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## KISSINGER BLOCKED DEMARCHE ON INTERNATIONAL ASSASSINATIONS TO CONDOR STATES

RESCINDED ORDERS  
TO WARN MILITARY  
REGIMES DAYS  
BEFORE LETELIER  
BOMBING IN  
WASHINGTON D.C.

Overruled Aides who  
Wanted to "Head Off"  
a "Series of  
International Murders"

National Security Archive  
Electronic Briefing Book  
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### In the news

#### ["Kissinger's 1976 Cable Sheds More Light on 'Operation Condor'"](#)

By Peter Kornbluh  
*Politics Daily*  
April 10, 2010

**Washington, DC, April 10, 2010** - Only five days before a car bomb planted by agents of the Pinochet regime rocked downtown Washington D.C. on September 21, 1976, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger [rescinded instructions](#) sent to, but never implemented by, U.S. ambassadors in the Southern Cone to warn military leaders there against orchestrating "a series of international murders," declassified documents obtained and posted by the National Security Archive revealed today.

The Secretary "has instructed that no further action be taken on this matter," stated a [September 16, 1976, cable](#) sent from Lusaka (where Kissinger was traveling) to his assistant secretary of state for Inter-American affairs, Harry Shlaudeman. The instructions effectively ended efforts by

**["New questions about Kissinger role in 1970s Latin death plot"](#)**

By Andrew Zajac and David S. Cloud  
*Los Angeles Times*  
 April 10, 2010

**["Operación Cóndor: Kissinger ordenó no avisar a Pinochet de planes de asesinatos"](#)**

By John Dinges  
*La Nación* (Chile)  
 April 10, 2010

**["Cable Ties Kissinger to Chile Controversy"](#)**

Associated Press via *New York Times*  
 April 10, 2010

**[The Case of the Missing Letter in Foreign Affairs: Kissinger, Pinochet and Operation Condor](#)** (.pdf)

by Kenneth Maxwell, The David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard University

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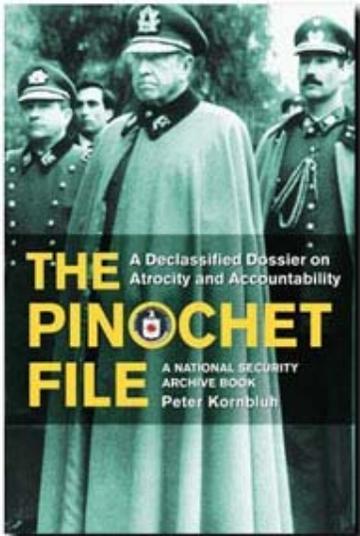
senior State Department officials to deliver a diplomatic *demarche*, approved by Kissinger only three weeks earlier, to express "our deep concern" over "plans for the assassination of subversives, politicians, and prominent figures both within the national borders of certain Southern Cone countries and abroad." Aimed at the heads of state of Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, the *demarche* was never delivered.

"The September 16th cable is the missing piece of the historical puzzle on Kissinger's role in the action, and inaction, of the U.S. government after learning of Condor assassination plots," according to Peter Kornbluh, the Archive's senior analyst on Chile and author of the book, *[The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability](#)*. "We know now what happened: The State Department initiated a timely effort to thwart a 'Murder Inc' in the Southern Cone, and Kissinger, without explanation, aborted it," Kornbluh said. "The Kissinger cancellation on warning the Condor nations prevented the delivery of a diplomatic protest that conceivably could have deterred an act of terrorism in Washington D.C."

Kissinger's September 16 instructions responded to an August 30, 1976 **[secret memorandum](#)** from Shlaudeman, titled "Operation Condor," that advised him: "what we are trying to head off is a series of international murders that could do serious damage to the international status and reputation of the countries involved." After receiving Kissinger's orders, on September 20, Shlaudeman **[directed his deputy](#)**, William Luers, to "instruct the [U.S.] ambassadors to take no further action noting that there have been no reports in some weeks indicating an intention to activate the Condor scheme."

The next day, a massive car bomb claimed the life of former Chilean foreign minister Orlando Letelier and his 26-year old American colleague, Ronni Karpen Moffitt, as they drove down Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, D.C. The bombing remains the most infamous attack of "Condor"—a collaboration between the secret police services in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil and several other Latin American military dictatorships, to track down and kill opponents of their regimes. Until 9/11, the Letelier-Moffitt assassination was known as the most significant act of international terrorism ever committed in the capital city of the United States.

