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The United States' Janus-Faced Approach To Operation Condor:
Implications For The Southern Cone in 1976

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Martín Almada, a prominent educator and outspoken critic of the repressive regime of President Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay, was arrested at his home in 1974 by the Paraguayan secret police and disappeared for the next three years. He was charged with being a “terrorist” and a communist sympathizer and was brutally tortured and imprisoned in a concentration camp.¹ During one of his most brutal torture sessions, his torturers telephoned his 33-year-old wife and made her listen to her husband’s agonizing screams. She immediately died of a heart attack from the shock and grief.² Upon Almada’s release in 1977, he was forced to flee Paraguay until Stroessner’s repressive regime finally ended in 1989.³ He became a tireless advocate of human rights, which came to be defined during the Cold War era as basic civil and political rights that every human being is entitled to, including the right to life and liberty, the freedom of expression and equality and the freedom to work, eat, participate in culture, and be educated.⁴ Mr. Almada’s story is just one of thousands resulting from various reins of terror that occurred throughout the Southern Cone of South America during the 1960s-1980s.

During the Cold War, as the superpowers attempted to spread their sphere of influence while ferociously defending their allies, this ideological struggle often manifested itself in hot war, including conflicts in Angola, Mozambique, Afghanistan and Iraq. The United States and the USSR chose to support proxy wars in an attempt to avoid direct conflict with their most powerful enemy. More common than hot wars during the period were covert action, government secrecy, and parastatal organizations that were implemented to ensure the predominance of a particular ideology. Nowhere was this trend more prevalent than in Latin America. During this

¹ Stella Calloni, “The Horror Archives of Operation Condor,” in *Covert Action Quarterly* 50 (1994), 8.

² Jack Epstein, “A History of a Dirty War: Paraguay’s Secret Police ‘Horror Files’ Come to Light,” in *Cleveland Plain Dealer* 13 June 1993.

³ Calloni, “The Horror Archives,” 8.

⁴ United Nations, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” Adapted 10 December 1948, UNGA Res17 A (III), Article 1.

era, the United States took a particular interest in exerting its economic and diplomatic influence throughout South and Central America. The U.S. government allowed for and even facilitated egregious violations of basic human and civil rights under the auspices of protecting the world from the communist threat.⁵ This paper will explore the dual faces of U.S. policy towards the countries of the Southern Cone (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay). While the United States promoted an international agenda that revered human rights and civil liberties, this paper demonstrates that members of the U.S. government secretly condoned a transnational organization of intelligence and covert action aimed at eliminating the subversive threat known as Operation Condor.

Greg Grandin has argued in *Empire's Workshop* that after the military skirmishes of the late nineteenth century were over, the U.S. continued to exert “‘soft power’ in the region – that is the spread of America’s authority through nonmilitary means, through commerce, cultural exchange, and multilateral cooperation.”⁶ Finding support from Latin American elites, American businessmen from companies such as Ford and Coca Cola began to pour money into Latin America and to scatter factories throughout the continent.⁷ That influx of incoming capital caused a steady stream of problems throughout Latin America.

After WWII, Latin America was rife with inequality, drastically unequal wealth distribution, and oligarchic governments that cared little about the welfare of their citizens and more about maintaining their personal wealth through friendly relations with the United States and its powerful corporations.⁸ Millions of citizens across Latin America lived in extreme

⁵ Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, The United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 2.

⁶ Grandin, 3.

⁷ Grandin, 3.

⁸ Alan McPherson, *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles: The United States and Latin America Since 1945* (Washington, D.C: Potomac Books, 2006), 70.

poverty while their inept leaders wasted away the loans given to them by the United States in an attempt to keep their governments “friendly” with capitalism and anti-communism.⁹ By the mid-1960s and early 1970s, social and political unrest was rising throughout South America. Popular leaders, such as Martín Almada in Paraguay, called for social reform that required a break with the United States and its neocolonial policies. These leaders posed a threat to not only the local elites but the government of the United States, who stood to lose a continent full of vital economic and ideological allies if popular Socialist movements took hold and spread around South America. The private American interests who had, especially in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a near monopoly on the flow of foreign capital and trade throughout Latin America also stood to lose a great deal if the new Socialist and neo-Marxist leaders pulled away from the U.S. influence over their economies.¹⁰ It was this threat that prompted the United States to assist, monetarily and ideologically, in the “removal” of certain South American leaders including Salvador Allende in Chile.¹¹ The involvement of the United States in these operations was always kept covert, in an attempt to publicly promote and defend liberty and basic human rights across the globe while simultaneously employing clandestine anti-democratic methods to ensure the survival of the capitalist system and their “victory” in the Cold War.

While the role of American business interests was instrumental in the formation and toleration of violence in the Southern Cone, the Cold War context and the anti-communist rhetoric also played a vital role in the U.S. government’s approach to Operation Condor. The U.S. government felt that the threat of communism was so real that the Cold War was often

⁹ J. Patrice McSherry, “The Undead Ghost of Operation Condor,” *Logos* 4 (no. 2, 2005), 2.
www.logosjournal.com/issue_4.2/mcsherry.htm

¹⁰ McPherson, 71.

¹¹ Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (New York: The New Press, 2003), 113.

referred to as the “Third World War.”¹² During this time, the United States found it vitally important to establish a global anti-communist alliance at whatever cost to its support for democratic values. The U.S. government saw Latin America, especially the Southern Cone, as a key player in that battle against communism. This alliance was often preserved through secret deals, loans, and looking the other way when the CIA or the national embassy learned of human rights violations or, as the case would be, entire networks developed to “eliminate subversives.”¹³ The use of such dramatic language popularized during this era, including “subversive,” “insurgent,” and even “terrorist,” resulted in the belief, by both the U.S. government and the reigning military dictatorships in South America, that any violation of human rights that occurred during the fight against communism was merely a means to an end, or “collateral damage” from the attempt to eliminate the Socialist threat.¹⁴ It was this fear of the rise of communism that led to the development of Operation Condor, a complex international network of Southern Cone nations that established the infrastructure of state terror by facilitating the clandestine sharing of information, detention of prisoners and numerous other egregious violations of human rights all in the name of eliminating the subversive threat.

Operation Condor was conceived by Manuel Contreras, the head of Chile’s secret police (DINA), and initiated at the *Primera Reunion InterAmericana de Inteligencia Nacional* (the First Inter-American Meeting on National Intelligence), which took place in Santiago in October 1975. Attendees included representatives of the governments of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia. The conference concluded with the formation of “Operation Condor” and the agreement to initiate “bilateral or multilateral contacts to exchange information on

¹² U.S. Department of State, “ARA Monthly Report (July) ‘The “Third World War” and South America, ” 3 August 1976. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB125/index.htm>.

¹³ J. Patrice McSherry, “Operation Condor: Clandestine Inter-American System,” *Social Justice* 26 (no.4, 1999), 2.

¹⁴ John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terror to Three Continents* (New York: The New Press, 2004), 2.

subversives,”¹⁵ originally defined as “Marxist terrorists” but eventually expanded to include anyone opposing the military governments of participating countries. The conference also sought to create an office to facilitate and coordinate the exchange of all this information.¹⁶ Cooperation between states was to remain of the utmost secrecy, mainly because it encouraged the cooperation of governments intent on ignoring the rights that every citizen of every nation had with regards to international amnesty and privacy. At this and other subsequent meetings, the framework for Operation Condor was established.

J. Patrice McSherry describes the three-phase system in her book, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America*. The first phase, as delineated in the notes from the meeting in Santiago, included coordinating intelligence, surveillance efforts, and information about subversives. Phase Two involved a form of unconventional warfare that included raids on subversives by multi-national death squads resulting in illegal detentions and often the permanent “disappearance” of detainees perceived of as a significant threat to the maintenance of the status quo. Finally, Phase Three called for the formation of special assassination teams that would eliminate high-profile “subversive enemies” worldwide.¹⁷ Phases One and Two sought to coordinate efforts that were already underway in all the member countries to minimize the threat that insurgents posed in undermining the authority of the ruling juntas. Phase Three, however, was the newest and most secret aspect of Condor that would eventually cement Condor’s status as an international reign of terror.

Part of what made Condor so terrifying, and so illegal, was its definition of a “subversive.” Originally, that term was only directed at high-profile opponents to the anti-

¹⁵ DINA, Secret Summary, “Closing Statement of the First Inter-American Meeting of National Intelligence” 28 November 1975 (English Translation), In Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File*, 59.

¹⁶ Kornbluh, 323.

¹⁷ J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 4-5.

Communist regimes of the Southern Cone who had fled their own countries and were living elsewhere in South America. Eventually, the term came to encompass anyone who, “sought structural change or challenged U.S. interests [including]... local reformers, socialists, or revolutionaries.”¹⁸ The broad spectrum of those targeted for detention during Condor created a widespread sense of panic and political paralysis in Southern Cone nations.

