

Originally Processed With FOIA(s):

1998-0004-F[1]; 2004-0722-F; 2005-0992-F; 2004-0728-F; 200

FOIA Number:

S

FOIA MARKER

**This is not a textual record. This is used as an
administrative marker by the George Bush Presidential
Library Staff.**

Record Group/Collection: George H.W. Bush Presidential Records
Collection/Office of Origin: Chief of Staff, White House Office of
Series: Sununu, John, Files
Subseries: Issues Files

OA/ID Number: 29154
Folder ID Number: 29154-002

Folder Title:
Nicaragua Elections [Panama Elections & Noriega, 1989] [Jimmy Carter & Haiti Election, 1990]

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
G	15	25	1	6

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Date: 9/27/90

TO: THE CHIEF OF STAFF

FROM: JAMES W. CICCONI
Assistant to the President and
Deputy to the Chief of Staff

The attached has been forwarded
to the President.

MR. PRESIDENT:

I've sent a copy of this to Brent with a request that NSC prepare a reply for your signature asap.

★
★
★

Jim

JIMMY CARTER

September 24, 1990

To President George Bush

I have just returned from another trip to Haiti, and want you to have this brief report. To summarize, with strong international support, there is now a good chance that successful elections can be held this year. The Carter Center and our Council of Freely Elected Heads of Government and NDI are already committed to this goal.

My hope is that our government will exert every effort to insure that the United Nations and Organization of American States can play a role similar to that in Nicaragua. Venezuelan President Perez tells me that the Andean countries are now unanimous in their support of this request from Haiti to the UN, provided action is taken first in the General Assembly and there is not a "peace-keeping" connotation. This decision needs to be expedited. Perhaps you would also encourage the governments of Japan, France, and other countries to contribute to this election effort.

In addition, it would be quite helpful if a small team of French speaking U.S. investigators could go to Port au Prince to assist the Haitian military and police, as requested by General Abraham, President Trouillot, and her top ministers.

I will work closely with State Department officials and Ambassador Al Adams to insure that our efforts are compatible with your policies.

Sincerely,



The Honorable George Bush
The President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

cc Brent Scowcroft
James Baker
Bernie Aronson

September 23, 1990

REPORT ON A VISIT TO HAITI, WITH A BRIEF HISTORY, by Jimmy Carter

Haiti is a fascinating country. Proud of their history as the second oldest independent nation in this hemisphere and the oldest black republic in the world, the people have rarely known a just government or been free of tyranny. For 186 years, since former slaves defeated some of Napoleon's best troops and proclaimed Haiti an independent country in 1804, their lives have been filled with oppression and poverty. Even in recent years, after finally overthrowing the Duvalier dictatorship on February 7, 1986, the citizens have been plagued with a succession of abortive efforts to find freedom.

As recently as November 29, 1987, an election was called to fulfill promises made in their post-Duvalier constitution. Citizens who lined up to vote were mowed down by fusillades of terrorists' bullets. Thirty-seven people died in Port au Prince. Military leaders, who had either orchestrated or condoned the murders, quickly moved in to cancel the election and to take over the government. Two months later, the military conducted an "election" which was boycotted by almost all the previous candidates and in which less than 4% of the people voted. As soon as the victor attempted to act independently, as President, he was peremptorily removed by the army commanders. Earlier this year, after another disgraced Haitian general was forced out of office, an interim government was formed, with supreme court justice Ertha Pascal Trouillot as acting President. Her primary goal has been to bring about a successful election this year.

The obstacles are formidable, but not insurmountable. There is a constitutionally established electoral council (CEP), which has already had to postpone the November election date. However, voter registration is now re-scheduled to begin on October 5, and it is believed that a new date of December 16 will soon be set for the election.

President Trouillot survived an effort to force her out of office in August, when the Council of State declared "no confidence" in her and declared that all her decisions were null and void. It now seems that she will continue to serve until her successor is elected.

Page 2

Army Chief of Staff General Herard Abraham and President Trouillot have been widely and perhaps justifiably criticized for their failure to investigate several political crimes, including the assassination of a member of the Council of State and a labor leader in a Port au Prince hotel. Even more criticism has been leveled against them because of the return to Haiti of two powerful men, whose apparent goals are to intimidate the people and to prevent the holding of an election. One of them is General Williams Regala, who is generally believed to be responsible for the election day murders in 1987. The other is Roger Lafontant, a notorious leader in Duvalier's regime whose name still strikes terror among Haitians who know of his former misdeeds. Their remaining in Haiti symbolizes the ineffectiveness of the government and casts doubt on the ability of the army and police to protect citizens during the coming election period.

