

Fifty Years Ago: Nixon's Intel Briefings, US-Backed September 11, 1973 Chilean Military Coup. Released Documents

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*Two fifty-year old documents related to the coup in Chile were [released](#) by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the State Department last week. The democratically elected, left wing government of **President Salvador Allende** was overthrown in 1973 by the Chilean military, with [covert CIA backing](#). A US-supported dictatorship led by **General Augusto Pinochet** was subsequently installed.*

President Richard Nixon's daily briefs related to the coup on September 8th as well as the 11th - the day the Chilean military seized control of the government - were released. This declassification followed repeated calls for increased transparency by progressive members of Congress, human rights groups, and Santiago.



Nixon and then National Security Adviser **Henry Kissinger** strongly opposed the leftist Allende government and attempted to prevent its rule. George Washington University's National Security Archive [issued](#) a statement which says

“[the documents] contained information that went to President Nixon as a military takeover that he and [Kissinger] had encouraged for three years came to fruition.”

Nixon’s daily brief for September 8, 1973 reads

“a number of reports have been received... indicating the possibility of an early military coup... Navy men plotting to overthrow the government now claim army and air force support.”

The document - written three days before the coup - continues with a discussion of how a fascist paramilitary group “has been blocking roads and provoking clashes with the national police, adding to the tension caused by continuing strikes and opposition political moves. President Allende earlier this week said he believed the armed forces will ask for his resignation if he does not change his economic and political policies.”

On September 11th, Nixon’s daily brief said

“Plans by navy officers to trigger military action against the Allende government are supported by some key army units... The navy is also counting on help from the air force and national police.”

After Allende’s initial refusal to resign, tanks opened fire, Air Force aircraft launched rocket attacks and [bombed the presidential palace](#). Troops stormed in and Allende shot himself. **[He was assassinated, M.C.]**

“What followed [the coup] was a vicious, decades-long reign of terror and repression during which tens of thousands of Chileans were killed, tortured, or disappeared by the Pinochet regime, which continued to receive support from the CIA,” as Common Dreams’ Jake Johnson has [written](#).

Indeed, in 2000, the CIA [conceded](#) that

“many of Pinochet’s officers were involved in systematic and widespread human rights abuses... Some of these were contacts or agents of the CIA or [US] military.”

Peter Kornbluh, a Chile specialist for National Security Archive, [said](#)

“I’m happy that the Freedom of Information Act, together with some positive diplomacy by the Chilean government, broke a secrecy barrier that has kept us from knowing this history for 50 years.” He added that he hopes the White House will soon be “releasing all the [US records on Chile relating to the coup and its aftermath] that, inexplicably, remain secret after all this time.”

As the *Los Angeles Times* noted, the US government “favored Pinochet, who for most of his 17 years of rule had good economic and military ties with Washington as he repressed many of his own people.”

Throughout Latin America, during the Cold War, the CIA was involved in [overthrowing governments](#), while fueling [a series of proxy wars and civil wars](#), as well as waging [terror campaigns](#) against others. To this day, the US maintains a more than 60-year old embargo on Cuba as well as a notorious torture prison at Guantanamo Bay.

During recent years, the US has supported coups against governments in [Venezuela](#) and [Bolivia](#). The US currently imposes sanctions on Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba. In Venezuela, Washington's economic war [led to tens of thousands of unnecessary deaths](#) between 2017 and 2018 as a result of vital medicines being deprived.

Additionally, [among GOP presidential candidates](#), there is substantial support for a potential military invasion of Mexico to ostensibly counter drug trafficking.

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