As previously mentioned, the United States had a particularly strong interest in ensuring that Southern Cone nations involved in Condor remained loyal to their anti-communist agenda. U.S. knowledge of and support for Operation Condor has been hotly contested in recent years thanks to the ample amount of CIA documents declassified through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The documents reveal not only the extent of the CIA and the State Department’s knowledge of Condor but also the extent of the aid, including expertise, military support, monetary assistance and other resources, provided to Condor’s operations by the CIA. These documents provide conclusive proof that the CIA offered Condor a secure means to coordinate their communications, through the U.S. Army Base in the Panama Canal Zone (SOUTHCOM), as well as training in CIA methods of interrogation and torture.¹⁹ By providing secret diplomatic, military, and monetary support while publicly condemning covert operations, the United States government provided a confusing dual reaction to Operation Condor.

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was particularly guilty of this “two-faced” approach of American foreign policy toward South America. His official speeches and correspondence during this time supported an image that was committed to preserving democracy while ensuring the protection of human rights. However, his meetings with South American officials as well as correspondence with American ambassadors and CIA operatives in the Southern Cone paint a

¹⁸ McSherry, “The Undead Ghost,” 3.

¹⁹ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 96.

much different picture. In fact, during a meeting with Argentine Foreign Minister Guzzetti in June 1976, Kissinger explicitly stated: "If there are things that have to be done, you should do them quickly. But you must get back quickly to normal procedure."²⁰ By using the rest of this conversation to provide context, the "things" that Kissinger referred to were extralegal measures, including detention, interrogation and torture, aimed at eliminating the terrorist threat.

Kissinger's use of the phrase "normal procedures" implied his understanding of the legal measures that should be taken to resolve the perceived problem and also his understanding that he was giving Guzzetti explicit permission to ignore them.²¹ This dual message allowed the United States and its many of its officials to protect their innocence while encouraging and even facilitating the eradication of the subversive threat in South America. These dual faces of American policy towards Operation Condor allowed it to flourish throughout the Southern Cone and led to the egregious violation of the human rights of thousands of South American citizens.

Initial American Support for Operation Condor

During the Cold War, and especially after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the United States government and armed forces felt it vitally important to train and equip Latin American militaries techniques that would assist regional forces in fighting the perceived subversive threat in their home countries. Part of the United States led global anticommunist alliance included training Latin American military leaders at the Army School of the Americas (SOA), originally located in the Panama Canal Zone.²² Here, the officers were taught classes on a variety of topics including intelligence, countersubversion, and psychological warfare as well as the role that

²⁰ United States Department of State, "Secret Memorandum of Conversation: Secretary Kissinger to Foreign Minister Guzzetti" 6 June 1976. <http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eensarchiv/NSAE/NSAE133/index.htm>.

²¹ US DOS, "Kissinger to Guzzetti," 6 June 1976.

²² Lesley Gill, *School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke Press, 2004), 9.

militaries should play in economic development. These classes had a profound impact on the students who returned to their home countries with aspirations of creating a strong militaristic government that would be friendly to the U.S.²³ Lesley Gill, author of *School of the Americas: Military Training and Political Violence in the Americas*, explains further the ideology that was impressed upon students at SOA: “Military training molded powerful beliefs about capitalist modernity, class conflict, race, and national sovereignty. Domestic military academies tantalized students with the prospects of future power and social mobilization that were enhanced by the SOA experience, which exposed the Latin American armed forces to the wealth and might of the United States and sent a strong message about the benefits of allying with Uncle Sam.”²⁴ One of the most appalling aspects of the training that U.S. Army officials provided to their South American counterparts was known as the Phoenix Program.

The Phoenix Program was implemented during the 1960s and was brought to Latin America after achieving “success” during the Vietnam War. This program was a: “CIA-led counterinsurgency operation using assassination, terror, and psychological warfare.”²⁵ One product of the Phoenix Program was the development of “Project X,” top-secret manuals that outlined all of the CIA’s interrogation and torture methods. These so-called “torture manuals” were released in 1997 and reveal startling evidence about just how the operatives of Operation Condor learned all of their characteristic terror techniques. Among many other lessons, these manuals include how to conduct an interrogation (coercive and non-coercive), how to elicit information out of an unwilling subject, how to accomplish an unlawful detention, and how just how to torture someone using, “deprivation of sensory stimuli, threats and fear, debility, pain,

²³ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 49.

²⁴ Gill, *School of the Americas*, 92.

²⁵ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 50.

and narcosis.”²⁶ One of the most popular forms of torture and instilling fear in the detainee involved simulating the feeling of drowning. One such method is explicitly outlined in the torture manuals:

Two subjects were ‘suspended with the body and all but the top of the head immersed in a tank containing slowly flowing water...’ Both subjects wore black-out masks, which enclosed the whole head but allowed breathing and nothing else. The sound level was extremely low; the subject heard only his own breathing and some faint sounds of water from the piping.... Both passed quickly from normally directed thinking through a tension resulting from unsatisfied hunger for sensory stimuli and concentration upon the few available sensations to private reveries and fantasies and eventually to visual imagery somewhat resembling hallucinations.²⁷

The tone of objective scientific inquiry reveals the senselessness with which these procedures were tested and then carried out against prisoners and then passed on to students at the SOA. These manuals were developed in 1963 and used throughout the United States sphere of military influence for decades.²⁸ The military officers that were submitted to this highly confidential training at the School of the Americas became some of the most influential actors during the Condor era, including one of every seven members of the staff of DINA. Also included in the roster of School of the Americas graduates were many of the thirty officials tried with President Pinochet during his trial for the crimes of “genocide, terrorism, torture, and illegal arrest.”²⁹ While participation in training through School of the Americas was not a blatant action by the

²⁶ CIA, *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation*, July 1963. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB122/index.htm#dod1992>.

²⁷ CIA, *Counterintelligence Organization*, July 1963.

²⁸ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 50.

²⁹ School of the Americas Watch, <http://soaw.org/article.php?id=234>, Accessed on 21 April 2008.

United States in support of Operation Condor, this evidence suggests that the U.S. provided the training and the inspiration that the key players in Condor needed to fuel their movement.

SOUTHCOM provided a forum for more than just operational training. A declassified cable sent from Robert White, US Ambassador to Paraguay, to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in October of 1978 reveals the extent of US involvement in the operations of Condor.³⁰ After a meeting with the head of Paraguay's army, White learned that Condor's communication network was being facilitated through the U.S. Army facility in the Panama Canal Zone. White wrote to Vance: "They keep in touch with one another through a U.S. communications installation in the Panama Canal Zone, which covers all of Latin America. This U.S. communications facility is used mainly by student officers to call home to Latin America but it is also employed to coordinate intelligence information among the Southern Cone countries.... Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay make [use] of the net."³¹ Because of the highly sensitive nature of this information, little conclusive evidence exists to support it. However, the cable to the Secretary of State suggests seriously that some members of the United States government were not only aware of, but also facilitated the transmittal of information that enabled Operation Condor to target, detain, and eliminate subversives. In addition, the date of this cable, October 1978, reveals that while some government or military officials may have known about this command center, many, including the Paraguayan ambassador, did not find out until long after many of the most monumental events of the Condor era had already transpired. The date on this cable also proves that the United States, who quickly dissolved Condor's Phase Three missions after the murders of Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffit in Washington in September 1976,

³⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Robert White Cable to the Secretary of State, 13 October 1978, available at: <http://www.foia.state.gov/documents/StateChile3/000058FD.pdf>

³¹ US DOS, "Robert White Cable to Secretary of State," 13 October 1978.

continued to facilitate Condor's Phase One and Two operations even into the presidency of Jimmy Carter who was widely lauded as a tireless champion of human rights.³²

The earliest pieces of declassified evidence suggesting that the CIA and the Secretary of State had knowledge of Condor did not emerge until the summer of 1976, nearly nine months after its creation in Santiago. The CIA weekly summary for the week of 2 July 1976 mentioned a meeting in Santiago in June 1976 during which, "intelligence representatives from Bolivia, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Chile and Argentina decided...to set up a computerized intelligence data bank – known as operation 'Condor.'"³³ This report goes on to mention a raid on the Argentine Catholic Commission during which the perpetrators, suspected to be involved with Condor, stole records relating to hundreds of refugees and immigrants. Many of those refugees were detained, tortured, and eventually released, though they revealed that they had been tortured and interrogated by Chilean and Uruguayan security officers.³⁴ This account is perhaps one of the first instances where the international, and parastatal, Condor operation was able to carry out its transnational missions with, of course, absolutely no intervention from the Argentine government. This report also marks the first general statement about Operation Condor made in a CIA-wide document. Less than a month later, 20 July 1976, the U.S. Ambassador to Uruguay sent a cable to Washington, informing the Secretary of State of what he believed to be an increasingly coordinated regional approach to subduing subversives.³⁵ He, however, saw this coordination as perfectly logical and did not reveal any knowledge of the terrorist methods that Condor operatives were using.

³² McPherson, 83.

³³ CIA, "Weekly Summary," 3 August 1976. Available at:
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB125/index.htm>

³⁴ CIA, "Weekly Summary," 3 August 1976.

