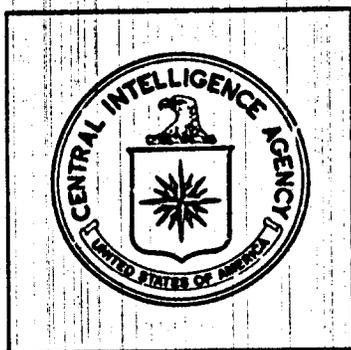


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# Latin American Trends

## STAFF NOTES

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[REDACTED]

Chile: Peeking into Murky Corners

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Acting under the mandate of President Pinochet's recent decree promising to safeguard the rights of prisoners, the justice minister and the supreme court president are making surprise visits to detention centers in the Santiago metropolitan area. If the practice persists it may put an end to the reported abuses of human rights by security and intelligence forces.

The two officials, who are respected by the Chilean legal community, are empowered by law to undertake the following actions:

- to set themselves up, without advance notice, in any place of detention related to the state of siege and to inspect it for strict compliance with laws pertaining to the rights of prisoners.
- to provide a confidential written report on any anomalies they find.
- to order the immediate medical examination of any prisoner who claims to have been mistreated.

[REDACTED] the justice minister and the supreme court head emphatically stated their intent to continue the unannounced checks. Although hesitant to discuss their findings, which have been reported privately to the President, the two officials appeared determined to do an honest and energetic job.

[REDACTED] they have uncovered evidence of serious abuses of human rights. Medical advisers who accompanied them to Cuatro Alamos, a detention center operated by the Directorate of National Intelligence (DINA), confirmed that physical mistreatment

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of prisoners had occurred recently. The two Chilean officials informed Pinochet of the need for strong support from him and probably pressed for closure of this facility. The President [redacted] agreed to give full endorsement to the continuing investigations and may be considering recommendations for reform.

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Meanwhile, Supreme Court President Eyzaguirre confided that he had made a completely unpublicized trip to Villa Grimaldi, reputedly a torture chamber run by DINA, but that he saw no signs of irregularities there. Eyzaguirre claimed that he arrived with no advance notice and opened every door. He did not think the news of his planned visit had leaked.

Pinocnet may have ordered his intelligence chiefs to clean house quickly in advance of visits by impartial observers and in preparation for the scheduled meeting in June of the Organization of American States in Santiago. This event will bring the full glare of international attention on the military regime. In addition, there is some chance that representatives of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission will also be invited to Chile prior to the June meeting.

In another development that appears to hint at an easing of the government's tough security practices, Eyzaguirre told newsmen recently that he did not believe imprisoned Communist Party leader Luis Corvalan would be tried by a military tribunal--which would provide regime opponents with a cause celebre and provoke strident condemnation from many Western nations as well as the Communist world. Pinochet may instead arrange to have Corvalan released from naval custody and expelled from the country, ridding it of a major focus of foreign criticism.

[redacted]

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