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U.S. tried to manipulate Chile

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate Intelligence Committee said Thursday the United States spent millions of dollars in a ten-year undercover effort to influence the course of domestic politics in Chile.

A 62-page study described U.S. attempts to manipulate the Chilean press, influence elections and foment a military coup. However, the report said the committee could find no evidence of direct American involvement in the military coup which toppled Marxist President Salvador Allende in 1973.

At a news briefing, Gregg Trevorton of the committee staff said, "It is fair to say that the U.S. cannot escape some responsibility for (Allende's) downfall."

Other parts of the report described secret U.S. efforts to prevent Allende's election and after they failed to block him from taking office.

The covert actions began in 1964, with financial support for Allende's chief opponent, Eduardo Frei, the committee

report said. Frei was elected in 1964. After Allende was elected president of Chile in 1970, the report added, the U.S. began "advocating and encouraging the overthrow of a democratically elected government."

The covert operations, carried out by the CIA, were aimed at encouraging the overthrow of Allende and were approved by the 40 Committee headed by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, according to the report. Kissinger has stated publicly that all covert actions he approved against Chile also were known to then President Nixon.

The report noted that "the United States was seen, by its covert actions, to have contradicted not only its official declarations but its treaty commitments and principles of long standing." The charters of both the United Nations and the Organization of American States prohibit member nations from interfering in the affairs of other countries, except in self defense.

In comparing covert actions in Chile to those in other countries, the staff report said "the scale of CIA involvement in Chile was unusual but by no means unprecedented." Staff members said they issued the report because the White House had forbidden administration officials and former CIA employees to testify in public about Chile.

Among the specific operations cited in the Senate committee report were:

—The CIA developed sources within Chile's major daily newspaper who "wrote articles or editorials favorable to U.S. interests in the world ... suppressed news items harmful to the United States ... and authorized articles critical of Chilean leftists."

—CIA funds "financed Chilean groups who erected wall posters, passed out political leaflets ... and engaged in other street activities."