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CBS NEWS REPORTS ON PANAMA

Tuesday Evening, January 2

CBS's Dan Rather: President Bush removed his ambassador to Panama today and named a new one. This unexpected move came as deals over Manuel Noriega appeared to be bogged down, as Panama's new government showed signs of having difficulty taking hold and taking root, and as the U.S. Army appeared to settle in for a long stay.

CBS's Doug Tunnell: Midway through day nine of talks to get Manuel Noriega out of the Vatican Embassy and into American hands, the Bush Administration announced that it was replacing the senior American diplomat in Panama. When U.S. Ambassador Arthur Davis met with the Vatican's ambassador for over an hour this morning, it was not for negotiations on Noriega but to say farewell. There it was announced that Davis will be replaced by career diplomat Dean Hinton. The change in midstream was said to be an attempt to bolster U.S. diplomatic support for the new government of Panama. Davis has often come up short when questioned on diplomatic matters.

(Ambassador Davis [laughing]: "Honestly, I don't know. You know, I, some of these diplomatic things, I'm a political appointee by Ronald Reagan.")

Hinton is a Latin American expert, currently the ambassador in Costa Rica. He is expected to report to his new post before the end of the week. He is a troubleshooter, and trouble is what he's got. Despite reports of a possible breakthrough, negotiations on Noriega are said to be at a standstill. In fact, for almost everyone concerned Noriega's respite here is turning into Noriega's revenge. The Vatican's envoys have made it clear they will not grant Noriega political asylum.

(Rev. Marcos Magrath, Archbishop of Panama: "He's going to have to decide which way he turns himself in.")

Panama's government rules out safe passage to another country, and even members of the Old Guard say the party's over. "This has gone on too long," said former Vice President Carlos Azores [phonetic]. "I think he should turn himself over to the Panamanians." But it appears that Noriega is intent on keeping everyone twisting slowly and denying both the Pentagon and Panama's new government the grand finale: his capture.

(Vice President Guillermo Ford: "Noriega is going to come out and we're gonna get him. Period. He's gonna face justice. He's not gonna laugh at us.")

Inside the Vatican Embassy, Noriega is said to be despondent and recluse, a man who has lost it all. There is word tonight, Dan, that now even as a fugitive Noriega is holding out for a deal, a way around the law. The main sticking point in negotiations, according to U.S. sources close to Noriega, is that he still wants to go to a third country even though almost everyone else has ruled that alternative out.

Rather: Doug, besides the possibility of Cuba, is there any third country that would have him?

Tunnell: Cuba was the most likely candidate. It was said he wanted to go there. But no one else has stepped forward, and even to go anywhere across this city he's going to have to get past the 82nd Airborne.

Rather: A few U.S. troops are home again after the invasion of Panama, a few more will follow, but as CBS News Defense Department correspondent David Martin reports, it appears U.S. soldiers will be needed in Panama for quite some time to come.

CBS's David Martin:

(U.S. soldier: "Damn glad to be home.")

The first American troops withdrawn from Panama returned to their home base today, and U.S. officials say more can be expected back by the weekend. But for the time being, the number of soldiers returning will be small.

(Col. Ron Sconyers, Southcom spokesman: "I think you'll just see in the hundreds over a period of time until the determination is made by the national command authority that we can send greater numbers home. But it's not going to be complete withdrawal overnight.")

In fact, additional troops may actually be going into Panama, to -- among other things -- help distribute tons of humanitarian supplies, everything from baby food to blankets, airlifted from the U.S. for those left destitute by the fighting. Another task facing the military before any large-scale pullout: turn the defeated Panamanian Defense Forces into an army untainted by the Noriega style of governing.

(Fred Woerner, Southcom Commander: "You'll be hard-pressed to find anybody that is totally free of that dimension because that was part of the bonding of the Panamanian Defense Forces, the mutual corruption that existed among its members.")

And weeding out Noriega supporters from the new recruits will take time.

(Woerner: "A series of interviews and background checks on their records, even to the point where the vice presidents and the president of Panama actually has an individual say so in who goes into certain leadership positions.")