³⁵ Department of State, "Montevideo 2702," 20 July 1976. Available at:
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB125/index.htm>

Kissinger's Early Reactions to Condor

In an attempt to understand just how much Secretary of State Henry Kissinger knew about the functions of Condor, the Freedom of Information Act has facilitated the declassification of a plethora of CIA documents on the subject. President Lyndon Johnson signed the original Freedom of Information Act in 1966 to allow U.S. citizens access to all manner of government records, including intelligence records.³⁶ Most of the documents relevant to Condor were declassified at the request of some of the leading scholars on the subject including J. Patrice McSherry, Peter Kornbluh, and John Dinges. One of the most damning pieces of evidence against the Secretary comes from a meeting between the Secretary and Argentine Foreign Minister, Admiral Cesar Augusto Guzzetti, that occurred on 6 June 1976. While the extent of Kissinger's knowledge prior to this meeting is not known, Kissinger made it explicitly clear during the conversation that he supported taking whatever means necessary to ensure order. When the minister mentioned the problem of terrorism, Secretary Kissinger responded with: "We are aware you are in a difficult period. It is a curious time, when political, criminal, and terrorist activities tend to merge without any clear separation. We understand you must establish authority."³⁷ The nonchalance with which Kissinger refers to political, criminal and terrorist activities as equal is frightening in the face of the information now available about the truly horrific aspects of Condor. By equating political dissent with terrorism, Kissinger is not only granting his permission to quell that threat but is actively encouraging and inspiring Guzzetti. The strong language employed by Kissinger in the phrase "you must establish authority" also serves to inspire Guzzetti to not only control the subversive threat, but control it quickly and violently.

³⁶ James X. Dempsey, "The CIA and Secrecy," in *A Culture of Secrecy: The Government Versus the People's Right To Know*, Ed. Athan Theoharis (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 39.

³⁷ US DOS, "Kissinger to Guzzetti," 6 June 1976.

In reference to the instances of terrorism, Kissinger advised Guzzetti to do whatever he must do to maintain order and then return promptly to regular behavior. Kissinger also warned Guzzetti that if the personal abuses reached a “certain level,” he could no longer offer protection. At the end of the meeting, both men suspiciously step outside for “a word alone.”³⁸ The statements Kissinger made to Guzzetti during the meeting reveal Kissinger’s ample use of very diplomatically loaded speech that is also quite coded. In an attempt to protect his diplomatic status and his innocence, Kissinger never openly acknowledges Condor or encourages the violent violation of human rights, yet a close analysis of the declassified documents reveal the hidden meanings in all of his correspondence.³⁹

During the very same conversation, there are indications that Kissinger was made aware of Argentina’s intention to unite with its neighbors to combat and control subversion in the Southern Cone. After an extensive discussion about what Guzzetti perceived as the terrorist threat, he told Kissinger: “We are encouraging joint efforts to integrate with our neighbors... all of them: Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Uruguay... activities on both the terrorist and economic front.” Kissinger then tells him, “You cannot succeed if you focus on terrorism and ignore its causes... That sounds like a good idea.”⁴⁰ The encouragement came despite Kissinger’s knowledge of assassinations of exile leaders and his suspicion that such plots were carried out by “international arrangements.” In a telegram sent out to the American ambassadors of Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Brazil and Chile, Kissinger explicitly acknowledges the “recent sharp increase in the number of assassinations of foreign political figures in exile or political

³⁸ US DOS, “Kissinger to Guzzetti,” 6 June 1976.

³⁹ John Dinges, “Green Light-Red Light: Henry Kissinger’s 2-Track Approach to Human Rights During the ‘Condor Years’ in Chile and Argentina,” in *Argentina-United States Bilateral Relations*, Ed. Cynthia Arnson (Washington D.C: Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars (2003), 61.

⁴⁰ US DOS, “Kissinger to Guzzetti,” 6 June 1976.

asylum in or from your countries” and expresses his deep concern about this problem.⁴¹ This telegram, however, was sent on 4 June 1976, two days before his meeting with Guzzetti. These two documents reveal the first of many times that Kissinger delivered an explicitly contradictory response to his fellow American diplomats and to the representatives of the Southern Cone governments.

Kissinger’s behavior in this meeting reveals a great deal about his priorities as Secretary of State. He clearly condoned any human rights violations or “personal abuses” that the regime felt it necessary to commit in order to maintain order and exert authority. While the two gentlemen never mention Condor, it is clear that Kissinger not only understood the level of terror and cooperation that was occurring but in his subtle and ever so diplomatic manner, he gave his approval. Guzzetti was clearly pleased with this approval and, according to U.S. Ambassador Robert Hill, he returned to Buenos Aires “almost ecstatic” and “in a state of jubilation,” because the Secretary had told him to “finish the terrorist problem quickly.”⁴² There is little doubt that Guzzetti not only shared his enthusiasm with Ambassador Hill but also with the directors of Condor throughout the Southern Cone. Secretary Kissinger’s approval essentially gave the Condor operatives permission to ignore human rights and international law in the name of preserving capitalism and destroying the leftist threat.

Just two days later in Santiago Kissinger met with General Augusto Pinochet, the President of Chile whom the U.S. had helped to install after the overthrow of the democratically elected leader Salvador Allende. The Secretary of State was there to make a speech in front of the Organization of American States (OAS) concerning human rights. He met with Pinochet

⁴¹ U.S. Department of State, “State 137156,” 4 June 1976. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB125/index.htm>

⁴² Andersen, Martin Edwin and John Dinges. “Kissinger Had a Hand in ‘Dirty War.’” In *Insight Magazine*. 7 January 2002.

prior to the conference to ensure that his speech was acceptable to the U.S. Congress while also satisfying Pinochet and the Chilean government by way of not condemning their actions directly but diverting attention to other worldwide human rights issues.⁴³ Kissinger began the meeting by acknowledging that there was a “worldwide propaganda campaign by the Communists” and telling Pinochet that, “in the United States, as you know, we are sympathetic with what you are trying to do here.”⁴⁴ While Kissinger was not explicitly accusing the Communists of creating the propaganda campaign concerning human rights, he did believe that they would support any idea that would cause ‘internal division’ among the U.S. and its allies.⁴⁵ By making such a statement, Kissinger affirmed his position that defense against communism trumped concerns over human rights.

Secretary Kissinger went on to blame the human rights issue and Congress’ bothersome intervention for causing strained relations between the U.S. and Chile, while clearly telling Pinochet: “I want you to succeed and I want you to retain the possibility of aid,” thus emphasizing the importance Kissinger placed on being able to control Chile’s military as well as economic ventures through loans and gifts.⁴⁶ He also told Pinochet that he would do everything in his power to remove the obstacles being placed in front of him by Congress. The “obstacle” Kissinger was referring to was the Kennedy amendment, an act passed by Congress in 1974 that favored restricting aid and placing legal sanctions on Chile in light of their deplorable human rights record.⁴⁷ Later in the conversation, Kissinger stated: “We want to deal in moral persuasion, not by legal sanctions. It is for this reason that we oppose the Kennedy

⁴³ U.S. Department of State, “Secret Memorandum of Conversation between Henry Kissinger and Augusto Pinochet, ‘U.S. – Chilean Relations,’” 8 June 1976. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB212/index.htm>

⁴⁴ US DOS, “Conversation between Kissinger and Pinochet,” 8 June 1976.

⁴⁵ US DOS, “Conversation between Kissinger and Pinochet,” 8 June 1976.

⁴⁶ US DOS, “Conversation between Kissinger and Pinochet,” 8 June 1976.

⁴⁷ Library of Congress – Federal Research Division, “A Country Study: Chile,” 8 November 2005. Available at: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/chile/cl_glos.html.

amendment.”⁴⁸ Kissinger does not explicitly define what he means by “moral persuasion,” but he does clearly display that his morals were overridden by an intense desire to preserve U.S. interests in Latin America. If this conversation was Kissinger’s attempt at moral persuasion, it is understandable that Condor only strengthened after the meeting between these leaders. By informing Pinochet that he was opposed to the Kennedy amendment, Kissinger effectively gave Pinochet a green light to commit any human rights violations with the understanding that Kissinger would not intervene.⁴⁹

These statements reveal inconsistencies and internal divisions within the U.S. government that Pinochet undoubtedly exploited. They also prove conclusively that Kissinger was not opposed to “covert encouragement of criminal activities.”⁵⁰ Mere hours later, he made a speech in front of the OAS condemning the human rights abuses that he was aware the Chilean government was committing. Once again, this series of events did not reveal Kissinger’s explicit knowledge of “Operation Condor” by name, but Kissinger’s nonchalant treatment of human rights and encouragement of covert coordination undoubtedly furthered the organization of intelligence and detention across the Southern Cone. Even if Kissinger was truly ignorant to the existence of Condor, his utter disregard for human rights gave Pinochet the authorization he was looking for to proceed with Condor’s covert operations.

The extent of the documentation available concerning Kissinger’s attitude toward human rights in South America reveals that Condor’s operatives and coordinators, including Guzzetti and Pinochet themselves, perceived they could continue with their coordination with full force and with no fear of US reprisal. Not only did Kissinger give his support, but he promised to divert the attention of the U.S. Congress so that Chile and Argentina would face no opposition,

⁴⁸ US DOS, “Conversation between Kissinger and Pinochet,” 8 June 1976.