Economic crises also plague the country. For instance, already far behind in their payments, there is doubt each month that the government can raise cash to buy fuel for transportation and other needs. Unemployment may be as high as 80%, and only a trickle of tourists are visiting Haiti's extraordinary seacoasts and historical sites. Potential foreign investors are doubtful of the country's future. Financial aid from other governments has been reduced dramatically. Paradoxically, these increasingly obvious troubles offer some hope; they have awakened among desperate Haitians a strong determination to improve their political system by holding free elections.

I returned yesterday from another visit to Haiti, as chairman of our Council of Freely Elected Heads of Government. We are committed to do all we can to encourage and to assist in the holding of a free, fair, and safe election this year. Although we had been quite discouraged during our previous trip in July and had heard only negative reports about the recent political and economic crises, the results of these current discussions with key leaders in Port au Prince and Gonaives were much more positive.

I was accompanied by my wife Rosalynn, Dr. Robert Pastor, Carter Center fellow on Latin American affairs, and Dr. Beatrice Rangel, Vice Minister of the Presidency in Venezuela, the official representative of President Carlos Andres Perez. We worked closely with Lionel Johnson, representing the National Democratic Institute.

Page 3

Our first meeting was with the president and executive secretary of the Provisional Election Council (CEP), who have announced October 5 as the date for voter registration to commence. They now have adequate international interest and assurances of initial financial support, and the elections will probably be on December 16. During recent weeks they have had support from the military leaders, including colonels and other regional officials, a new development which has been quite encouraging to them. They are confident that, unless there are major additional problems, the elections will proceed as planned. It will be noted below that all influential groups with whom we met now profess to back the CEP.

After representatives of the major labor unions met with us to confirm their support for the elections, we had a thorough discussion with Army Chief of Staff General Herard Abraham. He assured us that his subordinates will continue to cooperate with the CEP, and of his unswerving commitment to the electoral process. This is a complete reversal of the attitude of the army leaders with whom we met before the election in 1987. In August, when the stability of the interim Haitian government was extremely doubtful and the President was on the verge of resigning under pressure, the General had, he said, rejected all suggestions that he assume executive power and had maintained his private and public support for the embattled President. When questioned about the lack of progress in investigating serious crimes, including the Santos Hotel assassinations earlier this year, Abraham replied that he was waiting for the FBI to honor his request through the U.S. embassy for special investigators. We promised to pursue this request with officials in Washington. He also thought that their new committee of three cabinet members and three generals might make more progress in inducing General Regala and Lafontant to leave the country.

We then met with President Trouillot and her ministers of foreign affairs, interior, justice and defense. She was informed of President Perez's invitation for Haiti to negotiate an agreement with Venezuela that will give Haiti favorable terms for the acquisition of crude oil. The President immediately decided to appoint a delegation for this purpose, and the group left for Caracas that same afternoon. The President and ministers all agreed that FBI investigators would be welcomed to assist the Haitian police and military authorities in the Santos hotel case. I encouraged the group to invite the Council of State for consultations to resolve their serious differences, perhaps with religious leaders acting as mediators. The response was tepid at best. Despite these problems, there has never been any doubt of President Trouillot's support for the electoral process.

Page 4

In our meeting that afternoon with leaders of the ten major political parties, we found that several of them have already launched their campaigns. Three expressed reservations about the continued leadership of President Trouillot, failure to resolve the political crimes, and the continued presence of Regala and Lafontant. When I asked them pointedly if they would refuse to participate if these concerns were not assuaged, the three leaders were equivocal. My opinion is that they will take whatever concessions they can get, then decide to mount a campaign.

Chairman Louis Roy and eight other members of the Council of State who have been most critical of President Trouillot then presented their views to us. They had precipitated the government crisis in August by expressing no confidence in the President and declaring that all her actions were null and void. Earlier, in July, they had made it plain to our group that they could not support the election under existing circumstances. Now, however, they expressed their support for the decisions of the CEP, stated that the military was playing a proper role, repeated their accusations concerning the ineptitude and bad faith of President Trouillot, but insisted that they had never demanded that she leave office. After some discussion, it became clear that there is little chance for a reconciliation between them and the president even with the most effective mediation effort, and that this Council has effectively been by-passed concerning the basic functions of the government.

