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WHITE HOUSE
SITUATION 25X1
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22 April 1971

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : Situation in Haiti Following Death of Duvalier

1. The recently amended Haitian constitution provides for a successor to the President. That successor has been named and his selection ratified by popular referendum. He is Jean-Claude Duvalier, the 20-year old son of former President Duvalier who informed Ambassador Knox of his father's death on the evening of 21 April.

2. The initial act of transferring authority appears to have transpired without incident. Jean-Claude's tenure will probably be jeopardized by his youth, lack of preparation, the probable development of pro and anti-Jean Claude factions, and anxiety by men outside the government to make a move before it is too late. Duvalier sought to surround Jean-Claude with men whom he could rely upon to respect his wishes. Without the restraining presence of Duvalier himself, the personal ambitions which these Duvalierists harbor are expected to surface in the near future. Also, people outside the government are expected to try to move quickly toward power before they are cut out by others in the government who are in better position.

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Attached to Scoville memo from Nachmanoff/Kennedy for HAK, 22 Apr. 1971

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3. The exiles, and oppositionists within the country, are considered too weak, small and disorganized to act immediately, but they will try to take advantage of the first opportunity in 14 years to play a role in Haiti. There are no clear indications that Cuban or other foreign support to exile groups has prepared them for an immediate move. Duvalier's death of course increases the possibility. The Haitian military, which is now on full alert, is probably capable of containing moderate internal disorders but it is not adequate to resist a strong attack from abroad.

4. Fear of an invasion from abroad, whether well founded or not, may inhibit any immediate struggle for power within Haiti among those now in positions of power. The new President has already requested the United States to provide naval surveillance in the waters around Haiti to prevent Cuban vessels from carrying out any invasion attempt against the country and to forestall "external groups"--presumably Haitian exiles in the United States, from staging attacks on Haiti.

5. When news of Duvalier's death is made public, immediate widespread violence is not anticipated although there may be isolated instances of personal revenge.

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6. In brief, there is a legal successor. He is for the moment supported by people who do not wish to lose what they have. There are no clear indications as to who in this group, or outside the government, is strongest. An undetermined period of watchful waiting and business-as-usual is probably.

7. If a struggle for power does develop, and if a winner emerges quickly, power should be transferred with a minimum of unpleasantness--for Haiti and for the United States. If a struggle develops and no one emerges the clear victor, a chaotic and difficult time lies ahead.

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