Soldiers can restore order but they cannot restore the economy. That takes money. So, this afternoon, Deputy Secretary of State Eagleburger took off for Panama with a delegation of Administration officials to discuss economic aid for the new government. Eagleburger might also join in the negotiations over the fate of Noriega. Once that is decided, the withdrawal of U.S. troops could go faster. But even after the invasion force comes home, some 10,000 American servicemen permanently stationed in Panama will remain.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM FOR THE WHITE HOUSE STAFF

FROM: Marlin Fitzwater *Mail*
SUBJECT: Television Appearances, Sunday, January 7, 1990

ABC "This Week with David Brinkley": 10:30 am Channel 7

The topic will be Panama. The guest will be National Security Adviser General Brent Scowcroft; President Guillermo Endara, President of Panama; and Frank Rabino, Noriega's lawyer.

CBS "Face the Nation": 10:30 am Channel 9

The topic will be Panama. The guest will be White House Chief of Staff John Sununu.

NBC "Meet the Press": 10:30 am Channel 4

The topic will be Panama and Eastern Europe. The guest will be Under Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger.

CNN "Newsmaker" 1:30 pm and 5:50 pm (Saturday) 10:30 am (Sunday)

Saturday: The topic will be Panama. Guests include: Richard Gregorie, Former United States Attorney; Representative Newt Gingrich (R-GA); Lloyd Cuttler, former White House Counsel; and William Kunstler, liberal Defense Attorney. ✓

Sunday: The topic will be the ailing American auto industry. The guests will be Secretary of Commerce Robert Mosbacher; and representatives from the Detroit auto industry. ✓ 11 00

CNN Evans & Novak: 12:30 pm (Saturday)

The topic will be Panama. The guest will be Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney.

McLaughlin One-on-One: 12:30 pm (Sunday)

The guest will be Lynne Cheney, Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The topic will be the state of education in the United States.

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Prejudicing the Noriega Case

Q. You talk about your concern about prejudicing the case, but as you well know, you have called Noriega a thug, and other people in the Administration have gone further; you said he's poisoning our children; haven't you already done that and —

A. Well, I think I've heard all kind of char-

ON LATIN RELATIONS

"I want to assure all of the countries of Latin America that United States policy remains one of a friendly, supportive and respectful neighbor."

acterizations of him in the press, columnists, even commentators. Presidents, members of the United States Congress. He is not in custody. Time for rhetoric is over. Time for answering hypothetical questions that might prejudice the trial is over. Now I would go back, Lesley, to help you on that to Watergate, where there were hearings. Hearings held. Charges made. Over and over again. Editorials written and voiced, and yet the people received a fair trial. So I am convinced that our system of justice is so fair that the person will get a fair trial. But I can tell you from my standpoint, I am going to bend over backwards and not answer hypothetical questions or not do anything that might prejudice that. Yeah?

Q. I have a follow-up. I want to actually follow up on Helen.

A. No, that's a separate question.

Noriega's Trial Rights

Q. Reducing our charges. Are you saying that if he wants to go for that, if he wants to try to go for reducing of charges, that we will entertain —

A. No, I'm not saying that. I'm saying he has a right to do what he wants, and then let the legal process determine how that should work out.

Q. You're not ruling it out?

A. Well, I'm not ruling it in. I'm just saying he's got his rights, and we ought not to stand up here and try to define narrowly what they are. Yes, and then John, and then we'll start moving into the back.

NBC

Tom Brokaw: ...The President praised the Vatican and the Papal Nuncio for its statesmanlike ways and its even-handed approach to all this. He said it sends a clear signal as well that the United States is serious about dealing with those who are responsible for funneling drugs into this country. The President also praised, of course, the Americans who were involved in the invasion and he expressed his support and sympathy to those families of those young men who were killed....

Brian Ross reports from Homestead Air Force Base that Noriega's lawyers might claim their client cannot receive a fair trial in the U.S., and before that will try to raise the issue of whether Noriega was seized legally. Significantly, in the cases of the two Panamanians who have been seized in Panama and brought to this country, that argument has been dismissed by the U.S. magistrate. Justice Department officials have told NBC News that they intend to re-indict Noriega, "beefing up" the charges.