The continuing presence of General Regala and Roger Lafontant is indeed troublesome. The fact is, however, that no official charges have been filed against Regala and the warrant for Lafontant only concerns a passport violation in Switzerland. Even if arrested, tried, and convicted, their sentence would not include forced deportation from the country. Only political persuasion is likely to result in their departure. I encouraged the people of Haiti not to permit intimidation by these two known oppressors to deter them in their path to freedom and democracy. The elections can proceed even if these two men stay in the country and attempt to prevent them.

We spent the next day in Gonaives, a three hour drive from Port au Prince, meeting with regional leaders. The streets were filled with welcomers, who were crying out their support for free elections. Later, about 2,000 people assembled outside the building where we were meeting, and I spoke briefly to them from the balcony. The support for our group and for free elections was vociferous and clear.

Page 5

This is not a hopeless prospect if the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the United States and other nations will acknowledge their obligation to give support to a troubled but courageous people who hunger for freedom, justice, and a better life. The U.N. General Assembly will soon consider a request from the Haitian government to provide international assistance, including election observers and unarmed military advisors. The O.A.S. is eager to cooperate if moderate financing is made available. The United States has provided several million dollars to help with the election. Canada will provide paper for the ballots. Germany has indicated a willingness to furnish motorbikes for election workers. Venezuela has offered to sell oil on favorable terms and to make additional contributions of services, supplies, and money. It is hoped that other nations will help to make possible this long overdue move toward democracy.

CALL RECEIVED IN COMMENT OFFICE AT 2:55PM - 01/05/90
(CALL RECEIVED BY MOLLY MANCUSCO)

SISTER MAURINE - THE NUN KILLED NICARAGUA - BELONGED TO THE
CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. AGNES. A NUN CALLED FROM THAT
~~ORDER TO SAY THEY HAD BEEN MISQUOTED ON TV.~~ THE PRESIDENT WAS
TOLD THAT THEY SAID SISTER MAURINE WAS KILLED BY THE CONTRAS.

~~THEY WANT THE PRESIDENT TO KNOW THEY HAVE MADE NO STATEMENT AT
ALL.~~

THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE ORDER IS SISTER JEAN STEFFES, THE GENERAL
SUPERIOR.

THE CALLER GAVE 2 TELEPHONE NUMBERS FOR HER -

OFFICE (414) 922-4771

(414) 921-5826

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DATE: January 2, 1990

TO: Governor

FROM: JACKIE KENNEDY

Monseigneur Morian of Cardinal
Laws office called as a follow
up on your conversation yesterday.
Monseigneur Giacinto Berloco is
on his way to Panama from the
Vatican.



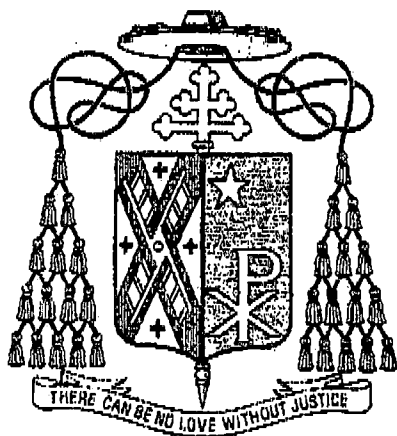
ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

1011 FIRST AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022 (TEL.) 212-371-1000

Office of Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: DECEMBER 28, 1989

REV. PETER G. HINN, DIRECTOR



CARDINAL'S OFFICE
1011 FIRST AVENUE
NEW YORK, NY 10022

CARDINAL'S OFFICE
ARCHDIOCESE OF N.Y.

FAX # 212-308-2674
OFFICE # 212 371-1000 X3000
TRANSMITTAL COVER

DATE: December 28, 1989TO: Governor John Sununu

DEPT.: _____

FROM: His Eminence, John Cardinal O'ConnorNo. OF PAGES 2REMARKS: _____

PLEASE CALL OUR OFFICE NUMBER IF THERE ARE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THE FAX.
THANK YOU



NUNCIATURA APOSTOLICA
EN PANAMA

In connexion to the events concerning General Manuel Antonio Noriega, who has taken refuge in the Apostolic Nunciature in Panama, the Secretariate of State communicates that:

Following the consultations that have taken place during these last days between the Holy See and the United States Authorities regarding the case of General Noriega, both parties have agreed to remain in close contact, to examine together, in a spirit of serene collaboration, the various aspects of this complex affair and the possibility of arriving at a just solution, that can be acceptable to both parties, while keeping in mind that when the Apostolic Nuncio accepted Mr. Noriega in the Apostolic Nunciature, he did not intend to hinder justice regarding a person accused of grave crimes, but only to favor the end of the conflict, which in the previous days had caused so much destruction and victims, and which could possibly turn into an indefinite guerilla war.

