

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40 Committee Meeting, September 8—Chile

A. The purpose of tomorrow's meeting on Chile is to:

1. Review the factual situation and its implications. (CIA is prepared to brief, and a wrap-up is attached at Tab 2. Ambassador Korry has just sent in a long cable summarizing the current situation. This is also worth reading and is at Tab 3).

2. Determine whether Phase 2 operations such as that which had been suggested earlier to influence the congressional run-off election are realistic now.

3. Determine whether there is any prospect for Chilean military action to keep Allende from taking power.

4. Determine what action plan we should now follow and what further analyses we need to undertake.

B. Korry's latest views and information (Tab 3) pose some specific questions within the above major categories.

1. He indicates Alessandri supporters may be prepared to contest the run-off and not concede defeat. He indicates at one point (1–D) that Frei may also move to contest the run-off, but later bewails Frei's hand-wringing.

2. Korry indicates that the high military officers are concerned and he relates a specific proposal being kicked around by the military commanders to foster an Alessandri–Christian Democrat deal to elect Alessandri and then have Alessandri resign and in 60 days have Frei elected.

3. One military officer tried this out on Korry, and while he did not respond specifically he did in effect give some encouragement to the military to think about "their responsibilities" to find a correct and democratic solution. (See paragraph K tab 3)

4. Korry in effect is saying he is trying to keep everything flexible and options open and to encourage Chileans who are disposed to contest Allende's victory to stay firm. However, he holds no particular hope that these elements will be able successfully to contest the run-off. He does seem to be leaning more and more to encouragement and moral support of the military.

5. He asks for a few specific things:

a. that the Department lobby in other countries to keep them from taking action implying that Allende is already President. (I do not see how we can do that without tipping our hand that we, the US, would contest the election.)

b. we provide to Korry suggestions of action that could keep the Communists from consolidating the psychological sense of victory.

c. we show support of the military by restoring some training slots and extending our Army Attaché for another nine months since he enjoys their confidence.

d. he requests a [dollar amount not declassified] contingency fund "set aside" in case it is needed to support Phase 2 kind of action.

6. Korry's cable at Tab 3 is a little rambling and inconsistent. He is still trying to think of something but the information does not in my view resolve the questions very satisfactorily. In particular, he may be operating personally with a little more commitment and encouragement to the military and/or other elements than he describes in the cable.

C. The conclusions we are likely to arrive at are:

1. It continues to appear very doubtful that Allende can be denied the congressional election victory within the normal electoral framework. The Christian Democrats hold the key and Korry indicates that they are "decomposing" and that Frei is far from firm. On the other hand, the indication that Frei is examining the constitutional processes by which Allende's victory can be over turned is a contradictory sign that Korry does not explain. In balance, it seems to me that the chances of a coordinated Christian Democrat–Alessandri effort to over turn Allende's election are very slim, and are hardly promotable by us alone.

2. It is equally dubious that the Chilean military can mount any viable action against Allende. The plan given to Korry is premised on Christian Democratic cooperation but it is not clear that this is realistic. There is more indication from Korry's cable, however, of military dissatisfaction than had been indicated earlier. There is still serious doubt, however, that we could stimulate any such action that would not result in violence, civil war, and perhaps destruction of the military as an institution.

3. We need to know a lot more than we do about how Frei, Edwards, Alessandri and other key anti-Allende elements see the situation and what they propose to do. Hence it is important to get the Embassy [less than 1 line not declassified] to contact them for their views. (There may be some resistance from State on the grounds that we should not push them into courses of action they are not prepared to take themselves. Nevertheless, I think that contact to determine their views is indispensable for us to make good judgments. I also think that we can do that without triggering something that won't fly.)

4. We shall have to come to some definitive conclusions soon as to the feasibility of supporting either political action to affect the congressional election or a military effort. My own view is that neither is very realistic or worth the risk, but we will probably have to ask the Agency and State to come up with a reasonable assessment very soon.

5. We should now also begin thinking in terms of how to cope with an Allende government and how to limit and contain the adverse impact of such a government's policy. This means early consideration of NSSM–97.

D. I believe that we should end up with the following decisions:

1. Authorize the Embassy to probe the views of key elements in Chile, particularly Frei and Edwards and report these as soon as possible;

2. Task CIA/State to come up with final recommendations on what political action to take, if any, regarding the run-off and/or encouragement of military, and to do this no later than September 15.

3. Review these recommendations as soon as possible thereafter;

4. Hold a Special Review Group consideration of NSSM–97 as soon as we have reached final conclusions on point 3.

E. Attached are:

1. Talking Points.

2. CIA intelligence summary (which you may wish to skim fairly carefully.)

3. Ambassador Korry's cable of September 7.

4. Background on previous 40 Committee meetings on this subject.

5. I have not added the contingency paper CIA prepared prior to the election. Because these ideas were designed essentially for an Alessandri popular vote victory, they are not very meaningful now.

HAK TALKING POINTS—CHILE

1. All of you should have received a CIA wrap-up of the situation in Chile as it looks after Friday's election. I would like to ask CIA to summarize the situation and to brief us on Ambassador Korry's latest views.

2. I think the first point to focus on is whether there is any chance for political persuasion or action to influence the Chilean congress to elect runner-up Alessandri on October 24. (We expect the consensus to be that there is little realistic chance; since the Christian Democrats are indispensable to any vote to elect Alessandri, Frei's all out effort is indispensable. Even with it, it is not certain anything would be effective; without it it would be impossible.)

3. What are the prospects that the Chilean military will take some action to keep Allende out of the presidency? (We expect the consensus to be that such prospects are poor. Korry indicates they are thinking about something but it is a tenuous plan, also dependent on the Christian Democrats whom Korry thinks are falling apart. No one can demonstrate any reasonable prospect which we can support and since an attempt which fails may enable Allende to destroy the military institution in one move and thus eliminate the greatest restraint on him; we ought to be leery about whether we should encourage this kind of action—at least now).

4. The discussion shows that judgments about what is likely to happen and what we ought to do cannot be made very confidently without more information as to what the views and intentions of people like Frei, Alessandri, Augustin Edwards are. Ambassador Korry has indicated that he has begun to make contact to find out. I take it there is no objection in this regard. (State may have some qualms, but I think our people must be able to talk frankly with the Chileans; there is no need to talk in terms of organizing an operation, just to gain political intelligence.)

5. What about Korry's specific requests contained in his latest cable? (See B–5 in your memo. I do not believe you will want to discuss these exhaustively, and I suggest that they be rolled in and answered in the definitive recommendations you request in the next point.)

6. Korry's latest cable states he is trying to keep all options open. But his assessment is not hopeful. He gives us little guide for any judgment as to whether any political action program by us aimed at keeping Allende out of power has any realistic chance. I must confess that we seem to be where we were several weeks ago. The time has come to decide whether there is anything we can do or whether we should move to planning for an Allende government so as to "limit the damage."

7. I propose that after a prompt reading of the various key elements we talked about earlier, CIA and State present their definitive recommendations to this Committee as to whether there is anything further to pursue in this sense. If not we should shift to considering NSSM–97 and our long range strategy.