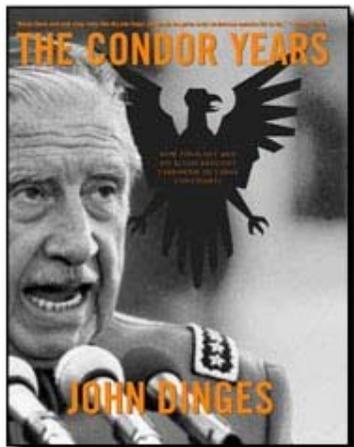
In the **[August 30th memorandum](#)** Shlaudeman informed Kissinger that the U.S. ambassador to Montevideo, Ernest Siracusa, had resisted delivering the *demarche* against Condor assassinations to the Uruguayan generals for fear that his life would be endangered, and wanted further instructions. Shlaudeman recommended that Kissinger authorize a telegram to Siracusa "to talk to both [Foreign



***The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability***

By Peter Kornbluh  
A Los Angeles Times

Best Nonfiction Book of 2003



***The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents***

By John Dinges

Minister Juan Carlos] Blanco and [military commander-in-chief] General [Julio César] Vadora" and a "parallel approach" in which Shlaudeman would meet with the Uruguayan ambassador in Washington. He also offered an alternative of having a CIA official meet with his counterpart in Montevideo. (This memo was obtained under the FOIA by Kornbluh.)

Several days earlier, the U.S. Ambassador to Chile, David Popper, had also protested the order to present the *demarche* to General Augusto Pinochet. "[G]iven Pinochet's sensitivities," Popper cabled, "he might well take as an insult any inference that he was connected with such assassination plots." Like Siracusa, Popper requested further instructions.

Kissinger did not respond to the Shlaudeman memo for more than two weeks. In his **September 16th cable**, Kissinger "declined to approve message to Montevideo" and effectively reversed instructions to the U.S. ambassadors in Chile and Argentina to deliver the *demarche* to General Augusto Pinochet and General Jorge Videla.

The cable was discovered by Archive Southern Cone analyst Carlos Osorio among tens of thousands of routinely declassified State Department cables from 1976.

"We now know that it was Kissinger himself who was responsible," stated John Dinges, author of **The Condor Years**, and a National Security Archive associate fellow. "He cancelled his own order; and Chile went ahead with the assassination in Washington."

Only after the Letelier-Moffitt assassination did a member of the CIA station in Santiago meet with the head of the Chilean secret police, Col. Manuel Contreras, to discuss the *demarche*. The meeting took place the first week of October. In a **secret memorandum** from Shlaudeman to Kissinger—also obtained by Kornbluh under the FOIA—he reported that passing U.S. concerns to Contreras "seems to me sufficient action for the time being. The Chileans are the prime movers in Operation Condor."

The memorandum makes no mention of the CIA pressing Contreras on the issue of the Letelier-Moffitt assassination. Several years later, the FBI identified him as responsible for that atrocity, and the U.S. demanded his extradition, which the Pinochet regime refused. In November 1993, after Pinochet left power, a Chilean court found Contreras guilty for the Condor murders and sentenced him to seven years in a specially-constructed prison.

Henry Kissinger's role in rescinding the Condor *demarche*

was at the center of a contentious controversy at the prestigious journal, *Foreign Affairs (FA)*, in 2004. In a *FA* review of Kornbluh's book, Council on Foreign Relations Senior Fellow Kenneth Maxwell referred to the undelivered *demarche*, and Shlaudeman's September 20th instructions to the ambassadors to "take no further action." In a response, the late William D. Rogers, Kissinger's close associate, lawyer, and a former assistant secretary of State, stated—incorrectly it is now clear—that "Kissinger had nothing to do with the cable." When Maxwell responded to the Rogers letter, he reiterated that the *demarche* was never made in Chile, and that the Letelier-Moffitt assassination "was a tragedy that might have been prevented" if it had.