From the Vatican, December 30, 1989



NUNCIATURA APOSTOLICA
EN PANAMA

December 31, 1989

Your Eminence,

I am very happy to send you the Panamanian Bishops' document with sincere thanks for your personal support and that of all the Catholic Church in the United States.

dev. us en el Señor
+ /me Sebastian Labra
N. A.

His Eminence
Cardinal BERNARD LAW
Archbishop of Boston

CARDINAL'S RESIDENCE

2101 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE
BRIGHTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02135

FAX NUMBER: 617-782-8358

TO:

Dr. Sennar

FROM:

Mr. Moran

DATE:

12/31/89

TIME SENT:

15:45

COMMENTS:

*for your information + reference
recent documentation from Paramo.*

PAGES INCLUDING COVER:

6

*Conferencia Episcopal Panameña (C.E.P.)**Sancti Spiritus**Asamblea 870833**Panamá 7 R.P.*

Panamá, 29 de Diciembre de 1989.

SU SANTIDAD
JUAN PABLO II
CIUDAD DEL VATICANO

SANTISIMO PADRE:

Los suscritos Obispos de la Conferencia Episcopal Panameña le saludamos filial y cariñosamente en el Señor.

El 22 de diciembre, dos días después de la acción militar desatada en nuestra Nación, la Conferencia Episcopal Panameña emitió un Comunicado (véase documento adjunto), que refleja tanto el dolor como la esperanza de este pueblo, recomendando soluciones prácticas inmediatas.

En este momento, el proceso de pacificación y el ordenado retorno a la vida libre, digna y democrática para todos los panameños -meta que exigirá enormes esfuerzos y oportunas ayudas- está moralmente impedido mientras dure la presencia del ex-general Manuel Antonio Noriega en la Nunciatura Apostólica de Panamá.

En reciente pronunciamiento el Señor Arzobispo y los dos Obispos Auxiliares de la Arquidiócesis de Panamá, que reflejaba el parecer de todos los Obispos, hicieron del conocimiento público -nacional e internacionalmente-, una carta donde se señalaba:

1.- Lo oportuno de la decisión de recibir al señor Noriega en la Nunciatura, pues este acto puso fin a su régimen y a la sangrienta lucha que sostenía.

2.- El apoyo a la gestión del Señor Nuncio con el Vaticano, en favor de la pacificación de nuestra Patria.

En este mismo espíritu, con esta misma finalidad y en pleno acuerdo con el propio Nuncio, nos ha parecido importante, como parte duramente afectada, dirigir nuestra modesta palabra a su Santidad, como aporte a la solución de tan espinosa situación.

Conocemos y celebramos la práctica del asilo o refugio político o territorial. Incluso en los últimos años, numerosos ciudadanos panameños han debido valerse de estos mismos caminos para escapar de la furia del régimen del general Noriega, gracias a la protección de

la Nunciatura Apostólica en Panamá. Con esto se mantiene la secular actitud de la Madre Iglesia, que acoge y protege hasta al pecador que lo solicite.

El caso actual reviste características muy particulares. Tanto es así, que la mera posibilidad de que el ex-general Noriega no sea llevado a la justicia, provoca un temblor y un temor muy justificados en nuestra población y, de manera particular, en la membresía de la Iglesia.

Estos sentimientos resultan de dos hechos.

Primero, se trata de un autor de crímenes abominables, destructor de su pueblo y de su propia nación; empeñado en su cruel y maligna conducta hasta el fin. Todo esto se ha documentado debida y constantemente, en sus aspectos más salientes, por ejemplo, con las declaraciones de los Obispos de Panamá, la Comisión Panameña de Derechos Humanos, y la reciente publicación de la Organización de los Estados Americanos sobre "La Situación de los Derechos Humanos en Panamá".