Fred Francis reports from the Pentagon that officials are saying there was never any plan for Noriega to go to any safe refuge, and that that was brought home to him over the last several days, not by U.S. officials, but by the Papal Nuncio and Vatican officials. The U.S. position did not waver through the entire week.

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Dan Rather: Sources told CBS News that as late as this afternoon, Gen. Noriega was questioning if the death penalty came with conviction on any indictments he faced in the U.S. An intermediary at the Nuncio in Panama City said no.

David Martin: It's important to point out that Manuel Noriega is a long way from either standing trial or being convicted. There are a lot of people in the Pentagon who have a queasy feeling about this indictment, because it is all based...primarily on the testimony of witnesses who are not necessarily the most reliable witnesses because of their own problems with the law or a past falling-out with Noriega.... I think a lot is going to depend on how much documentary evidence has been uncovered in Noriega's various hideaways in Panama, and whether it has been uncovered and brought to the U.S. in a way that meets all the requirements of the custody of evidence.

Rather: ...Give President Bush credit for at least this: That he's consistently said that his goal was to get Noriega returned to face trial.... Noriega has been quoted as saying on several occasions that in terms of evidence, that he, quote, and I'll try to clean it up, had President Bush in a vital place, unquote.

Rather asks Lesley Stahl: What has the White House said, officially and unofficially, about that, referring to the fact...that President Bush had met Noriega in Panama, and had a meeting with him there, at least one?

Lesley Stahl: Well, I can tell you that the press secretary said the other day, "Noriega can talk about Bush, and secrets at the CIA, till he's blue in the face. It's not going to make any difference." They seem to be quite confident that there's nothing he could do that could damage President Bush or embarrass him to such a degree that he didn't go out to pursue this man and bring him back to the country.... They have never really gone back and looked methodically at what kinds of secrets he could ask to be revealed at the trial, what kind of documents he could subpoena. And they have just begun that process. So in terms of specifics, I don't think they actually have pinpointed what kind of documents he would seek, what kind of information he would demand to come out of the trial. And I'm not sure they really have figured out exactly how far they're willing to let this go.

Rather: How does what you've just said square with what strikes many, both Republicans and Democrats in the Congress, as Attorney General Thornburgh, under apparently the direction and cooperation at the White House, tried to get the special prosecutor to, in effect, not even try Adm. Poindexter, the, quote, stonewalling, unquote. Naturally, Attorney General Thornburgh has another view of this making available any documents about exactly what Oliver North was doing when he met with Noriega. And is it true that Poindexter met with Noriega. And if so, what was said. How does this square, how can it be made to come full circle?

Stahl: Well, as you can imagine, that's the very kind of question that gets asked here at the White House virtually every day in the last week, "If you really want Noriega, are you going to let these secrets out, if you're trying to stop them in the other trials." And Marlin Fitzwater says that Iran-contra is different from this situation, a drug dealer. They feel that they, at least they say publicly, I want to stress that, this is the public, on-the-record statements, that they're going to pursue and they're going to let some of these secrets come out. Those are the public statements.

Rather asks **Doug Tunnell** what the mood is in Panama City and whether this increases or decreases the chances of the new Endara government ...actually beginning to govern?

Tunnell: All around me there are parades of cars in all the streets here. They're creating a bit of a problem for U.S. troops right now, because they're still barricading certain streets, and the cars are coming right up to the barbed wire. Everyone's beating pots and pans, honking their horns, flashing lights on the balconies of the apartment buildings all around here.... People are chanting, singing, playing music.... As for the Endara government, there is no doubt this is going to give them a big boost.... Now that he's gone, they can get down to business.

Rather: There are those who have said...that the sudden appointment of Dean Hinton...is to, in effect, "make him the government of Panama," with his vast experience, including his experience in El Salvador. Is that the read on the ground in Panama City?

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Rather asks David Martin: Has there been any queasiness on [U.S. intelligence services'] part, to the effect of saying, Listen, a trial could be trouble, if for no other reason, that it might expose some of our operations in Central America? What about the consistent accusations...that there was a guns-for-the-contras south, drugs-north operation, to North America, run out of Panama and possibly Noriega?

