

Nixon Defends Acts in Chile; Cites JFK and LBJ Moves

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By Laurence Stern
Washington Post Staff Writer

Former President Nixon said his efforts to undermine the presidency of the late Salvador Allende in Chile were prompted by "the same national security interests" that led Presidents Kennedy and Johnson to intervene secretly in that country.

Nixon's acknowledgement of his role in launching covert Central Intelligence Agency operations against Allende in 1970 was made in a 34-page document containing his sworn answers to questions posed by the Senate intelligence committee.

The former President's responses covered a range of inquiries touching on the Chile intervention as well as

his authorization of domestic operations by the CIA and FBI such as break-ins, wiretapping and interception of cable traffic.

In dealing with the intervention in Chile as well as the controversial surveillance programs targeted against American citizens, Nixon repeatedly argued that he had followed the lead of his predecessors in the White House.

In 1964, he said, during Allende's earlier bid for the presidency, "I was aware . . . that the incumbent administration in the United States determined that it was in the interest of this nation to impede Mr. Allende's becoming president because of his alignment with and support from

various Communist countries, especially Cuba."

Nixon said that the Kennedy and Johnson administrations "expended approximately \$4 million on behalf of Mr. Allende's opponents and had prevented Mr. Allende from becoming president."

In the arena of surveillance activities within the United States, Nixon said: "I remember learning on various occasions that during administrations prior to mine, agencies or employees of the United States government, acting presumably without a warrant, conducted wiretaps, surreptitious or unauthorized entries, and intercepts of voice

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and non-voice communications."

In a sharp response to the former President's answers, Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho) of the Senate intelligence committee criticized Nixon's advocacy of a doctrine of "the sovereign presidency" as a "pernicious and dangerous doctrine."

Church acknowledged that his investigation uncovered evidence of abuses in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. But he said the lesson was not that "the illegal actions were justified," it was that "once government officials start believing they have the power to act secretly and outside the law we have started down a long slippery slope which culminates in Watergate."

In his version of the Chile

intervention Nixon softened his own involvement as compared with the way it was described in the Senate intelligence committee special report on assassination plots against foreign leaders involving the CIA.

Nixon said he did not specifically remember ordering the launching of a military coup against the government of Chile by the CIA.

The Senate report said, "There is no question that the CIA received a direct intion from the President on Sept. 15 (1970) to attempt to foment a coup. . ." It cited cable traffic from CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., to the Santiago, Chile, CIA station alluding to authority "to work toward a military solution to problem . . ." of preventing Allende's accession to office.

Nixon said that while he did not recall the specific means to be used by the CIA in preventing Allende from assuming the presidency, he did recall some means to achieve that end.

"I recall discussing the di-

rect expenditure of funds to assist Mr. Allende's opponents, the termination of United States financial aid and assistance programs as a means of adversely affecting the Chilean economy and the effort to enlist support of various factions, including the military, behind a candidate who could defeat Mr. Allende in a congressional confrontation," Nixon acknowledged.

The former President gave his answer to one of the more perplexing mysteries of the Watergate tapes in a response to a committee question.

He was asked about his assertion in the June 23, 1972, tape transcript that ". . . we protected (former CIA Director Richard M.) Helms from one hell of a lot of things."

Nixon said that the off-hand remark referred to his defense of efforts by Helms to oppose by legal action if necessary the disclosure of CIA secrets in a forthcoming book. "I recall assuring Mr. Helms he was doing the right thing in defending the

CIA and that he would have my full support despite criticism," said the former President.

Asked whether he was informed that any member of his administration had "lied to or intentionally misled" any congressional committees on events in Chile from 1970 to 1973, Nixon said he could not ever recall being so informed.

Former CIA Director Helms and several State Department witnesses testified to foreign relations committees of the House and Senate that the United States had launched no covert political campaigns against Allende. The testimony was given before the congressional disclosures that the CIA had spent from \$11 million to \$13 million in efforts since 1969 to block Allende's election and then topple his government.

While most of Nixon's responses cited his failure to recall specific actions or authorizations of a questionable nature, he was most expansive in responding to the committee's invitation to express his "comments and suggestions" for organizing the intelligence service.

He suggested that congressional oversight over intelligence functions be exercised by a single joint committee with a six-member staff operating under criminal sanctions for disclosure of classified information to unauthorized persons.

The former President denounced as "irresponsible journalism" the publication of classified information in the national media. "I realize it is in vogue to rail against covert activities and clandestine operations," he said. ". . . The pendulum has swung too far."