Es conveniente destacar que la Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Organización de los Estados Americanos en reciente resolución expresó:

"La Comisión adoptó una resolución encontrando al Gobierno de ese país responsable por la muerte de Hugo Spadafora, tal como se expone en el capítulo referido al derecho de vida de este Informe" (OEA/Ser.L/V/II.76, 9 de noviembre de 1989).

Y es obvio que al encontrar dicha Comisión culpable al Gobierno de Panamá, condenó igualmente al general Noriega como la persona que tomaba todas las decisiones en Panamá.

Segundo, en estos días, se han revelado más detalles sobre aspectos tan tristes como las cámaras de tortura, la vida personal lujosa y execrable del dictador, las enormes provisiones de armas y municiones escondidas para una resistencia de tipo guerrillero prolongada, las cantidades de drogas escondidas en sus casas y oficinas; y la evidencia de santería, brujería y demás ritos oscurantistas, encontrados en las casas del ex-general.

Por otra parte se teme, con fundada razón, que de ponerse en libertad en cualquier parte del mundo, el señor Noriega, en poco tiempo, estaría provocando disturbios, conflictos y violencias en ésta ya muy

sufrida nación.

Por todo ello, nos parece del todo necesario que el ex-general Noriega sea entregado a la justicia. Por cierto conviene, y el espíritu protector de la Iglesia lo requiere, que previamente se establezcan ciertas garantías de su integridad física y personal tales como la exclusión de la pena capital; trato humano; un juicio recto y justo, es decir, con el debido proceso; y que sea juzgado sólo por lo delitos especificados. En esto, las normas humanitarias son bien conocidas.

En cuanto al Estado que lo vaya a juzgar dependerá primero del Gobierno de Panamá; como también de los posibles arreglos de extradición, según los tratados existentes.

Sabemos, Santísimo Padre, que los juristas y demás expertos al servicio del Vaticano conocen de sobra estas materias. Sabemos, sobre todo del corazón de bondad con que Su Santidad acompaña el luto y la esperanza de este pueblo, lo cual motiva la confianza con que le escribimos la presente carta.

De Su Santidad, nos suscribimos Hijos en el Señor, solicitando su Apostólica Bendición,

Manuel Antonio...
JOSE BIVAR GONZALEZ D.
OBISPO DE SANTIAGO
PRESIDENTE DE LA CEP

Manuel Antonio...
MARCOS O. MCDONALD, C.S.B.
ARZOBISPO METROPOLITANO
DE PANAMA

Manuel Antonio...
DANIEL E. MURRAY
OBISPO DE DAVID
VICE-PRESIDENTE DE LA CEP

Manuel Antonio...
JOSE LUIS LACUNZA, C.S.B.
OBISPO AUXILIAR DE PANAMA
SECRETARIO DE LA CEP

Manuel Antonio...
JOSE MARIA CASPISO V
OBISPO DE CHITAN

Manuel Antonio...
CARLOS MARIA ARIS, C.M.F.
OBISPO DE COCON

Manuel Antonio...
JOSE AGUSTIN ORTIZ, C.S.B.
OBISPO PABLO DE BOGAS

Manuel Antonio...
ROMULO BELLANI, C.M.F.
VICARIO APOSTOLICO DEL DARIEN

Manuel Antonio...
CARLOS A. LEVIA, S.M.
OBISPO COADJUTOR DE DAVID

Manuel Antonio...
OSCAR MARIO BROWN J.
OBISPO AUXILIAR DE PANAMA

Manuel Antonio...
MARCOS BIVAR GONZALEZ
ARZOBISPO METROPOLITANO DEL DARIEN

Manuel Antonio...
JOSE BIVAR GONZALEZ
OBISPO AUXILIAR DEL DARIEN

Nota: A esta carta de la Conferencia Episcopal Panameña han solicitado adherirse explícitamente: el Consejo de Consultores, el Consejo Presbiteral y la Comisión Arquidiocesana de Coordinación y Animación Laical de la Arquidiócesis de Panamá..

CARDINAL'S RESIDENCE

2101 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE
BRIGHTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02135

FAX NUMBER: 617-782-8358

TO:

Gov. Sullivan

FROM:

Msgr. Moran

DATE:

12/29/89

TIME SENT:

12:30

COMMENTS:

*Text of Cardinal Law's press
statement on the situation of
the Apostolic Nunciature in Rome.
For your information.*

PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 3

The Apostolic Nunciature in Panama

The past few dramatic days in Panama have occasioned, as indicated by a number of telephone calls to the offices of the Archdiocese of Boston and elsewhere, some misunderstanding concerning the role of the Apostolic Nunciature in Panama as regards Manuel Noriega.