In response, Kissinger enlisted two wealthy members of the Council to pressure the editor of *FA*, James Hoge, to allow Rogers to have the last word. In a second letter-to-the-editor, Rogers accused Maxwell of "bias," and of challenging Shlaudeman's integrity by suggesting that he had countermanded "a direct, personal instruction from Kissinger" to issue the *demarche*, "and to do it behind his back" while Kissinger was on a diplomatic mission in Africa. When Hoge refused to publish Maxwell's response, Maxwell resigned from his positions at *FA* and the Council.

In the letter that his own employer refused to publish, Maxwell wrote that, to the contrary, "it is hard to believe that Shlaudeman would have sent a cable rescinding the [demarche] without the approval of the Secretary of State who had authorized [it] in the first place." He called on Kissinger to step forward and clarify the progression of policy decisions leading up to the Letelier-Moffitt assassination, and for the full record to be declassified.

The declassification of Kissinger's September 16th cable demonstrates that Maxwell was correct. It was Kissinger who ordered an end to diplomatic attempts to deliver the *demarche* and call a halt to Condor murder operations.

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## Documents

### [Document 1 - Department of State, Cable, "Operation Condor", drafted August 18, 1976 and sent August 23, 1976](#)

This action cable signed by Secretary of State Kissinger reflects a decision by the Latin American bureau in the State Department to try to stop the Condor plans known to be

underway, especially those outside of Latin America. Kissinger instructs the ambassadors of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay to meet as soon as possible with the chief of state or the highest appropriate official of their respective countries and to convey a direct message, known in diplomatic language as a "demarche." The ambassadors are instructed to tell the officials the U.S. government has received information that Operation Condor goes beyond information exchange and may "include plans for the assassination of subversives, politicians and prominent figures both within the national borders of certain Southern Cone countries and abroad." Further, the ambassadors are to express the U.S. government's "deep concern," about the reports and to warn that, if true, they would "create a most serious moral and political problem."

**Document 2 - Department of State, Action Memorandum, Ambassador Harry Schlaudeman to Secretary Kissinger, "Operation Condor," August 30, 1976**

In his memo to Kissinger dated August 30, 1976, Schlaudeman spelled out the U.S. position on Condor assassination plots: "What we are trying to head off is a series of international murders that could do serious damage to the international status and reputation of the countries involved." Schlaudeman's memo requests approval from Kissinger to direct U.S. ambassador to Uruguay, Ernest Siracusa, to proceed to meet with high officials in Montevideo and present the Condor *demarche*.

**Document 3 - Department of State, Cable, "Actions Taken," September 16, 1976**

In this cable, sent from Lusaka where Kissinger is traveling, the Secretary of State refuses to authorize sending a telegram to U.S. Ambassador to Uruguay, Ernest Siracusa, instructing him to proceed with the Condor *demarche*. Kissinger then broadens his instructions to cover the delivery of the *demarche* in Chile, Argentina and Uruguay: "The Secretary has instructed that no further action be taken on this matter." These instructions effectively end the State Department initiative to warn the Condor military regimes not to proceed with international assassination operations, since the *demarche* has not been delivered in Chile or Argentina.

**Document 4 - Department of State, Cable, "Operation Condor," September 20, 1976**

Kissinger's Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs received his instructions on turning off the Condor demarche on September 16th. Three days later, while in Costa Rica, Schlaudeman receives another cable, which remains secret, from his deputy, William Luers, regarding how to

proceed on the demarche. At this point, on September 20, Shlaudeman directs Luers, to "instruct the [U.S.] ambassadors to take no further action noting that there have been no reports in some weeks indicating an intention to activate the Condor scheme."

Condor's most infamous "scheme" comes to fruition the very next day when a car-bomb planted by agents of the Chilean secret police takes the life of former Chilean diplomat, and leading Pinochet opponent, Orlando Letelier, and his 26-year old American colleague, Ronni Karpen Moffitt, in downtown Washington D.C.

**[Document 5 - Briefing Memorandum, Ambassador Harry Schlaudeman to Secretary Kissinger, "Operation Condor," October 8, 1976](#)**

In his October 8 memo to Kissinger transmitting a CIA memorandum of conversation with Col. Contreras, Schlaudeman argued that "the approach to Contreras seems to me to be sufficient action for the time being" because "the Chileans are the prime movers in Operation Condor."

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