⁴⁹ US DOS, “Conversation between Kissinger and Pinochet,” 8 June 1976.

⁵⁰ John Dinges, “Green Light-Red Light,” 66.

as long as the governmental involvement in their missions was held under the upmost secrecy. In doing so, Kissinger took an active role in assisting the Condor nations in depriving their citizens of the basic human rights to safety, security, and due process, among others. In a meeting on 9 July 1976 between Kissinger and Harry Shlaudeman, his top Latin American aide, Shlaudeman informed the Secretary of numerous accounts of Argentineans murdering priests and nuns, as well as “large-scale mafia warfare between the security forces and the leftist urban guerrillas.”⁵¹ Despite this clear evidence that not only “leftists” were being persecuted and tortured in Argentina but also innocent priests and nuns, Kissinger was not deterred. He told Shlaudeman that there was nothing they could do but wait. Shlaudeman agreed, because he felt that the Argentines had “no real control” of the guerilla violence that was ravaging their country.⁵² Kissinger chose not to reveal his knowledge to the contrary and permitted Shlaudeman and his other aides to continue thinking that Argentine and Chilean governments were not involved in these parastatal actions and that nothing could be done to deter them.

Diplomatic Reactions from Other Sources

Evidence uncovered through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Chile Declassification Project pertained not just to Kissinger, but to other important American diplomats who also dealt with Latin America during this era. Undoubtedly, Secretary of State Kissinger was the most intimately involved with the military dictators of the Southern Cone but CIA operatives and some local ambassadors had varying levels of awareness of the widespread torture and terror that was occurring. However, the reaction to that knowledge varied greatly. In a memorandum taken on 30 July 1976 of a meeting between Harry Shlaudeman and the CIA,

⁵¹ U.S. Department of State, “Memorandum of Conversation between Henry Kissinger and Harry Shlaudeman,” 9 July 1976. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/%7EEnsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB133/index.htm>.

⁵² US DOS, “Conversation between Henry Kissinger and Harry Shlaudeman,” 9 July 1976.

the unnamed CIA operative acknowledged the increased coordination of national security resources throughout the region: "... the organization was emerging as one with a far more activist role, including specifically that of identifying, locating, and 'hitting' guerilla leaders. This was an understandable reaction to the increasingly extra-national, extreme, and effective range of the [Revolutionary Coordinating] Junta's activities."⁵³ In this meeting, Shaludeman and the CIA official voiced their approval for the killing of "guerilla leaders" despite Shlaudeman's knowledge that the attacks on the RCJ went far beyond targeting the guerilla leaders, as seen in his conversation with Kissinger earlier that month concerning the deaths of priests and nuns in Argentina.

The Department of State had a specific subcommittee founded in 1944 designed to coordinate inter-American and western hemispheric activities known as the Office of American Republic Affairs (ARA).⁵⁴ The ARA monthly report for July 1976 entitled "The 'Third World War' and South America" reveals Shaludeman's extensive knowledge of the existence of Operation Condor and what was really happening in the Southern Cone. It is perhaps the most comprehensive document concerning the State Department's knowledge of the widespread human rights violations that were occurring in the military dictatorships across South America. The memo began with an acknowledgement of the Southern Cone's security tactics: "The security forces of the Southern Cone: now coordinate intelligence activities closely; operated in the territory of one another's countries in pursuit of 'subversives;' and have established Operation Condor to find and kill terrorists of the 'Revolutionary Coordinating Committee' in

⁵³ U.S. Department of State, "Memorandum of ARA-CIA Weekly Meeting -- 30 July 1976."
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB125/index.htm>

⁵⁴ Graham Stuart, "The New Office of American Republic Affairs in the Department of State," in *The American Political Science Review* 39 (no. 3, 1945), 481-482.

their own countries and in Europe. Brazil is cooperating short of murder operations.”⁵⁵ The fact that this information was issued in the CIA monthly report of July 1976 implies that the gathering of information began weeks, if not months, before the report was issued. It also implies that Secretary Kissinger had knowledge of the coordination and of the torture that is later revealed in this report when he met with Foreign Minister Guzzetti and President Pinochet on 6 June and 8 June respectively. A close reading of this document reveals that when, during those meetings, Secretary Kissinger gave his blessing and told those men to “do what they had to do,” he was well aware of the actions they would then take.⁵⁶

The introductory information in the report reveals just how much the CIA knew about Condor but also reveals their fear at what would happen if Condor were to become too strong. The report states: “The broader implications for us and for future trends in the hemisphere are disturbing. The use of bloody counter-terrorism by these regimes threatens their increasing ideological isolation from the West and the opening of deep ideological divisions among the countries of the hemisphere.”⁵⁷ That ideological isolation would greatly impact the U.S.’s attempts to remain the leader of a united front against Communism and, in the face of the Cold War, would tarnish the United States’ reputation as a protector of liberty and human rights. Ironically, however, the State Department also lived in fear of the “ideological implications” of what would happen if Condor failed. In an attempt to avoid this “right-wing bloc,” Secretary Shlaudeman recommended that the State Department advise its ambassadors:

- To emphasize the differences between the six countries at every opportunity;
- To depoliticize human rights;
- To oppose rhetorical exaggerations of the “Third World War” type;

⁵⁵ US DOS, “ARA Monthly Report,” 3 August 1976.

⁵⁶ Dinges, “Green Light-Red Light,” 65.

⁵⁷ US DOS, “ARA Monthly Report,” 3 August 1976.

- To bring the potential bloc members back into our cognitive universe through systematic exchange.⁵⁸

A closer look at each of these commands reveals exactly what the State Department knew about Condor and about its specific plans to downplay its importance to the international community.

By focusing on each country's individuality, the State Department was attempting to deemphasize the growing wave of cooperation across Latin America. Because of the fear that an ever-strengthening, anti-democratic right-wing bloc would harm their image not only in the international community but also on the homefront, Secretary Shlaudeman knew the importance of hiding any extensive coordination. The depoliticization of human rights was actually a common trend throughout Kissinger's tenure as Secretary of State. The concept of human rights was brought into the vernacular with the issuance of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The document defines human rights as: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."⁵⁹ Alan McPherson, author of *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles: The United States and Latin America Since 1945*, refers to Kissinger's approach toward foreign policy as "realistic."⁶⁰ While he acknowledged the widespread human rights violations that were occurring across Latin America at the hands of repressive regimes, it just was not "realistic" for the United State to intervene. Until that repression directly impacted the American economy or threatened America security, Kissinger's only advice was to strengthen the Latin American military forces by heightening repression so as to keep the insurgency at

⁵⁸ US DOS, "ARA Monthly Report," 3 August 1976.

⁵⁹ United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," Adapted 10 December 1948, UNGA Res17 A (III), Article 1.

⁶⁰ McPherson, 74.

bay.⁶¹ The Secretary of State's attitude of indifference was also seen in his meeting with Pinochet on 8 June 1976, during which he informed President Pinochet that he would downplay human rights and oppose the Kennedy amendment, which would have cut off security assistance and aid to Chile in light of their known human rights abuses.⁶²

The reason for deemphasizing the "Third World War" rhetoric among those in the Southern Cone was because that kind of language only, "justified harsh and sweeping wartime measures" and brought attention to this conflict as an international struggle instead of just a security threat within a few countries.⁶³ This aspect of Shlaudeman's plan of attack in the Southern Cone also harkens back to his attempt to deemphasize the extent of the cooperation between the South American states. The fourth and final aspect of Shlaudeman's plan is the most ambiguous, yet perhaps the step that required the most direct action. He was essentially revealing his hope that bribing the Southern Cone nations with trade opportunities and security assistance would pressure them to reduce the cooperation between the states.⁶⁴ By fostering division among the Southern Cone nations through competition for U.S. aid and U.S. business interests, Shlaudeman hoped to diffuse the formation of the right-wing bloc. The common theme that runs through all of these steps is that Shlaudeman and the Department of State were aware of what was happening in the Southern Cone but were more concerned with protecting the trade and ideological relationships with their Latin America allies than with defending the human rights of the millions of citizens of those nations.

The report ultimately concludes with the idea that it may be best to let this ideological cooperation against "subversives" just run its course. Shaludeman believed that after the military

⁶¹ McPherson, 74.

⁶² US DOS, "Conversation between Kissinger and Pinochet," 8 June 1976.

⁶³ US DOS, "ARA Monthly Report," 3 August 1976.