There can be no question in the mind of anyone of good will that the Church is firmly opposed to all those involved in the trafficking of illegal drugs. The abuse of political power for ideological or other reasons and those who engage in such activities have been repeatedly denounced by the Church, at all levels, for the grave harm that is thereby done to society, to individuals and to the Church herself.

Manuel Noriega, notoriously accused of such crimes, fled to the Apostolic Nunciature in Panama apparently to escape capture by the invading forces of the United States. The temporary diplomatic asylum which he has obtained by his presence in the Nunciature does not signify an endorsement of his person or his activities by the Catholic Church. The Nuncio, Archbishop Laboa, allowed his entry there for urgent and serious considerations regarding the good of Panama, whose peace was compromised by the continued presence of Noriega in hiding. The Nuncio's action brought about an end to the state of conflict, thus saving the lives of innocent civilians as well as those of the combatants on both sides. For this he deserves our gratitude and that gratitude should be expressed publicly.

It is a principle of international law that diplomatic missions, such as the Nunciature, must remain inviolate. This is especially true in situations of military invasion. The wisdom of this practice has been proven time and again, as it was in many situations touching the Catholic Church during the Second World War, and it must be respected by all, as it is by the United States and by all governments in the Americas.

The Holy See is now engaged in serious negotiations regarding the future of Manuel Noriega. Noriega could be convinced to leave the Nunciature on his own, as some of his associates have already done. At the same time, for the reasons mentioned above, he cannot be forced to leave nor be turned over directly to an outside military power.

It is my full expectation that the decision regarding the future of Noriega will be made in the light of the good of the Panamanian people, the principles of international law and the demands of justice. Accordingly, it is the prerogative of the Panamanian government to decide whether to press charges and to request that Noriega be handed over for judgment. The legitimate interests of the Holy See to assure that a correct and just decision is made, and those of the United States, which seeks to bring Noriega to court to determine whether he is guilty of the crimes of which he is accused under American law, must all be taken into due consideration. I know from high authorities both within the Holy See and the American Government that the parties are approaching this question with the highest respect for each other and are committed to finding in a friendly manner a solution acceptable to both sides.

December 29, 1989

Bernard Cardinal Law

Cardinal Law

Archbishop M^cGeath

Called 1 hr ago

8 Bishops

Developing Elements of Response -

Sorrowful because of loss of life, etc

doesn't mean it wasn't justified

Just was interviewed by Vatican

Q "Is joy over loss of Noriega?"

A - grieved at getting rid of Noriega

Get out asap

President on way

N. offensive for not

Chosen cabinet

He said no police in street

\$20,000,000

Need military police

T.V. get on line

Need M.P.'s - train Panamanians

Get out ASAP

People Happy

Counter Protesting too long

Need for Reconstruction

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 20, 1989

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

THROUGH: GOVERNOR SUNUNU
DAVID DEMAREST, ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
FOR COMMUNICATIONS

FROM: DOUG WEAD, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE
PRESIDENT FOR PUBLIC LIAISON

SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVE REACTIONS TO INTERVENTION
IN PANAMA

Here are a few of the comments we have received:

"At long last... I give my warmest applause to the President for taking this action. Now more than ever before, it must be understood that small twerps cannot push around great nations."

-Midge Decter, Committee for the Free World

"[In response to the action in Panama] we have received a completely positive reaction, with good reason. This has been an appropriate, rational use of U.S. force.... The affirmative move taken totally erases criticism of the failed coup of several weeks ago."

-Peter Flaherty, Citizens for Bush

"...bravo on Panama, and bravo on Colin Powell's class act at the press briefing. How could any U.S. citizen do anything but applaud the action and also the manner in which it was carried out."

-Lt. General Dan Graham, High Frontier

"Noriega's ouster by U.S. troops offers us the best chance we have of seizing hundreds of millions of dollars in Medellin assets. But we must act now. [A joint U.S.-Panamanian committee] must ensure that no drug money leaves the country. This would be a major blow to the traffickers global money-laundering network and would buttress President Bush's war on drugs."

-Lynn Bouchey, Council for Inter-American Security

"We are completely elated. The President should be congratulated. This action shows that the United States is going to take a leadership role in the Western Hemisphere. It demonstrates that we are going to protect our interests, and that the Administration is willing to take risks. The President has sent a strong signal to Nicaragua, Cuba, and the Soviet Union. Definitely a step in the right direction."