Martin: I don't know anything about that latter point. The former point, this fear of secrets being avoided.

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EXCERPT FROM NBC'S NIGHTLY NEWS, FRIDAY, JAN. 5

STORY ON PRESIDENT BUSH'S COMMENTS ABOUT
SIMULTANEOUSLY AIRING COFFINS RETURNING FROM PANAMA
AND THE PRESIDENT DURING EARLIER PRESS CONFERENCE

Brokaw: At the end of his news conference, the President spoke out emotionally on another subject, criticizing the way some television networks handled his last news conference. It was the day after the U.S. invasion of Panama. At times, Bush joked around, complaining at one point about his stiff neck.

(President Bush: "The longer you stay under the lights, the worse it gets.")

During the news conference, the first of the American servicemen killed in Panama were arriving at Dover Air Force Base. CNN, ABC and CBS used a split-screen technique that showed the coffins and the President at the same time. Today Bush said he received a lot of angry mail from viewers.

(President: "I could understand why the viewers were concerned about this. They thought their president, at a solemn moment like that, didn't give a damn. And I do, I do, I feel it so strongly.")

The President said that if the split-screen technique is going to be used, he would like to be told about it, and he'll stop the news conference. ABC said it would consider that request on a case-by-case basis. NBC, CNN and CBS said they didn't think it was appropriate to inform the White House. By the way, a White House official said later that President Bush may have been a little light-headed during that news conference because he had taken a muscle relaxant for his stiff neck. (NBC-14)

Mia —
WHCA did not take
CNN report. Here
is NBC-Brokaw.
- John

NETWORK NEWS COVERAGE FOLLOWING THE PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT
OF NORIEGA'S SURRENDER

ABC

Brit Hume: I would say this ties this off in a way that the President must have wished; getting Noriega, I always thought, was going to be difficult. The fact that they did it, obviously, is a political achievement for George Bush, in addition to a military one, and in addition to whatever it may contribute to the War on Drugs.

Beth Nissen reports from Panama City that the reaction to Noriega's capture was one of jubilation. Most Panamanians wanted Noriega to be turned over to the U.S. because Panama could not give him an adequate trial at this time.

Bob Zelnick reports from the Pentagon that the enthusiasm the President exhibited tonight is not matched throughout the intelligence bureaucracy. Zelnick reports that the CIA has 35-40 volumes of facts on Noriega, much of it detailing a 20-year relationship with the intelligence community of this country, and there's going to be an awful lot of linen washed in the next several months as Noriega's trial approaches and during the trial itself. The same source who gave him this story also said that they have done a damage check on President Bush and that he has nothing personally to worry about in terms of any taint on his record.

Jennings asks Hume if there is any anxiousness at the White House about what a Noriega trial might reveal in terms of U.S. behavior in Panama, in Nicaragua, in El Salvador?

Hume: That is a question that we've had the opportunity to ask, and the answer's come back the same every time: No, nothing to worry about. I might make the point that while Noriega indeed may have a great deal of information to impart that might be embarrassing to the U.S. government, and he might consider his trial an opportunity to do that, he's going to have to establish to the satisfaction of some judge under the federal rules of evidence that his activities with the CIA are in some way relevant to his drug-running charges in order to get the whole subject brought up at his trial and introduced. And as we've all witnessed from the Iran-Contra trial, the government can suppress...evidence that for state reasons that may allegedly involve vital secrets. Of course, that sometimes means the charges have to be dropped, and obviously that would be very embarrassing to the Bush administration to have that happen.... There is some care [that has been taken in arresting Noriega] to make sure that the charges against Gen. Noriega...are not thrown out by a judge on the basis of the fact that he was not properly arrested, that he was brought back to the U.S. improperly and by the wrong authorities....

Nissen reports that Noriega has many times in the past expressed confidence that he had something on the U.S. Of more concern to U.S. officials is the worry that the actual drug-trafficking case against Noriega is not as air-tight as U.S. officials might have hoped. It is based largely on testimony from sources that might be considered somewhat spurious by U.S. judicial system standards and U.S. officials here been busily debriefing many of the PDF and Noriega associates they have captured in the last several days, trying to get much better evidence than they now have in hand.

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-more-

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