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## Accessing Declassified Documents Through Library Resources: Revealing How US Training Exacerbated Human Rights Violations During Chile's Dictatorship

In January of 2024, I finished reading a book I found through the UC Davis Library—Peter Kornbluh's "The Pinochet File." Kornbluh unveiled hundreds of CIA declassified documents on the US's involvement in Chile's political, economic, and social affairs. The library's material sparked my interest in declassified documents and studying the effects of US intervention in Latin American countries. The research paper I created is a one-of-a-kind investigation into the US training effects on Chilean security personnel behavior, particularly the human rights violations conducted by personnel during the dictatorship. The extensive UC Davis Library services offered access to newly declassified US documents, developed my research strategies, and supported my clear four-step investigation into *how* military training shaped the abuses that continue to affect Chilean societies today.

Through navigating the Gale Database, Proquest, and its thousands of document collections, I built a more narrow research project that uniquely unveiled the United States government's interventionist effect in Chile. From my newfound interest in declassified US materials at the beginning of 2024, I created a broad research project question: "To what extent did the US's Central Intelligence Agency's Cold War intervention worsen human rights in Latin America." To find declassified CIA documents, I searched through the UC Davis library research guide for databases that contained these under-studied materials. Using the UC Davis Library site, I found that researchers typically use Proquest to cross-search various databases. In using this method, I discovered the collection "Death Squads, Guerrilla War, Covert Ops, and Genocide: Guatemala and the United States, 1954-1999," which contained 2,071 declassified documents. Within Proquest, I also searched for "Archival Materials" and included key terms like "US Intervention in Latin America," "US political intervention in the Cold War," "Covert Interventions by the US in the Cold War," etc. While I read through more than 50 of the declassified materials I discovered through hours of research, I also found a key document in the Gale Database that motivated my original and narrow research idea. Through Gale, I used the Advanced Search Function and its Boolean operators to search "US Political Intervention AND Cold War." The "1966 Counterinsurgency Bluebook" appeared, which is a 304-page document detailing the training the US offered Latin American countries during the Cold War. Through this library document, I narrowed my research to the human rights effect of US military training on the behavior of Latin American security personnel. I also decided to focus my study on Chile for several reasons: 1) the Counterinsurgency Bluebook unveiled that one of the highest US-funded countries was Chile, 2) I had found a library collection titled "Chile and the United States: US Policy Toward Democracy, Dictatorship, and Human Rights" that revealed thousands of under-studied declassified materials, and 3) despite that Peter Kornbluh's book has one of the most comprehensive material on US intervention in Latin America, it lacks any declassified documents on the training of Latin American military personnel. Thus, through the library resources, I began my research into the effect of US military training on the human rights violations conducted by Chilean officials.

To develop an original research question that expanded upon existing literature addressing the effects of US training on Chilean human rights violations, I used platforms like JSTOR, HeinOnline, and, more specifically, the PAIS Index and the Worldwide Political Science Abstracts. First, I had to understand existing literature on my research topic; thus, I used the UC Davis Library site to search for related books, articles, or essays. I used the Advanced Search functions and inputted keywords like

“School of the Americas”—the largest US military training facility—or “US Military Training in Chile during the Cold War.” I checked out some of the physical copies and thoroughly read the following pieces for my literature review: *Hostile Intent: US Covert Operations in Chile*, *Principles in Power: Latin America and the Politics of US Human Rights Diplomacy*, and “The consequences of CIA-sponsored regime change in Latin America.” The literature unveiled that international relations scholars minimally studied the human rights effect of US-led military training, and it was unclear *how* US training had particularly affected security personnel behavior. I further used the “Ask the Librarian” function on the UC Davis Library site to ask about particular databases that could expand my search for literature on the effects of US military training on Latin American personnel behavior. The librarian I connected with through the function directed me to the PAIS Index and the Worldwide Political Science Abstracts. By using both tools to search for keywords, like “CIA,” “Central Intelligence Agency,” or “School of the Americas,” and narrowing down to the 1960s and 1970s, I found additional articles that similarly revealed the lack of existing research on US military training. Through my access to JSTOR and HeinOnline, I found a document titled “Lawmakers Push For Shutdown of Army’s School of the Americas.” It revealed that while scholars and attorneys had criticized the School of the Americas for equipping Latin American officials with the strategies and tools necessary to violate civilian human rights, they had not unveiled what particular devices the US encouraged, who was involved, how long the US trained officials, or even the courses the US offered. I incorporated the literature into my research paper, but further used these resources to expand international relations scholarship. I took on a research-heavy task that involved uncovering the US’s specific role in the human rights violations in Chile but also, more broadly, in Latin America.

