World: CBS television: Henry Kissinger, U.S. involved in 1970 Chilean plot

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The Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (September 9, 2001 8:00 p.m. EDT) - Henry Kissinger and the United States were more deeply involved than was previously thought in a 1970 plot to prevent a left-wing politician from becoming the president of Chile, CBS television news reported Sunday.

The program "60 Minutes" quotes an independent researcher as saying the CIA sent a cable to its office in Chile instructing agents there to continue fomenting a military takeover. The cable came following a conversation with Kissinger, who at the time was President Nixon's national security adviser and later became secretary of state.

According to researcher Peter Kornbluh, the order also came a day after Kissinger has said he cut off any attempt to undermine Chile's democratic government.

The plot did not prevent the Marxist Salvador Allende, who had won a September 1970 presidential election, from taking office the next month. But the right-wing plotters killed Chilean Gen. Rene Schneider, described as an opponent of the Chilean military's involvement in politics.

Three years later, Allende committed suicide while his palace was being bombed by the Chilean military, and Gen. Augusto Pinochet took over as the country's military dictator.

Kissinger declined to appear on the "60 Minutes" program, CBS said. Kissinger's office late Sunday returned a message from The Associated Press but was unable to reach him immediately for comment.

However, the program aired Kissinger's testimony during a 1975 Senate investigation saying he ordered all contacts with the coup plotters to be cut off on Oct. 15, 1970.

Kornbluh told the program: "The very next day, the CIA sent a cable to the station in the Chilean capital of Santiago, based on its conversation with Kissinger, which is referred to in the very first line. This cable was absolutely explicit: It is the continuing policy of the U.S. government to foment a coup in Chile."

Kornbluh is a senior analyst at the National Security Archive, an independent research institute which works at getting secret U.S. documents declassified,

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research institute which works at getting secret U.S. documents declassified, according to CBS.

The 1975 Senate investigation had already determined Nixon had wanted to incite a military takeover, but Kissinger's testimony indicated the United States had stopped any such attempt before Schneider's slaying.

Kornbluh also said newly revealed documents show that the U.S. intelligence community believed a coup could not be carried out in Chile in 1970.

Edward Korry, then the U.S. ambassador to Chile, said on "60 Minutes" that he also advised Kissinger that a coup would fail and boomerang against Nixon just as the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba had put the United States in a bad light a decade earlier.

Korry said he had already ordered all contacts cut off with the coup plotters in the Chilean military, but CBS cited what it said were minutes of an Oct. 7 meeting of a covert action committee in which Kissinger allegedly said that Korry's orders "should be rescinded forthwith."

Also appearing in the program was retired Col. Paul Wimert, a former military attache in Chile who CBS said was assigned the task of promoting a coup in Chile to block Allende.

Wimert told the program that he delivered weapons to the CIA to use in a plot to kidnap Schneider and send him to neighboring Argentina. The move was supposed to incite a military takeover of the government and prevent Allende from taking office, he said.

However, Schneider was shot during the kidnapping attempt on Oct. 22, 1970, and died two days later.

Schneider's son, also named Rene, said on "60 Minutes" that his family is planning to file a suit against Kissinger in the United States.

On Sunday, police in Santiago used tear gas and water cannons to scatter demonstrators marking the 28th anniversary of the start of Pinochet's dictatorship.

Police said some 7,000 people joined the march organized by human rights organizations, leftist groups and relatives of victims of repression during Pinochet's 1973-90 rule.

There were no reports of injuries or arrests.

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