-Mike Wilson, The Heritage Foundation

"I am so pleased that President Bush has decided to do something about Panama. I hope this will send a message to Ortega that we will not tolerate voter fraud."

-Beverly LaHaye, Concerned Women for America

2:30 P.M. NEWS UPDATE

PANAMA (Headline News/2:00) -- At the White House the euphoria over the initial success of Operation Just Cause appears to have waned because U.S. troops have not found Noriega.... Eleven Americans are confirmed dead in the assault, 39 injured. Among Panamanians as many as 50 are reported dead and scores are hurt. The Pentagon claims success, although the operation's main objective -- seizing Noriega -- has not been accomplished. A Panamanian businessman claims one of his associates has seen [Noriega] near the Costa Rican border, protected by his Defense Forces. In Panama City citizens are virtual prisoners in their homes, barricaded by armed threats. About 100 journalists are confined to their hotel by armed troops roaming the streets outside. Two journalists and the Marriott's manager have been taken into custody by the PDF. Several others are reported kidnapped as the fighting continues.... There are unconfirmed reports that Noriega loyalists shot down a U.S. helicopter. Each side is holding prisoners: The U.S. has 16 or 20, Panama at least 10.

PANAMA/MARRIOTT (Panama City/AP) -- ...The Pentagon confirmed reports that some Americans were seized at a Panama City hotel and taken away as hostages. "We will make efforts to take care of that," said Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams, but offered no further details. About 100 journalists were trapped in the Marriott, unable to leave, because of gun-carrying Noriega loyalists roaming the streets outside, ABC correspondent John Quinones reported by phone from the hotel during a newscast today.

PANAMA/CONGRESS (AP) -- Members of Congress in both parties today supported President Bush's assault against Manuel Noriega, although one Democrat said Bush should have consulted with allies in advance and another called him "trigger-happy." ...Speaker Foley said: "I think under the circumstances, the decision is justified. When there is the engagement of U.S. forces in the field, it behooves all of us to give that support," Foley told reporters. "My immediate reaction is: at last," said Rep. Aspin. "After the failed coup of October, the administration faced two choices -- stow its anti-Noriega rhetoric and leave itself to the whims of events, or take the initiative and intervene. The latter was the better choice." And Sen. Nunn said he hoped the rest of the world would take note of "the unique circumstances" that faced Bush. "It is unfortunate that the United States has been required to take these steps in Panama" when it is asking for restraint on the part of the Soviet Union, he said.

Rep. Edwards issued a harshly critical statement calling Bush's action "a trigger-happy act of gunboat diplomacy that continues our mindless 100-year abuse of small Central American nations." Edwards...said Bush had violated the provision which requires Congress' consent to go to war. "There was no danger to our national security from this weak, small country, nor was the Panama Canal in real peril," he said. And Rep. Weiss, interviewed on CNN, said, "It seems to me that what the president is doing is trying to correct for his failure to back up the insurgent forces in the Panamanian Defense Forces back in October. And I think he was wrong on both occasions. He didn't provide sufficient support last time and he's doing overkill this time." ...

Sen. Levin endorsed Bush's decision and praised the action as a "blow against the international drug trade."

-more-

(UPI) ...Rep. Rangel said, "I oppose the invasion of Panama. The last thing other Latin leaders will want to see is American troops fighting in a neighboring country." Sen. Simon said, "More information from the administration is needed before we can know whether this particular operation, as planned and executed, was the best course of action at this time." Rep. Richardson, who has been a critic of Bush's Central American policy, said the military action was justified. "We had no choice. Noriega was making a laughing stock of the United States.... On the basis of saving American lives, protecting the canal and eliminating a drug cancer from the hemisphere we had no choice but to act."

PANAMA/THORNBURGH (Reuter) -- Attorney General Thornburgh advised President Bush that U.S. military forces could legally seize Manuel Noriega, who faces drug smuggling charges, the Justice Department said Wednesday. Spokesman Runkel said Thornburgh told Bush at a high-level White House meeting Tuesday that a sufficient legal basis existed for the action against Noriega, based on U.S. and international law. He said Thornburgh cited a recent Justice Department opinion that U.S. military forces have the legal power to go to foreign nations, arrest fugitives wanted in the U.S. and turn them over to law enforcement officers.

