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Don't push Chile, Pinochet warns

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SANTIAGO, Chile — Chile's return to democracy is going according to schedule, and will neither be hurried nor delayed, President Augusto Pinochet said in an interview with The Washington Times.

"We have a calendar where all the plans and programs are being developed, with date certain. . . . We will

strictly follow this schedule," he said.

"Some people are very worried, and want the [implementing] legislation dictated from one day to the other. No, senores. Everything is being studied," Gen. Pinochet said.

Under the 1980 constitution approved by two-thirds of the Chilean electorate, a presidential plebiscite and congressional elections are scheduled for 1989.

In a rare interview with an American journalist, Gen. Pinochet, who remains commander-in-chief of the armed forces, also described relations with the United States as normal — a diplomatic term for mediocre.

Looking fit and relaxed over an early morning breakfast at the Moneda Palace, the Chilean president responded freely to questions on a wide range of subjects, including touchy ones regarding human rights practices in Chile.

But under direct questioning, he refused to disclose his own plans for 1989, citing a variety of reasons, including personal health. The Chilean president — who even his political enemies here concede is a wily

politician — continues to play his cards very close to the vest.

As to when the decision will be made, the Chilean leader said, "the year 1989."

"Before then, I remain silent and tranquil. I am doing things as I always have done them. That's the luck of being military," he said.

At 68, Gen. Pinochet is also reportedly in good, if not excellent, health, with only rumors of a high blood pressure condition circulating in this politically sophisticated capital.

Gen. Pinochet rejected any suggestion that the United States could alter his plans through the use of pressure tactics.

"When the United States wants to impose something on us, we don't accept it," he said.

"Although we may die from hunger, we are not going to accept pressure from anyone," he said, adding that the removal of Marxist President Salvador Allende in 1973 by Chile's armed forces "did not cost the United States one dollar, one shot, one weapon, one man."

"No one can say in the United States: 'We helped Chile. That is not the case. We did it ourselves, here in Chile.'"

Mr. Pinochet warned, "We are friends with the United States, but we are not subordinate, nor a colony."

Describing current relations with the Reagan administration, Gen. Pinochet said: "not so close that I may get burned, nor so far that I may get cold."

Impatience, if not criticism, has been increasing lately from at least the middle levels of the U.S. State Department over the pace of the transition toward representative democracy. U.S. officials have expressed a fear that Gen. Pinochet's seeking an eight-year term in 1989 will constitute "continuism" — a term that the general rejects.

"Continuism would be if I remained for life . . . but there are elections here," he said. At the same time, the Chilean president made clear he would not step aside prematurely.

Gen. Pinochet insists that what he will leave Chile is a "protected

democracy" — that is, protected from a communist takeover.

Chile "does not have confidence in absolute pluralism because through absolute pluralism, democracies die," he said.

Under the new party law which is currently being written, the Communist Party will be banned, according to Gen. Pinochet. On the other hand, other parties will be allowed to function.

In addition, a constitutional tribunal will be established with the power to outlaw "totalitarian groups."

As to the possible identity of other groups, Mr. Pinochet hinted at the fate of the socialists — or at least the faction allied with the Chilean communists.

"For me, the socialists are first cousins of the communists," Gen. Pinochet said.

As for terrorism in Chile, Gen. Pinochet said it will continue in his country "because it is the armed arm of the Soviet Communists."

Chile's urban terrorist movement, the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front, killed a policeman last week in downtown Santiago during rush hour traffic, blocks from the Moneda palace.

Charging that Chile's terrorists have been trained in Cuba and the Soviet Union, Gen. Pinochet also said that intelligence services in the region are exchanging information on terrorist movements.

As for Chile's human rights situation, which critics — including some members of the Reagan administration — have long attacked, Gen. Pinochet insisted that "congressional [critics] and others know very little of South America."

Reacting to the murder of three communists last March — a matter of continuing controversy within Chile — Mr. Pinochet said, "I am an enemy of crime and I am not approving of the crime."

"Now the government has given all the facilities so that it can investigate. The government has used every means to find out," he said.

To Gen. Pinochet, the method of the killings — throats cut — suggests "Mafia characteristics."

"Chileans don't kill by cutting throats," he said, making a stabbing motion over the breakfast table in the direction of the interviewer's chest.