

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-14

NEW YORK TIMES
14 JANUARY 1981

Major Points in Testimony Before Senate Panel in Haig Confirmation Hearings

Following are excerpts from a transcript of the hearing in Washington yesterday by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the confirmation of Alexander M. Haig Jr. as Secretary of State, as recorded by The New York Times:

SENATOR PAUL S. SARBANES, Democrat of Maryland: How important is it that Government decisions be made through regularly established channels?

A. I think very important. And I think we cannot permit ourselves to be frustrated by the realities of the current environment in Washington of the kind Mr. Biden, Senator Biden, talked about: the leakage problem. Sometimes that takes a great deal of persistence and requires a number of failures and disappointments.

Q. Well, in view of that answer, what would your thinking be on the way the Cambodian bombing and the Chile Track Two operation were handled? A. Well, with respect to the Cambodian bombing, I think it was very much in line with past practices in American history.

Q. Did those practices trouble you at the time?

A. Not so long as I was assured — and I was — that the appropriate leaders of the Congress were informed. I think in the context of past practices, normally — no one's perfect. No administration is impeccable in these areas, and I don't suppose the Nixon Administration was. But I think there's not a great deal of reason to question that aspect of the problem.

Now you can question whether or not the program itself should've been launched. In that context, you know, I'm on the side of being very much in favor of it. I know what those sanctuaries provided the enemy, and I thought it was a self-defeating position for us to take, to permit them to enjoy those sanctuaries on that narrow strip of land adjacent to South Vietnam.

Q. Now what about the Chilean Track Two, the way that was handled?

A. Well again, and you know everybody's perception is conditioned by their level of involvement, and I know a great deal more about Track Two after the event, and, as I prepared for a required testimony in 1975, than I think I knew at the time. And I think, in hindsight, that that's something that is not ever going to happen again.

In other words, if there were established mechanisms, a 40 Committee designed to deal with covert activity, and there was a separate track established. But, you know, there were tracks in other administrations.

So, again, I want to be sure that we don't single out one particular phase in our history that suggests that it was unique and, as a consequence, something very different. There were tracks in Kennedy's Administration, on the Cuban problem, outside of the old 303 Committee. That's clear and history has confirmed that.

Operation in Chile

Q. Now, it's my understanding that the Secretary of State at the time was not aware of the Chilean Track Two operation. Is that your understanding?

A. Yeah, I think that's probably true, yes.

Q. What do you think of a decision-making process that excludes from it the Secretary of State, with respect to a decision of that — an action of that sort? A. It better not happen on my watch.

Q. Did you make a value judgment about it then?

A. I wasn't really sensitive to whether I should or didn't — or shouldn't have because I was not a functionary, in the formal sense of Track Two. My recollections of the situation were I was asked to take some reports from the Central Intelligence Agency. And I served as a conduit for a number of reports that were received, which I learned later were under the format of Track Two.

I didn't sit in on the 40 Committee meetings, I doubt — you know, frankly, it wasn't an issue that I focused on, Senator. Now it's very important that that be understood here.

EXCERPTED