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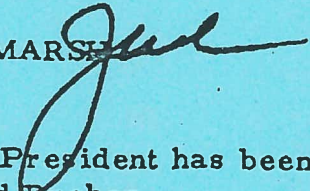
THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 29, 1975

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(With Attachments)

MEMORANDUM FOR: DICK CHENEY

FROM: JACK MARSH 

The attached Memorandum to the President has been staffed to Kissinger, Schlesinger, Colby and Buchen.

These are the only Administration officials who have been advised of the contents of the Senate draft report. We understand that the Senate Committee may reach a final decision on publication today and it may go to the printer as early as Friday; therefore, a quick decision is necessary.

cc: Don Rumsfeld

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(With Attachment)

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Richard Cheney Files: Intel series, b.7, f.1 "CIA Assassination Rpt (2)." Photocopy from Gerald R. Ford Library

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 29, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

JACK MARSH

SUBJECT:

Assassination Report

Background

As you know, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence has conducted a detailed investigation of charges that the Executive Branch engaged in plotting the assassination of foreign leaders. Under your instructions the various intelligence agencies provided the Committee complete access to all documents relevant to such charges. These documents were highly classified and unsanitized, and no claim of Executive Privilege has been made. You provided the documents on the express assumption that they would be used by the Committee in a responsible manner.

----- The final Report of the Committee on the assassination charges has been prepared in draft form and will soon be published.

Under an agreement that they would consult with us prior to publishing classified materials, the Church Committee submitted to us a lengthy list of names, phrases and quotations extracted from classified documents which they desired to include in their Report. Rather than approve such a list out of context, three senior persons from the relevant agencies went to review the Report in its entirety. No other members of the Executive Branch have seen the Report.

The three who have reviewed the report agree that its publication will be extremely damaging to the United States, that it will expose specific individuals who have been associated with these activities to serious risk of harm, and that it fails to resolve the issues raised by the inquiry. Their individual reports are at Tabs A, B and C.

Official acknowledgement of assassination plotting by successive Administrations of the United States Government would have an appalling and shattering impact in the international community. Without question, it would do grave damage to our ability to play a positive role of leadership in world affairs. It would provide profoundly harmful leverage to our adversaries and the resultant humiliation we would suffer would deal a serious blow to our foreign policy from which we could recover only with difficulty. In sum,

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Richard Cheney Files: Intel series, b.7, f.1 "CIA Assassination Rpt (2)." Declassified

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the report could result in grave harm to the United States' position in the world. In addition, it would expose specific individuals who have been associated with these activities to serious risk of harm.

Issue for Decision

What actions should be taken by you or your Administration regarding this Report in view of the potential harm from its impending publication?

Three broad options are present:

Option 1 -- Take no action whatsoever to influence the Committee's decision of the Report.

Pro: This option allows the Executive to maintain complete distance from the Committee and avoid any possible charges of coverup; moreover, it avoids any implication of Executive approval of the Report.

Con: However, the Executive will have forfeited the opportunity to restrain a Report the publication of which in its present form will cause a significant harm to the United States. Also, we will not be clearly on the record in opposition to publication.

Option 2 -- Take no official position but forward to the Committee the three reviewers' comments and request the Committee consider these views in revising their Report.

Pro: This option apprises the Committee of our concerns on the draft Report while maintaining the Administration's distance from the Report itself. It largely overcomes any charges of coverup.

Con: This approach may not be strong enough, in view of the magnitude of the changes which would be required in the short time prior to publication of the Report. The Committee may simply ignore such a communication. Moreover, this option gives to the Committee advice offered within the Executive.

Option 3 -- Take an official Administration position, expressed by yourself or a spokesman in your behalf, opposing publication of the Report in its present form and stressing that the Committee must assume full responsibility for damage to the Nation because of publication.

Pro: Strong action by the Executive may persuade the Committee to revise the most harmful areas of the Report. This puts you firmly on the record in opposition to a Report whose publication will harm the Nation.

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Con: This option most clearly exposes you to charges of coverup.

Should you select this option, there are the following positions available:

- A. That no Report be published.

? If you take this position, it will provide the most room for compromise; however, the chances of stopping publication entirely are slight. It most strongly exposes you to charges of coverup.

- B. That only the findings and recommendations portion of the Report be published.

If you select this position, you will have recognized the Committee's intent to publish some form of an official report which acknowledges past assassination activity. This is the most feasible alternative noted by the three reviewers. However, this position will only reduce, not eliminate, the damage to the United States-foreign relations.

- C. That all sensitive sources and methods and any material the publication of which would subject individuals or groups to injury be deleted prior to publication.

This position would eliminate one cause of harm in the Report. However, it will pose very substantial difficulties in actual implementation since it will require page-by-page analysis by the Executive and the Committee. One reviewer noted that this type approach would be infeasible because of the intertwined mass of sensitive data. Even if the Executive is successful in removing most of the material harmful to individuals and groups, damage to foreign relations will still result from publication. Moreover, the Executive will have become so enmeshed in the Report that it will have, de facto, approved its publication in that form.

- ? D. (Combination of A and C) That no Report be published, but if the Committee persists, all sensitive sources and methods and any material the publication of which would subject individuals or groups to injury be deleted prior to publication.

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This position would offer a fall-back to accommodate Committee demands for a full Report and would offer hope for minimum protection of individuals and groups jeopardized by the Report in its present form. However, the difficulty of piecemeal sanitization must be emphasized; and it will likely entail de facto approval of the Report by the Executive.

Decision

1. No action whatsoever.

Favor:

Oppose: Buchen, Colby, Schlesinger, Kissinger, Marsh

 Approve

WJ Disapprove

2. Take no official position but forward to the Committee the comments of the three reviewers and request the Committee consider these views in revising its Report.

Favor:

Oppose: Buchen, Colby, Schlesinger, Kissinger, Marsh

 Approve

WJ Disapprove

3. Take an official Administration position, expressed by yourself or a spokesman, opposing publication of the Report in its present form.

Favor: Buchen, Colby, Schlesinger, Kissinger, Marsh

Oppose:

WJ Approve

 Disapprove

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If you take a position:

A. That no Report be published.

Favor: Kissinger (with fallback to B), Buchen (in combination with B), Schlesinger (in combination with B)

Oppose:

MR4

Approve

_____ Disapprove

B. That only the findings and recommendations of the Report be published.

Favor: Colby (with fallback to C), Kissinger (as fallback to A), Buchen (in combination with A), Schlesinger (in combination with A).

Oppose:

_____ Approve

_____ Disapprove

C. That all sensitive sources and methods and any material the publication of which would subject individuals or groups to injury be deleted prior to publication.

Favor: Colby (as fallback to B)

Oppose:

_____ Approve

_____ Disapprove

D. (Combination of A and C) That no Report be published, but if the Committee persists, that all sensitive sources and methods and any material the publication of which would subject individuals or groups to injury be deleted prior to publication.

Favor: Marsh

Oppose:

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_____ Approve

_____ Disapprove

Under Option 3 it is necessary to designate a spokesman for the Administration. This can be you or one of your officials.

_____ I will take position.

_____ Others (_____, _____, _____) will take position.

*Presidential letter to the Committee to
be made public?*

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