⁶⁴ Victor Bulmer-Thomas and James Dunkerley, Ed., *The United States and Latin America: The New Agenda* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 39.

leaders were in power for long enough, after they had subdued the left-wing threat, the regime would simply reverse itself:

From the standpoint of our policy, the most important long-term characteristic of these regimes may be precisely that they are reversible, in both theory and practice.... Long after left-wing threats are squashed, the regimes are still terrified of them. Fighting the absent pinkos [communist sympathizers] remains a central goal of national security. Threats and plots are discovered. Some “mistakes” are made by the torturers, who have difficulty finding logical victims. Murder squads kill harmless people and petty thieves.⁶⁵

In this quote, Shlaudeman essentially equates “logical” with threatening or guilty. When murder squads ran out of victims who posed a legitimate threat to the national security, they went after anyone who vocally disagreed with any aspect of the current regime. The flippant attitude with which Shlaudeman regards the violence and sheer terror being committed by the militaristic regimes of the Southern Cone is startling. He, quite accurately, predicted the rubric of the human rights violations that were being carried out, and would continue to be carried out, yet blatantly decided to ignore it and let it run its course. With all the information he had compiled, all the evidence he already had of innocent priests and nuns that had already been tortured and murdered, he still chose to ignore it and hoped that the problem would just work itself out. His “hands-off” approach was much more beneficial to U.S. economic interests than calling attention to the human rights violations of the Southern Cone.⁶⁶ Shlaudeman’s reaction to the formation of Condor was characteristic of the attitudes of top CIA and State Department officials, as seen in the previous examples.

⁶⁵ US DOS, “ARA Monthly Report,” 3 August 1976.

⁶⁶ Bulmer and Dunkerley, *The United States and Latin America*, 39.

American Opposition Emerges

The decision to either ignore or blatantly endorse the knowledge of Condor's operations was not universal throughout all the channels of U.S. diplomacy. In general, as previously mentioned, the CIA and the highest officials in the Department of State tended to voice their opinion in favor of Condor. Some of the most serious opposition or hesitation to Condor came from the ambassadors to those countries. Robert Hill, ambassador to Argentina during the 1970s, was the first diplomat to express outrage at the abuses he knew were being committed in Argentina and by Argentine officials in other Southern Cone nations. This opposition was surprising as Hill was a very unlikely champion of human rights in Latin America. He married into a wealthy political family, as John Dinges points out, "whose vast investments and unabashed manipulations of political power in Latin America had made it the stereotype – for Latin Americans – of Yankee imperialism."⁶⁷ Hill had every reason – familial, political and economic – to ignore the rumors he was hearing about refugees disappearing, members of the clergy being killed, and security forces being coordinated, yet he allowed his "moral outrage" to overcome his sense of obligation to both his party (Republican) and even his family.⁶⁸ Hill made the first move in warning President Jorge Videla of Argentina by issuing a *démarche* on 25 May 1976.

The *démarche*, or action of formal diplomatic protest, came not long after the military coup in Argentina that placed President Videla in power. Hill hoped that the atrocities of the Pinochet regime in Chile would be avoided, and his Argentinean contacts assured him that the scattered violence was merely a remnant of death squads that had operated under the previous

⁶⁷ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 201.

⁶⁸ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 201.

regime.⁶⁹ However, after the assassinations of foreign diplomats in Buenos Aires, including Uruguayan congressional leaders Zelmar Michelini and Hector Gutierrez, as well as his new knowledge of the government's secret extermination plans, Hill decided to issue the *démarche* on the "worsening human rights situation" to the government of Argentina.⁷⁰ After receiving no response from Kissinger, Hill informed Foreign Minister Guzzetti of the issuance of the rather polite *démarche* that had the following conclusion: "Some sort of statement on part of GOA [Government of Argentina] deploring terrorism of any kind, whether from left or right, and reaffirming GOA's resolve to enforce law and respect human rights might have very salutary effect."⁷¹ In a cable to the Secretary of State immediately following the *démarche*, Ambassador Hill remarked that: "Though Guzzetti indicated his understanding of the problem, I did not have the impression he really got the point. We will continue working on him and others in GOA."⁷² The fact that Guzzetti "didn't get the point" suggests that he may have understood but was more interested in obeying permission from someone higher up in the US governmental bureaucracy or the CIA to continue with the anti-terrorist actions. Though Hill was extremely suspect of Videla's new government, he was yet to understand the full extent of Argentina's role in the orchestration of the terror network sweeping across the Southern Cone

The *démarche* was the first true sign of American opposition to any of the right-wing Southern Cone governments in years. The years prior to 1976 were laden with U.S. supported military coups, namely the overthrow of Salvador Allende in favor of Pinochet in Chile, and other attempts to ensure that anti-communist U.S. allies who relied heavily on the America

⁶⁹ Dinges, "Green Light-Red Light," 67.

⁷⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Request for Instructions," 25 May 1976. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB73/index3.htm>.

⁷¹ U.S. Department of State, "Démarche to Foreign Minister on Human Rights," 28 May 1976. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB73/index3.htm>.

⁷² US DOS, "Démarche to Foreign Minister on Human Rights," 28 May 1976.

market remained in power throughout the Southern Cone.⁷³ In fact, when Kissinger was informed of the démarche he was “infuriated.” In a phone conversation with Deputy Secretary Shlaudeman on 30 June 1976, Kissinger asks: “How did this happen?... What do you guys think my policy is?... You better be careful. I want to know who did this and consider having him transferred.”⁷⁴ Kissinger’s adverse reaction to Hill’s cable furthered his image as a diplomat who prioritized U.S. interests above human rights issues.

Despite his failure to earn Kissinger’s direct support for this action, the démarche issued by Hill prompted the Secretary of State to authorize the ambassadors of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay to issue a similar démarche in August of 1976. In the cable sent to those ambassadors, Secretary Kissinger very clearly outlined his knowledge of Condor: “Government planned and directed assassinations within and outside the territory of Condor members has most serious implications which we must face squarely and rapidly.... There is a degree of information, exchange and coordination among various countries of the Southern Cone with regard to subversive activities within the area.”⁷⁵ The report represents the first time that Kissinger openly acknowledged Condor and the first time he admitted to anyone the potential danger that it posed to the United States. Though Kissinger’s report should have been encouraging to Ambassador Hill and others who were gravely concerned with the mechanisms of Condor, it was slowed by the negative reaction of David Popper, ambassador to Chile – one of the countries believed to be most heavily involved in Condor.

Ambassador Popper responded to Kissinger’s démarche the very next day by stating that he felt a uniform approach to this problem would be ineffective and detrimental to the stability of

⁷³ McPherson, 78.

⁷⁴ U.S. Department of State, TELCON: Secretary Kissinger and Harry Shlaudeman,” 30 June 19. Available at: <http://foia.state.gov/documents/kissinger/0000C08D.pdf>.

⁷⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Démarche for U.S. Ambassadors,” 23 August 1976. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eensarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB199/index.htm>.

U.S.-Chilean relations. He went as far as to call Pinochet “sensitive” and assert that “it is quite possible, even probable, that Pinochet has no knowledge whatever of Operation Condor, particularly of its more questionable aspects.”⁷⁶ While it is impossible to understand the full extent of Popper’s knowledge of Condor, it is quite improbable that he truly thought of Pinochet as “innocent” or that a large portion of Chile’s national security strategy was being carried out without Pinochet’s awareness. Kissinger, however, seems to have taken his advice seriously, because he failed to follow up further with any of the ambassadors regarding the démarche. Finally, on 20 September 1976, Deputy Secretary Shlaudeman instructed his top aide to issue the following statement: “Instruct the ambassadors to take no further action, noting that there have been no reports in some weeks.”⁷⁷ This command comes quite shockingly, less than one month after Kissinger’s seemingly urgent communiqué. The information issued on 23 August presented Condor as an imminent threat not only in the Southern Cone but also to the United States.⁷⁸ It is suspect that less than a month later, the Secretary of State’s office suddenly saw no threat in the organization. The sad irony of the memo is that the very next day, 21 September 1976, former Chilean foreign minister under Allende, Orlando Letelier, and his American colleague, Ronni Moffit, were murdered on the streets of Washington D.C. by a car bomb planted by Condor operatives.⁷⁹

The Letelier-Moffit Murders: Condor Comes to America

On Tuesday morning, September 21, Orlando Letelier drove down Massachusetts Avenue towards his office on Dupont Circle in his Chevy Chevelle. He had with him his friends,

⁷⁶ U.S. Department of State, “David Popper to Secretary Kissinger,” 24 August 1976. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eensarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB199/index.htm>.

⁷⁷ U.S. Department of State, “Shlaudeman to Southern Cone Ambassadors,” 20 September 1976. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eensarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB199/index.htm>.

⁷⁸ US DOS, “Démarche for U.S. Ambassadors,” 23 August 1976.

⁷⁹ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 152.

