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Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency

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Nota de Archivo: *Summary: This memorandum recounted the operational details of U.S. covert actions in Chile in response to instructions from President Nixon given in a meeting on September 15. These actions included funding for El Mercurio, the conservative Chilean paper, communications with the Argentine military to uncover additional Chilean vulnerabilities, and investigations into possible coups brewing within the Chilean military. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 777, Country Files, Latin America, Chile, 1970. Secret; Sensitive; Eyes Only. Regarding the September 15 meeting with President Nixon, see Foreign Relations, 1969–1976, vol. XXI, Chile, 1969–1973, Document 93.*

The following actions have been taken in response to the President’s instructions of 15 September 1970:

1. Organizational:

a. Two special operating units have been organized at Agency Headquarters and were in operation by 18 September. Both units will operate within the Agency under the cover of the 40 Committee approval of 14 September for political action.

b. Three Chiefs of Station have been recalled, two arrived in Washington on 18 September to serve as Chief and Deputy Chief of one of the special operating units which will be known as the military unit of the task force.

c. [1 paragraph (4½ lines) not declassified]

d. The original 40 Committee program group has also been augmented by the addition of two officers. This unit will continue to function from the present quarters of the Chile Desk to provide support for the 40 Committee program.

2. Political/Economic:

[2 paragraphs (13 lines) not declassified]

c. The Communists have been conducting an intensive campaign to gain control of all media in Chile before the election run-off. El Mercurio has been a key target. All of our [less than 1 line not declassified] Stations [less than 1 line not declassified] have been advised of this campaign and instructed to generate press support for El Mercurio’s position of resistance to pressures of Allende’s forces.

d. Our Station Chief in Santiago has indirect contact with various Chilean military leaders [1 line not declassified]. There is a clear evidence of possible coup plans which call for President Frei’s authorization to take the following steps:

(1) Resignation of the Cabinet,

(2) Formation of the new Cabinet composed entirely of military figures,

(3) Appointment by Frei of an acting President,

(4) Frei's departure from Chile.

The success of such a coup would ultimately depend on Frei's total commitment to follow through.

e. Agency representatives debriefed [1½ lines not declassified] as part of a continuing attempt to identify possible military leads and economic vulnerabilities.

f. Two senior staff officers have arranged to meet with [less than 1 line not declassified] to brief him on the Chilean situation and to ask him to contact [name not declassified] and obtain his support in persuading his counterpart in Chile from taking any public action to endorse Allende.

3. Propaganda:

a. A series of guidance cables have been sent [less than 1 line not declassified] urging them to attempt to generate press response in their respective countries which is intended to:

(1) help create an atmosphere of hope that an alternative to a Marxist government in Chile will be found;

(2) avoid premature acceptance by the general public of an Allende fait accompli;

(3) convince Chileans that a majority of their fellow Latins are concerned, watchful, and hopeful that an appropriate solution can be found;

(4) generate support for the efforts of El Mercurio's owners and publishers to continue to fight to bring about Allende's defeat;

(5) make a maximum effort to exploit through all media assets the reported campaign which the Communists are conducting to gain control of all media in Chile prior to the election run-off.

b. Guidance cables were also sent to selected European Stations requesting appropriate support of the above noted objectives.

c. A paper has been prepared for the Director proposing that he contact [name not declassified] to enlist his support in having [less than 1 line not declassified] assist El Mercurio and expose the Communists campaign to control the media of Chile.

d. We are exploring ways in which [less than 1 line not declassified] to determine how [less than 1 line not declassified] might bring its influence to bear on the Chilean situation.

e. [1 paragraph (5½ lines) not declassified]

f. [1½ lines not declassified] we are exploring the possibility of having the Brazilian and Argentine military discreetly encourage the Chilean Army to take action to prevent Allende's succession.

g. In a continuing effort to identify possible economic pressure points we have enlisted the support of experts from various components of the Agency.

h. Upon receipt of the intelligence from our Santiago Station indicating that a possible military coup was developing, a cable was sent to COS, Santiago indicating he should discreetly encourage such a movement.

i. We are in the process of contacting [3 lines not declassified] who [1 line not declassified] will be sounded out on any possibilites for discreet recontact of Frei by him personally. If that is possible, we would hope to use him to stiffen Frei's resolve to keep an Allende government from coming into power.