

Kissinger cut off warning against killings

BY PETE YOST

As secretary of state, Henry Kissinger canceled a U.S. warning against carrying out international political assassinations that was to have gone to Chile and two neighboring nations just days before a former ambassador was killed by Chilean agents on Washington's Embassy Row in 1976, a newly released State Department cable shows.

Whether Kissinger played a role in blocking the delivery of the warning to the governments of Chile, Argentina and Uruguay has long been a topic of controversy.

The Sept. 16, 1976, cable, which was discovered in recent weeks by the National Security Archive, a nonprofit research organization, is among tens of thousands of declassified State Department documents recently made available.

In 1976, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay were engaged in a program of repression code-named Operation Condor that targeted those governments' political opponents throughout Latin America, Europe and even the United States.

Based on information from the CIA, the State Department became concerned that Condor included plans for political assassinations around the world and drafted a stern warning against such killings.

In the Sept. 16, 1976 cable, the topic of one paragraph is listed as "Operation Condor," preceded by the words "(KISSINGER, HENRY A.) SUBJECT: ACTIONS TAKEN." The cable states that the "secretary declined to approve message to Montevideo," Uruguay, "and has instructed that no further action be taken on this matter."

Jessica LePorin, a spokeswoman for Kissinger, said the former secretary of state had dealt many years ago with questions concerning the cancellation of the warnings to the South American governments and had no further comment on the matter.

On Sept. 21, 1976, agents of Chilean Gen. Augusto Pinochet planted a car bomb and exploded it on a District street, killing former ambassador Orlando Letelier, an outspoken Pinochet critic.