Ronni Moffit, who was four months pregnant at the time and sitting in the front seat, and her husband, Michael Moffit, who was sitting in the back seat. Both were working at the Institute for Policy Studies and were only riding with Letelier that Tuesday morning because they had car trouble.⁸⁰ Just as the Chevelle pulled onto Sheridan Circle, the stretch of road known as Embassy Row, a bomb exploded that shocked the streets of Washington D.C. and the world. The terror of Condor had finally come to America: “Letelier’s legs were blown off and he died almost immediately. Ronni Moffit, in the front seat, caught a piece of shrapnel to the neck, which severed her carotid artery and windpipe. She drowned in her own blood. Michael Moffit, riding in the back and shielded from the main force of the blast, suffered cuts but survived.”⁸¹

The murders of Letelier and Moffit were the first Phase Three assassinations carried out on America soil, but they were not the first assassinations coordinated and carried out by Condor operatives. The first assassination linked to Condor actually occurred before its inception but was orchestrated by a DINA and Condor operative linked to many of the Phase Three operations, Michael Townley. His first mission involved the murder of Chilean General Carlos Prats, Allende’s former commander-in-chief, and his wife by car bombing in Buenos Aires in 1974. Townley also arranged the attempt on the lives of Chilean Christian Democratic leader Bernardo Leighton and his wife in Rome in October 1975; however, both Leighton and his wife miraculously survived after being shot in the head and neck at point blank range.⁸² The circumstances surrounding these assassination plots – the attacks on Chileans in Argentina and in Rome – reveal the truly international scope of Condor and its Phase Three missions. They also reveal the leadership role that DINA and the Chilean government took in Condor.

⁸⁰ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 191.

⁸¹ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 191.

⁸² McSherry, “Clandestine Inter-American System,” 13.

Orlando Letelier came onto Pinochet's radar as an extraterritorial threat during the summer of 1976. With Prats dead and Leighton out of commission, Pinochet and his main confidant and advisor, DINA's chief Manuel Contreras, felt quite secure in their tight control of the domestic political situation.⁸³ Internationally, however, Orlando Letelier was stirring up anti-Pinochet sentiment throughout the west. He was actively promoting "anti-junta" movements as well as urging the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights' to condemn Pinochet and his tyranny in Chile. Some reports even accused Letelier of planning a government-in-exile that would attempt to undermine Pinochet.⁸⁴ Pinochet revealed his dislike for Letelier in the 8 June 1976 conversation he had with Secretary of State Kissinger in Santiago. Pinochet told Kissinger: "We are constantly being attacked by the Christian Democrats. They have a strong voice in Washington. Not the people in the Pentagon, but they do get through to Congress.... Letelier has access to Congress. We know they are giving false information."⁸⁵ Pinochet's words in regard to Letelier are very revealing not only about his feelings toward Letelier but also about his understanding of the U.S. government. He did not seem too worried that Letelier and the Christian Democrats will have luck communicating their concerns to the Pentagon, which houses the U.S. Department of Defense. His confidence that the Pentagon would not be swayed by Letelier suggests that Pinochet had an intimate understanding of the defense mechanism of the United States, likely provided by a close relationship with both Kissinger and CIA officials.⁸⁶ President Pinochet was, however, clearly worried that Letelier would be successful in convincing Congress to halt aid to Chile and to enforce the Kennedy amendment. Armed with paranoia and

⁸³ John Dinges and Saul Landau, *Assassination on Embassy Row* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 170

⁸⁴ Dinges and Landau, *Assassination on Embassy Row*, 175.

⁸⁵ US DOS, "Conversation between Kissinger and Pinochet," 8 June 1976.

⁸⁶ US DOS, "Conversation between Kissinger and Pinochet," 8 June 1976.

an exhibited hatred for Letelier, Pinochet authorized Contreras to begin exploring options for his extermination.

General Contreras' immediately contacted Michael Townley, Condor's most reliable assassin, and one of the most interesting figures connected to DINA and Operation Condor. He was an American who moved to Chile with his family at the age of 14 and became deeply interested in the functions of government, especially covert security operations.⁸⁷ Townley eagerly attempted to join the CIA upon his return to the US and, during his later trial, actually claimed to be a CIA operative. All testimony from the CIA, however, dismissed Townley as merely a CIA "wannabe."⁸⁸ While Townley was never actually a part of the CIA, he was in fact intimately involved with Chilean secret service operations and was actively involved in the political climate in Chile. J. Patrice McSherry, one of the foremost scholars on Operation Condor, has uncovered a wealth of information about Townley's life in Santiago: "[Townley] was a US Embassy informant and a militant in Patria y Libertad, the right-wing terrorist group [in Chile] funded by the CIA."⁸⁹ Patria y Libertad had even been called a, "pro-fascist paramilitary group that modeled itself after Hitler's Brownshirts and was fiercely loyal to Pinochet's government."⁹⁰ Townley was later arrested in the U.S. and convicted for the murder of Orlando Letelier but was later admitted into the Witness Protection Program after providing vital evidence in the U.S.'s case against Contreras and Pinochet.⁹¹

While Townley consistently denied his involvement with DINA and used a wide array of aliases to complicate his identity, a summary of his testimony in the Contreras extradition trial – the "Resume of USG Evidence and Defense Position in the Contreras, et al. Extradition" –

⁸⁷ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 73.

⁸⁸ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 73

⁸⁹ McSherry, "Clandestine Inter-American System," 13.

⁹⁰ Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File*, 168.

⁹¹ Dinges and Landau, *Assassination on Embassy Row*, 379-381.

reveals numerous examples uncovered by the U.S. government that inexorably link Townley to DINA and to Contreras:

- The Townley's had full-time use of a Fiat 125 registered to "DINAR," a confirmed DINA cover acronym.
- Both Townley and his wife had a full set of fraudulent documents and they were authorized use of DINA facilities....
- DINA assigned three full-time employees to Townley: a secretary, an "administrative assistant," and a chauffeur....
- Townley made at least a dozen trips to Miami to acquire electronic equipment for DINA... Townley was authorized to buy equipment for the GOC.⁹²

The first three points of the US government's argument merely sought to firmly establish Townley's connection with DINA, which they do conclusively. The final point is perhaps the most interesting in understanding Townley's connection not only to DINA but also to Condor. DINA was Pinochet's secret police force and was guilty of committing some of the worst human rights violations throughout Chile and the Southern Cone.⁹³ Because Chile has been widely acknowledged as one of the countries most intimately involved in Condor, it stands to reason that Townley was an integral part of DINA and also an integral part of Condor.⁹⁴ His frequent trips to Miami to purchase electronic equipment for DINA and for the Chilean government reveal not only the high level of trust placed in Townley by Contreras and Pinochet but also suggests that he was picking up that electronic equipment for use by Condor. Chile became a leader not only of Condor's foreign operations but also in the coordination of Condor's infamous intelligence

⁹² U.S. Department of State, "Resume of USG Evidence and Defense Position in the Contreras, et al. Extradition," ca. 1979. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/20001113/>.

⁹³ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 5.

⁹⁴ US DOS, "ARA Monthly Report," 3 August 1976.

network, which remained on the cutting edge of intelligence technology.⁹⁵ By establishing Townley's undeniable connection to DINA, the report thus establishes his connection to Condor.

The summary of the 1979 extradition trial not only explicitly establishes the link between Townley, DINA and Condor but also outlines the role that the Condor system played in coordinating the murder of Letelier. General Contreras' intimate involvement in Condor was evident from its inception, as proven by the fact that he was responsible for calling the meeting during which he proposed the creation of Condor.⁹⁶ His coordination of the Letelier assassination was also made apparent in the summary of his extradition trial in the U.S: "Contreras personally and directly sought third country documentation so that Townley could go to the United States in July, 1976. Furthermore, he was the only DINA official in a position to authorize Townley the official Chilean passport, U.S. visa, and funds Townley used for his September trip to the U.S."⁹⁷ The third party documentation mentioned in the summary refers to Contreras' attempt to obtain Paraguayan passports for Townley and his accomplice, Armando Fernandez Larios, who graduated from the Army School of the Americas in 1970.⁹⁸ A cryptic memo sent through the Condor system on 17 July 1976 from DINA to Paraguay's Sub-Director of Foreign Intelligence contained a request from Contreras that his agent, Alejandro Rivadeneira, be received and that his "request" be granted. Contreras wrote: "Tomorrow, 18 or 19 July, will be arriving in that country from Buenos Aires Alejandro Rivadeneira with companion. Flight number will be forwarded from Condor One. I would appreciate assistance in the performance of the mission in accordance with request made by the above-named person."⁹⁹ This memo,

⁹⁵ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 70.

⁹⁶ DINA, "Closing Statement of the First Inter-American Meeting of National Intelligence" 28 November 1975.

⁹⁷ US DOS, "Resume of USG Evidence," 1979.

⁹⁸ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 154.

⁹⁹ Condor One, "Cable to Paraguay," 17 July 1976. Obtained by John Dinges. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB125/index.htm>

obtained by John Dinges, contains the first documented evidence of the newly developed Condor system. While the memo itself is quite cryptic, the timing of the memo as well as the summary of Contreras' extradition provides proof that "the mission" Contreras was referring to was indeed his attempt to secure Paraguayan passports for Townley and Fernandez to use on their assassination mission to the United States.¹⁰⁰

Townley and Fernandez were granted passports and visas from "connections" within the Paraguayan government (presumably Condor connections); however, someone in the Paraguayan Foreign ministry became suspicious and alerted the CIA about a possible DINA mission to Washington. The Paraguayan government then revoked the falsified passports and visas, issued under the names Juan Williams Rose and Alejandro Romeral Jara, and issued arrest warrants for the two men who had, just a few days prior, made their escape back to Santiago.¹⁰¹ Paraguay, the most recent entry into the Condor system, had failed Contreras and he was forced to seek other methods for obtaining Townley and Fernandez's entrance into the U.S.