While I found hundreds of documents on the US’s intervention in Chile, I developed four original research questions that allowed me to evaluate which resources to include in my research paper. The first question states, “Did Chilean security personnel receive training by US military forces?” For this question, I aimed to find declassified materials that revealed that the US substantially trained Chilean security officials. I aimed to find the courses the US offered, the length of training, the types of training tools recommended, the funds the US invested in training Chileans, and any other background information on the US School of the Americas. I returned to the 304-page “Counterinsurgency Bluebook” I had found through the Gale database. While reading the document, I used the keyword search function provided through the database to search for “Chile,” “funds,” and “training.” I also clicked on the “allow variations” function, as this had previously directed me to new details on US military training. Through this document, I found that the US invested almost \$564,162 in foreign security training just in 1966. I had read dozens of articles and books on US training facilities, but existing literature had not revealed the specific funds the US invested in training Latin American countries. In my research paper, I also included the various course names and some of the information on the details of the training offered to Chileans and other Latin American military personnel. Additionally, to answer question one, I continued to use the Gale Database since I had not only learned successful search methods but had discovered the most comprehensive information on the School of the Americas through this platform. By using the “US Declassified Documents Online” collection, I searched for keywords like “SOA AND Chile” or “Department of Defense AND Chilean personnel.” While I found various declassified documents, only a couple answered question one in my research topic. The collection allowed me to find a key Department of Defense document titled “Summary of aircraft sorties in SE Asia.” The document described the US’s training in Latin American countries and Basic Combat Training courses offered to security personnel. By

answering question one, I encountered original information on the US's training of Chilean personnel, which scholars had not identified in previous literature.

Through my research of question one, I encountered a challenge—there were limited declassified documents that revealed the content of training courses or even training length. To expand my research methods, I booked three one-hour appointments with the UC Davis librarians. On two occasions, I spoke to William Cuthbertson. Mr. Cuthbertson not only provided me with various sources on the School of the Americas but also walked me through ProQuest search suggestions. We worked together to find an outside source—the School of the Americas Watch. This site had filed a FOIA request and collected 60,000 names of Latin American personnel who the US trained at the School of the Americas. The database contained information on the training length, the courses the military officials attended, and their rank. Given that some of the documents and dissertations on ProQuest are not fully available to the public, I worked with Mr. Cuthbertson to contact universities like UNCO to gain access to literature like “Armies of Compassion? United States military training in counterinsurgency doctrine at the School of the Americas.” While I did not use this dissertation in my answer to question one, it served as an interesting context for my literature review. As per the guidance Mr. Cuthbertson offered, I contacted the US Library of Congress to expand my research into the training provided by the School of the Americas. Through working with another librarian in October of 2024, I received research tips. One valuable suggestion was to look at citations within books (e.g., Peter Kornbluh’s *The Pinochet File*) to find relevant literature that contained declassified documents on US military training. To expand my search into question one, I also used the “Ask the Librarian” function. Although the librarian directed me to several documents I had already discovered, I was introduced to the National Security Archive, which introduced newly declassified documents. While I experienced various challenges with the limited number of declassified documents that could support my research into question one, I spoke to librarians who facilitated my investigations.

To answer questions two, three, and four, I used declassified sources I discovered through librarian assistance and applied investigative strategies I learned throughout my research process. With the support of my advisors, we crafted question two to state, “Did the training curriculum promote human rights abuses?” While the previously declassified documents I found through Library databases were helpful for my first research question, I needed a document that thoroughly described the kinds of behaviors and tools the US recommended Chilean officials apply to civilians. After I discovered the National Security Archive through both the “Ask the Librarian” feature and the citations at the end of the library-accessed *Pinochet Files*, I searched through the documents the site collects. It housed the more than 200-page KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation Training Manual. This document fueled all the information I needed for question two, given that it contained numerous details on the training provided to Chilean security officers. It exposed the US's repressive training devices and their encouraged behavior. Moreover, question three states, “Did the tools used by Chilean forces mirror the training methods promoted by the US?” For this question, I compared US training tools to Chilean security personnel behavior during the dictatorship. Through the Library-accessed literature, I discovered that the Chilean government had released a public report—the Valech Report—which detailed Chilean security personnel behavior. Similarly, to answer question four—Did Chilean security personnel who received US training carry out human rights abuses?—I applied investigative strategies I learned through my research. I had learned that advanced searches through Google should include quotation marks, along with key markers like “AND,” “OR,” etc. Through such strategies, I found that the School of the Americas Watch and other human rights organizations have minimally identified the individuals who 1) attended the

School of the Americas training facility and 2) committed rights violations in Chile after their training. Using these learned research strategies, I expanded the list of Chilean security personnel linked to human rights abuses. I used the 60,000-person database I had found with Mr. Cuthbertson and cross-referenced to sites like *Memoria Viva*, which tracked the Chilean personnel who committed violations. If I had not met with the librarians and further developed my investigative strategies, I would not have been able to expand upon current human rights research to compile the 65-person list of Chilean personnel who attended the US military training facility and who committed abuses.

Through extensive library resources, including the databases, the UC Davis library site, the research guides, the “Ask the Librarian Function,” and the librarian services, I created an original research project that not only holds the US accountable for its interventions but demands that global nations and US civilians demand policies to restrict US military training. I discovered that existing literature minimally studies the effects of US military training on Latin American security personnel behavior. I used library resources to fill those gaps and clearly outline mechanisms that explain *how* US training could have shaped the human rights violations in Chile. While I searched for declassified documents through the CIA website and US government sources, the UC Davis Library provided the most declassified materials. I developed key research strategies, narrowed down my search terms, and formed a determination to continue investigations into declassified documents despite the challenges that come with accessing them. The library resources not only supported the development of an original research project but sparked a newfound passion I will be exploring in graduate school—the assessment of declassified documents for research that exposes US interventions in Latin American countries and pushes for restrictive policies.

*I used Grammarly for grammar and syntax corrections in this essay. Here is the website for the tool:*  
<https://www.grammarly.com/>.