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CHILE: Government Contingency Plans. (U)

[redacted] High-ranking government officials have reportedly drawn up contingency plans to sabotage the plebiscite on 5 October and to nullify the electoral process if the government is perceived as losing the referendum.

[redacted] Close supporters of President Pinochet are said to have contingency plans to derail the plebiscite by encouraging and staging acts of violence. They hope that such violence will elicit further reprisals by the radical opposition and begin a cycle of rioting and disorder. The plans call for government security forces to intervene forcefully and, citing damage to the electoral process and balloting facilities, to declare a state of emergency. At that point, the elections would be suspended, declared invalid, and postponed indefinitely.

[redacted] have stated that the military will not tolerate significant opposition violence or any activity recognized by the government as unconstitutional. They added that if the opposition were to challenge the government and engage in antigovernment activity, the military would take extreme, forceful measures to contain such activity. They also stated that the results would be more severe than they were in 1973, when President Allende was overthrown in a bloody coup.

COMMENT: [redacted] The contingency plans, if implemented, would counter conventional logic since Pinochet would subvert the constitutional process that has thus far provided his legal basis for rule. If the opposition reacts the way the government hopes it will and plays into its hands, the probability of serious, widespread bloodshed will increase considerably.

[redacted] The plans would provoke vehement international condemnation that would be enhanced by the presence of several hundred international observers. In addition, the security forces would probably face a radical left swelled by some former moderates who would view the new political situation as radical and lacking prospects for moderation or future accommodation.

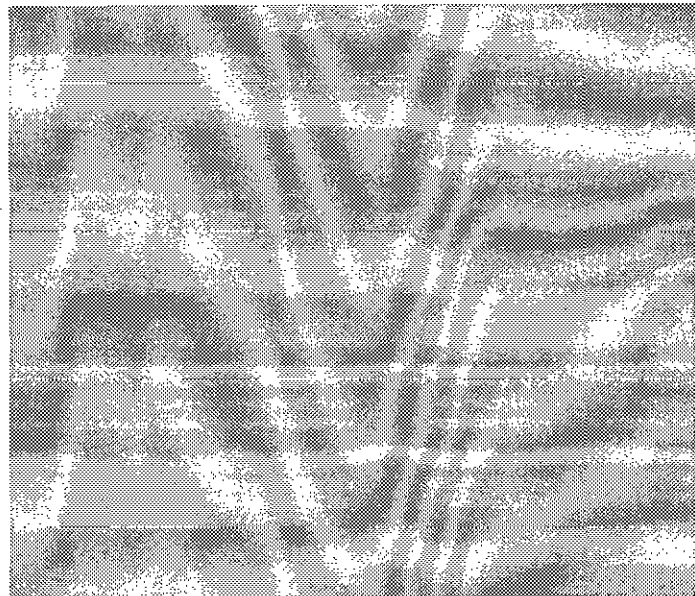
[redacted] Whether the commanders of the other military services represented in the junta are aware of the contingency plans is unclear. However, their personal and institutional commitments to the constitutional process would lead them to resist Pinochet if he chooses to implement plans to derail the vote. The President might ignore such protests for short-term gain if he were convinced that the army would fully back him. However, most army officers have expressed confidence in a government victory, and the majority have indicated that the military's proper reaction to a "no" victory, barring massive violence, would be to abide by the constitutional framework.

[redacted] Considering the existence of extralegal contingency plans, close supporters of Pinochet have apparently considered ignoring the negative repercussions of an aborted plebiscite to ensure his continuation in power. Weighing the possible negative repercussions, the President's close supporters have evidently opted for disrupting the plebiscite and making sure that Pinochet stays in office regardless of the cost.

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