Townley and Fernandez finally obtained passports from the Chilean government that used false names and identified them as employees of the Chilean government. Fernandez spent several weeks in Washington and left just as Townley arrived, on 9 September 1976, having completed his main mission – conducting surveillance on Letelier and his daily routine.¹⁰² When Townley arrived in Washington, he met with Anti-Castro Cubans upon orders from Pedro Espinoza Bravo, Senior Operations Officer for DINA. Before Townley's departure, Espinoza had informed him that Contreras preferred for the Cubans to carry out the actual assassination.¹⁰³ While it was the Cubans who built the bomb and served as Townley's accomplices, it was

¹⁰⁰ US DOS, "Resume of USG Evidence," 1979.

¹⁰¹ Dinges and Landau, *Assassination on Embassy Row*, 189 and 195.

¹⁰² Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 190.

¹⁰³ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 157.

Michael Townley who actually planted the bomb underneath the driver's seat of Letelier's Chevy Chevelle after midnight on 18 September 1976. Townley promptly left town, on Contreras' orders, and was in Miami visiting his father when the bomb was detonated by Cuban accomplice Dionisio Suárez on the morning of 21 September 1976.¹⁰⁴ Letelier and Moffit were killed, and Moffit's husband, Michael Moffit, was seriously injured but survived.

The location of the explosion was not a coincidence but was specifically planned to send a message to all diplomats who were considering meddling in the Chilean's affairs. Letelier and his aide, Ronni Moffit, were killed instantly when the car exploded on a stretch of road known as Embassy Row, the central hub for all the foreign diplomats and ambassadors living in Washington.¹⁰⁵ The CIA and Washington officials immediately suspected DINA and/or Condor. Despite CIA evidence that pointed directly to Pinochet's involvement, the American people were led to believe that the murder was carried out by leftist terrorists who were attempting to discredit Pinochet.¹⁰⁶ Clearly, the U.S. could not be seen as allied with a government that felt justified in committing a brazen act of international terrorism in the nation's capital. Regardless of the message they were transmitting to the America people, one thing was certain in the eyes of the U.S. government: "The bombing on Sheraton Circle [Embassy Row] was in 1976 the most egregious act of foreign-inspired terrorism ever committed in the U.S. capital. The crime was aggravated by the fact that it was organized and carried out not by an enemy of the United States but by a government that was a firm ally, and by a security force trained and with intimate ties to the U.S. military and the CIA."¹⁰⁷ One question immediately came to the forefront of the U.S.

¹⁰⁴ McSherry, *Predatory States*, 157.

¹⁰⁵ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 191.

¹⁰⁶ U.S. Department of State, "CIA Points to Pinochet," 6 October 1976. Found in John Dinges, *The Condor Years* (New York: The New Press, 2004), 193.

¹⁰⁷ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 192.

investigation, given the CIA and the Department of State's knowledge of Condor and even its Phase Three assassination capabilities - Could the Letelier – Moffit murder have been prevented?

Some of the cables previously analyzed in this paper suggest that the Letelier-Moffit murders could have possibly been avoided. The 30 July 1976 ARA-CIA Weekly Report reveals that both Secretary Shlaudeman and the CIA operatives in the area were concerned that the organization was taking a much more "active role" in assassinating their opposition throughout the Southern Cone.¹⁰⁸ While this memo did not disclose any CIA or ARA knowledge of Condor's international assassination plans, it does introduce those organizations to the concept that Condor was capable and willing to commit transnational murders. In another memo concerning Operation Condor sent by Harry Shlaudeman to Secretary Kissinger, Shlaudeman explicitly stated that: "What we are trying to head off is a series of international murders...."¹⁰⁹ The cable, dated 30 August 1976, clearly reveals Shlaudeman's worry that Condor would soon turn to international assassinations to further its agenda. Just days earlier, Kissinger had sent the Southern Cone ambassadors permission to issue a *démarche* to their governments in light of recent human rights concerns. However, as previously stated, the response to that memo was minimal. Ambassador to Chile David Popper expressed his opinion that it was doubtful that Pinochet was involved in Condor and his belief that issuing a *démarche* to Pinochet would be a serious mistake.¹¹⁰ The fact that not a single one of the ambassadors acted on the *démarche* is very curious. With rumors of Condor's assassination capabilities abounding, it is even odder that every single ambassador remained silent, especially given Ambassador Robert Hill's

¹⁰⁸ US DOS, "Memorandum of ARA-CIA Weekly Meeting," 30 July 1976.

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Action Memorandum: Operation Condor," 30 August 1976. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eensarchiv/NSAE/NSAE199/index.htm>.

¹¹⁰ US DOS, "David Popper to Secretary Kissinger," 24 August 1976.

demonstrated willingness to stand up to the Argentinean government.¹¹¹ Robert White, ambassador to Paraguay during the Condor years, later told Patrice McSherry: "... instructions from a secretary of state cannot be ignored unless there is a countermanding order received via a secret (CIA) backchannel."¹¹² The lack of response from the ambassadors and this statement from White strongly suggest that the CIA advised the ambassadors to stay quiet on the issue of Condor and assassinations. Had that backchannel message from the CIA not been delivered, and some of the ambassadors made to deliver *démarches* to their host governments, the murders of Letelier and Moffit might have been prevented.

While the previous evidence leaves room for debate and speculation, an interview given by Hewson Ryan, former deputy assistant secretary for Latin American Affairs, reveals that the State Department undoubtedly knew about Condor's plans for internationalizing their Phase Three operations and chose to withhold that information. He stated: "...we knew fairly early on that the governments of the Southern Cone countries were planning, or at least talking about, some assassinations abroad in the summer of 1976. I was Acting Assistant Secretary at the time and I tried to get a cable cleared with the 7th Floor instructing our ambassadors to go to the Chiefs of State, or the highest possible leveling these governments to let them know that we were aware of these conversations and to warn them that this was a violation of the very basic fundamentals of civilized society."¹¹³ Hewson's statements affirm the notion that the CIA had explicit knowledge of Condor's assassination plans and chose to ignore them. Ryan noted that it would be impossible to know if Letelier and Moffit's murders could have been prevented had the CIA taken action, but the distressed tone of his interview suggests his belief that the murders

¹¹¹ US DOS, "Démarche to Foreign Minster on Human Rights," 28 May 1976.

¹¹² McSherry, "The Undead Ghost of Operation Condor," 8.

¹¹³ U.S. Department of State, "Interview with Ambassador Hewson Ryan," 27 April 1988. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB125/index.htm>.

might have been stopped had the CIA or the State Department taken action¹¹⁴. Ryan's interview also reveals a great deal about the State Department's attitude toward Latin America at the time, and the irony in Ryan's statement about "civilized society" is palpable. The State Department had knowledge of Condor's assassins committing cross-border "hits" and was remarkably unconcerned. However, the moment that the borders of the United States were crossed, the "basic fundamentals of civilized society" were suddenly threatened. In his interview, Ryan also admits that the State Department was extremely hesitant in taking any direct action against Condor prior to the assassinations.¹¹⁵ That reticent attitude quickly changed after Washington D.C. fell victim to the Condor system.

Opposition Only After Assassination

The atmosphere in Washington D.C. following the assassinations of Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffit was panicked. The State Department's outward attempts to assure the American people that the murders has been conducted by leftists terrorists were countered with secret yet intense investigations into the root of the assassinations and who within the American governmental bureaucracy had any prior knowledge of Condor's Phase Three plans for the United States.¹¹⁶ In a meeting just four days after the Letelier assassination, the CIA and State Department pooled their information about possible future Condor missions and began to realize the extent of the Phase Three plans. Condor organizers, led by Contreras and DINA, were planning the assassinations of three "leftist terrorists" in Europe in the days following the attack on Washington.¹¹⁷ The cooperation between the CIA, the FBI and Scotland Yard quickly put an end to those aspirations, and Contreras watched as the international arm of Phase Three quickly

¹¹⁴ US DOS, "Interview with Ambassador Hewson Ryan," 27 April 1988.

¹¹⁵ US DOS, "Interview with Ambassador Hewson Ryan," 27 April 1988.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, "CIA Points to Pinochet," 6 October 1976.

¹¹⁷ Dinges and Landau, *Assassination on Embassy Row*, 240-241.

disintegrated due to, “Chile’s arrogance and Condor members’ own inability to keep its secrets.”¹¹⁸ This pooling of information also brought to light another Phase Three operation that was likely being planned against prominent U.S. Congressman and human rights advocate, Edward Koch.

