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Provenance:

Category: **Uncategorized**

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C. CIA Views of Difficulty of Project

On one point the testimony of CIA officials who were involved in Track II is unanimous: they all said they thought Track II was unlikely to succeed. That view ran from the working levels of the Agency to the top. They all said they felt they were being asked to do the impossible, that the risks and potential costs of the project were too great. At the same time, they felt they had been given an explicit Presidential order, and they tried to execute that order.

A few excerpts from the testimony follow:

Richard Helms, CIA Director -

...my heart sank over this meeting, because...the possibility of bringing off something like this seemed to me at that time to be just as remote as anything could be. In practical terms, the Army was constitutionalist...And when you look here at the time frame in which the man was suddenly asking you to accomplish something, it seemed really almost inconceivable...

What I came away from the meeting with the distinct impression that we were being asked to do almost the impossible and trying to indicate this was going to be pretty tough....

(Helms testimony, July 15, 1975, pp. 6-7)

David Phillips, Chief, Chile Task Force -

...it is my feeling that the odds are unacceptable, it is something that is not going to work, and we are going to be burned if we get into it ...what are the chances of pulling off a coup successfully, or in any way stopping Allende from assuming the presidency?...we never even got to two chances out of 20. (Phillips testimony, p. 16)

...I assure you that those people that I was in touch with at the Agency just about universally said, my God, why are we given this assignment?.

(Phillips testimony, p. 53)

James Flannery, Deputy Chief, Western Hemisphere Division -

There was just no question that we had to make this effort, no matter what the odds were. And I

think that most people felt that the odds were just pretty long. (Flannery testimony, p. 20)