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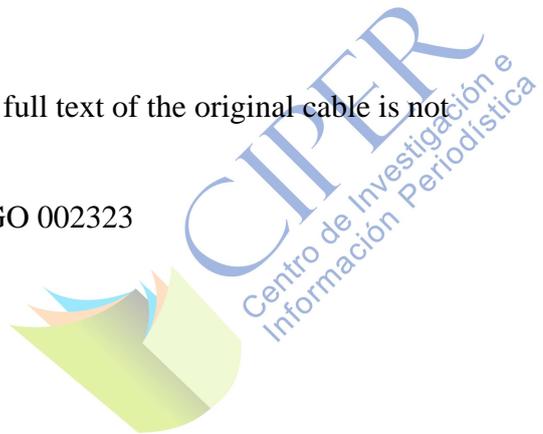
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTIAGO 002323

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STATE FOR WHA/BSC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/14/2015  
**TAGS:** PREL, PGOV, CI, Test Hot Topic



**SUBJECT: CHILE'S ELECTIONS: BACHELET SLIP IN POLLS  
INCREASINGLY POSSIBLE**

**REF:** A. SANTIAGO 1975  
B. SANTIAGO 01342  
C. SANTIAGO 01175 AND PREVIOUS

**Classified By:** Ambassador Craig A. Kelly. Reasons: 1.4 (b and d).

1. (C) **Summary:** Concertacion presidential candidate Michelle Bachelet's recent slip in the polls to 40 percent increases the likelihood that no candidate will win more than 50 percent on December 11 and a run-off election will be required. Bachelet's two main rivals -- the Independent Democratic Union's Joaquin Lavin and the National Renewal's Sebastian Pinera -- continue to poll separately in the high teens or low 20s. If Bachelet does not win over 50 percent on December 11, she and the second highest vote earner will move on to a run-off election on January 15, where it is plausible that the two rightist candidates' votes could combine, together with swing votes, to create a Lavin or Pinera victory. End summary.

The Poll  
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2. (U) One of Chile's conservative leading dailies, ""El Mercurio,"" released on November 13 the results of a recent poll conducted in Chile's three largest cities (Santiago, Valparaiso and Concepcion). According to the poll:

--If elections were held today, 40.2 percent said they would vote for Bachelet, 20.5 for Lavin, 19.7 percent for Pinera, and 5.4 percent for Hirsch. Undecideds numbered

14.2 percent.

--In a Bachelet vs. Lavin run-off, 45.1 percent said they would vote for Bachelet and 29.1 percent for Lavin. Undecideds numbered 25.8 percent.

--In a Bachelet vs. Pinera run-off, 46.9 percent said they would vote for Bachelet and 31.8 percent for Pinera. Undecideds numbered 21.3 percent.

Compared with the results of the same poll taken in June, Bachelet and Lavin dropped two and 2.6 points, respectively. In contrast, Pinera gained two points. Hirsch's standing remained generally unchanged.

### **The Dynamic**

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3. (C) For the first time, Lavin's and Pinera's combined numbers equal those of Bachelet's. ""Together We Can"" coalition leader Tomas Hirsch polls in the five to seven percent range, and likely gained at Bachelet's expense.

4. (C) Some of the same observers who concluded in early September that the presidential race was over are rethinking their positions in light of Bachelet's declining numbers. The Embassy's Concertacion contacts, including Bachelet campaign advisor (and son of the president) Ricardo Lagos Weber, continue to predict a Bachelet victory. However, they are less certain of a first-round victory than they were two months ago. Some are even openly talking about a run-off election, in part to lessen the dismay and public embarrassment should Bachelet not win outright in December. The Embassy's Alianza contacts, including UDI Deputy and Lavin advisor Dario Paya, are beaming at Bachelet's drop in numbers, believing she peaked too early, and are confident there will be a run-off election.

### **Comment**

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5. (C) As reported previously (reftels), Bachelet's numbers and charisma assure her a strong showing on December 11. However, there is no guarantee she will win the 50 percent plus one vote required to secure a first-round victory (Ref A). If Bachelet does not win over 50 percent, she and the second highest vote earner will move on to a run-off election on January 15. There are a number of variables that make it difficult for polls to predict how voters will vote in a run-off election: whether voters will be encouraged/discouraged by a second round Christian Democrats will drift to Pinerarecaptures all of the Hirsch voteright or left. In one entirely plausible run-off scenario, the right could win the election if Lavin and Pinera supporters unite behind the one remaining Alianza candidate and if the right secures enough of the swing and/or undecided vote.

KELLY