During the summer of 1976, Congressman Koch was busy amassing evidence of human rights violations committed by the militaries of the Southern Cone, especially Uruguay, in order to elicit support for his amendment that advocated immediately cutting off all aid to countries involved in such egregious human rights violations.¹¹⁹ Koch’s investigations into Latin American affairs drew Condor’s attention, and the CIA would later reveal that they had knowledge of a possible attempt on his life made in July 1976. Allegedly, an unnamed Latin American military official, while quite intoxicated at a social event in Washington, made the following comment: “... the military is extremely irritated with your proposed amendment to restrict U.S. military assistance to Latin American countries due to alleged human rights violations by the military.... [I will] have to send someone to the U.S. to get Congressman Koch.”¹²⁰ Despite the fact that the threat was made in late July 1976, the CIA did not find it necessary to inform Mr. Koch of the threat until 27 September 1976, five days after Orlando Letelier was brutally assassinated in the streets of Washington.¹²¹ The CIA’s decision to not inform Mr. Koch on this threat made against his life demonstrates not only that they had knowledge of Condor’s fomenting international assassination plans but that they actively chose to withhold that information so as not to harm the United States’ relationship with the Condor nations. The CIA did consider this information “highly speculative and fragmentary,” but

¹¹⁸ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 222.

¹¹⁹ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 214.

¹²⁰ U.S. Department of State, “CIA Letter to Edward I. Koch,” 26 September 2001. Available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB125/index.htm>.

¹²¹ US DOS, “CIA Letter to Edward I. Koch,” 26 September 2001.

considering the volatile political atmosphere surrounding the Southern Cone and Condor's demonstrated propensity for blatantly disregarding human rights, a threat such as the one made against Koch should have been taken seriously.¹²² Had the threat been addressed and investigated, the murders of Letelier and Moffit might have been prevented.

In the weeks and months following the Letelier-Moffit murders, the State Department and the Justice Department worked tirelessly to bring the perpetrators to justice. Of course, the task proved extremely difficult given the complex nature of Condor's operations and the incongruity of information between different channels of the U.S. bureaucracy. The CIA, in an obvious attempt to avoid drawing attention to their prior knowledge of Condor's capabilities, continued to promote the "martyr" theory that Letelier was murdered by radical leftist terrorists in no way linked to the government.¹²³ The CIA slant extended into the media, and the New York Times reported the following information on 12 October 1976: "[Ford administration] intelligence officials said it appeared that the FBI and the Central Intelligence Agency had virtually ruled out the idea that Mr. Letelier was killed by agents of the Chilean military junta...[They] said they understood DINA was firmly under the control of the government of Gen. Augusto Pinochet and that killing Mr. Letelier could not have served the junta's purposes."¹²⁴ Despite their knowledge to the contrary, the CIA chose to continue protecting themselves by distracting the press with "martyr myths" of leftist terrorists. The CIA's deliberate attempts to confuse the American people and to withhold their information and their involvement has continued for decades and continues to complicate the search for justice and the

¹²² US DOS, "CIA Letter to Edward I. Koch," 26 September 2001.

¹²³ Dinges and Landau, *Assassination on Embassy Row*, 243.

¹²⁴ Dinges and Landau, *Assassination on Embassy Row*, 243-244.

truth surrounding not only the Letelier-Moffit murders but also the U.S. involvement in the international covert reign of terror known as Operation Condor.¹²⁵

Thanks to tireless work by the State Department and the Justice Department, the Letelier and Moffit murder investigations resulted in numerous convictions, including the Anti-Castro Cubans who assisted Townley and Michael Townley himself. Two of those Cubans, Guillermo Novo and Alvin Ross, were sentenced to two consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole. Townley received ten years in a medium security facility and the protection of the federal witness protection program in exchange for damning evidence against DINA, Contreras, and Pinochet that he gave after signing a plea bargain early in his trial.¹²⁶ The information that Michael Townley offered about DINA and Manuel Contreras put great pressure on Pinochet, who was forced to dissolve DINA and remove Contreras from his inner circle.¹²⁷ This landmark trial of 1979 brought justice to the perpetrators of the “assassination on embassy row,” yet failed to draw attention or bring retribution to the larger organization that facilitated it or the key players, Pinochet, Contreras and Espinoza, who ordered it.

While the United States involvement with Operation Condor essentially ended with the conclusion of the trial of Townley and the Cubans, Condor continued throughout the Southern Cone. The year 1976 was the most volatile and violent year of Condor’s existence and, in the years following, the removal of American support slowed but did not stop Condor’s Phase One and Two operations. In Argentina, the “dirty war” raged on until 1983 when the election of Raúl Alfonsín led to the collapse of the military junta and ushered in a new era of Argentine politics that valued and preserved human rights and brought some of the worst violators of the dirty war

¹²⁵ McShery, *Predatory States*, 248.

¹²⁶ Dinges and Landau, *Assassination on Embassy Row*, 279.

¹²⁷ Dinges and Landau, *Assassination on Embassy Row*, 280.

to justice.¹²⁸ Pinochet's repression continued with varying degrees of severity until Chile returned to civilian rule in the election of 1989.¹²⁹ Several other military dictatorships and right-wing regimes were overturned in favor of civilian rule throughout the 1980s.¹³⁰ With the return to civilian rule in these nations came an overwhelming demand for information about Condor from many of the victims and their families. Former prisoners, such as Martín Almada, crusaded tirelessly for the discovery and declassification of Condor's thousands of documents relating to suspects, prisoners, and many of the disappeared.¹³¹ Their efforts have been successful and have inspired scholars in the United States to avidly pursue the declassification of CIA and State Department documents relating to the U.S. role in Operation Condor. The plethora of documents that have been declassified are only surpassed by the number of documents still left to be discovered. The quest for justice and information by governments and victims alike continues to reveal not only the horrors of the Condor era but also the complicated role of the United States in that era.

Conclusion

The American government's involvement with Operation Condor stands as an example of what happens when economic interests and political allies are prioritized over human rights and civil liberties. The facilitation and encouragement of certain Condor activities from some members of the CIA and the States Department combined with the sheer inability or unwillingness to act from others led to a terrifying situation for the citizens of Latin America and even Latin American diplomats throughout Europe and the United States. The double-sided

¹²⁸ Martin Edwin Andersen, *Dossier Secreto: Argentina's Desaparecidos and the Myth of the "Dirty War"* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1993), 304.

¹²⁹ Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File*, 427.

¹³⁰ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 241.

¹³¹ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 238.

approach of U.S. policy during the Condor era undoubtedly allowed it to continue as long as it did and escalate as quickly as it did.

The declassified documents from Henry Kissinger reveal just how double-sided his message to the Southern Cone really was. Empirical evidence has been found that he gave explicit permission and approval to both Foreign Minister Guzzetti and President Pinochet for their attempts to destroy the subversive threat.¹³² Yet, merely two months later, the Secretary was advising his ambassadors to issue a *démarche* to the leaders of all of the Southern Cone countries concerning the functions of Condor and the human rights violations. That *démarche*, while improving Kissinger's image to the international community and to his own ambassadors, actually held little sway with the leaders in the Southern Cone. They held the *démarche* in contrast to his approval and encouragement that they had received from him just two months before. When weighing the importance of these two actions, the presidents of these nations and the leaders of DINA clearly held Secretary Kissinger's as more legitimate. Not only did it echo the words they wanted to hear, but it also came straight from the lips of the highest office on foreign relations in the United States government. By taking into account the available information, it is easy to see why the Condor operatives not only believed that they would encounter no opposition from the United States, but also believed that they had direct support from the Secretary of State. It was only after Condor's international assassination plans came to fruition that the operation received definitive condemnation from all channels of the U.S. government.

The study of Operation Condor and the American response to it also provides insight into current international political situations in which the United States has found themselves intimately involved. The links between the language and the general states of mind that was

¹³² Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 159-161.

prominent during the Condor years and those present today during the “war on terror” are extremely evident. The language specifically suggests that the ideology that propelled the U.S. response to Condor is now controlling the way the U.S. is dealing with what they perceive to be the terrorist threat in both Iraq and Afghanistan. During the Condor years, labeling someone as a subversive, an insurgent, or a “terrorist” was justification enough to strip them of their basic human rights and remove them from society.¹³³ Today, post-9/11 paranoia has crippled not only a large portion of the American people but the government as well and the paranoid language of the Condor era pervades the news media coverage and even the governmental response to the current “war on terror.”¹³⁴

Another aspect of the U.S. involvement in Operation Condor is the legitimization of torture and terror as acceptable means of obtaining information or “controlling” a population. The recent scandals at prisons such as Abu Ghraib proves that the United States military is still not opposed to using torture when they deem it justified.¹³⁵ It is in that ideology that we see the legacy of Condor living on. Finally, the inconsistencies that characterized the U.S. response to Condor have a startling similarity to inconsistencies and questions raised about today’s “war on terror.” In 1976, the high level of miscommunication and secret diplomacy allowed Condor to escalate into a full-scale reign of terror and ultimately resulted in an assassination on U.S. soil. The CIA then intentionally blamed that assassination on the wrong organization to divert attention away from their involvement in the conflict. Similar inconsistencies are evident today in the gap that exists between military intelligence, presidential orders, and congressional authorization of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thanks to improved news media capabilities, the American people’s knowledge of these conflicts has increased. However, after

¹³³ Dinges, *The Condor Years*, 2.

¹³⁴ Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop*, 237.

¹³⁵ Seymour Hersh, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 5.

studying Condor and the complicated and deceptive tactics employed by many different branches of the U.S. government, it is impossible not to assume that many of the same tactics are being employed today.

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