PANAMA/REAGAN (Los Angeles/UPI) -- Former President Reagan, declaring the "time has come" to act, said Wednesday he agreed with the U.S. military move against Panama. "The administration has been more than thorough in its efforts to reach a negotiated settlement to the problems in Panama...but the Noriega dictatorship not only rejected all diplomatic efforts, it threatened the lives of our citizens there," Reagan said in a prepared statement. "There comes a time when a president must take action," he said. "That time has come." "President Bush's decision to use U.S. military personnel to protect the lives of American citizens in Panama and to restore democracy there was correct and deserves our full support."

PANAMA/CUBA (Havana/Reuter) -- Cuba Wednesday condemned the U.S. military intervention in Panama and Cuban citizens offered to join the fight against the U.S. forces. "Cuba's Foreign Ministry expresses the strongest condemnation of the people and government of Cuba at this new imperialist aggression against our peoples in Latin America," a ministry statement said. It called on the international community to support the people of Panama in resisting the U.S. action, which it described as "incredible proof of U.S. contempt for international law."

PANAMA/NICARAGUA, PERU (Bogota/AP) -- Nicaragua condemned the U.S. attack on Panama today and placed its army on alert, while Peru ordered its ambassador in Washington to return to Lima until all American troops are withdrawn.... President Garcia of Peru...also said the drug summit Feb. 15 with President Bush and the presidents of Colombia, Bolivia and Peru should be postponed as a result of events in Panama.... Nicaraguan President Ortega declared a "state of national alert" and sent message to the Security Council, Non-Aligned Movement and Pope John Paul II saying he was "deeply concerned by the invasion of Panama."

ROMANIA (Vienna/AP) -- Romanian President Ceausescu today blamed "fascist, reactionary groups" for anti-government protests in his country and confirmed that the army had to intervene to restore order. In a 25-minute address on national radio and television hours after he returned from a three-day visit to Iran, Ceausescu made no mention of casualties in the west Romanian city of Timisoara.

###

NETWORK TELEVISION COVERAGE
of Events in Panama

CBS

Wyatt Andrews reports from the White House on the President's address: The President explained in effect that for an Administration that for 11 months has been known for its caution, a certain threshold in that thinking was reached over the weekend, starting with the declaration of a state of war that Mr. Noriega declared last Friday and culminating with, first, the death of a U.S. unarmed Marine, and then threats to other servicemen. The President said that that put all Americans in Panama in imminent danger. And the President said -- quote -- that he had "no higher obligation" as President but to protect American lives. Now, the President made no claim that the danger to Americans now in Panama is over, nor did he explain why Noriega was not captured despite that being one of the clearest aims of the mission to send 24,000 troops there. On the big picture, however, the President on the larger points...seemed ready to proclaim the invasion a success.

(President: "Key military objectives have been achieved. Most organized resistance has been eliminated. But the operation is not over yet. Gen. Noriega is in hiding. And nevertheless, yesterday a dictator ruled Panama and today constitutionally-elected leaders govern.")

The question of course today for the White House politically is how the Panamanian people in the near term will react to that kind of message.... The President and the White House are trying to put across the message that they have in effect decapitated the beast. They moved immediately to lift the economic sanctions that have been strangling the Panamanian economy and they can only now hope that that all will add up to a package that the Panamanians, and for that matter the world, will embrace.

CBS's Tom Fenton reports from London on international reaction: The most supportive was Prime Minister Thatcher, who warmly supported the intervention and gave her reasons for doing so. And basically they were the President's reasons. And that's a switch for her, because a few years ago she strongly condemned the American military intervention in Grenada. Now the rest of the opinion is, I would say, nuanced:

- The Dutch say they sympathize with the President.
- The Japanese expressed concern.
- The Spanish deplore.
- The Soviet Union has absolutely condemned it and said it was a violation of the U.N. charter and the U.S. should cease it at once.

Private reaction might be something different. I'll tell you what a British cab driver thinks, and I suspect this is the sort of thing many people think and most governments can't say out loud, and that is: Instead of going in with the whole panoply of military power and thousands of men, why didn't the U.S. send in a hit squad to take out Noriega, or do something like an Israeli Entebbe raid? In that case instead of having large numbers of casualties, there would be only a handful.

Rather comments: I suppose part of the answer, there, is there's always somebody who wants to Monday morning quarterback, and no one wants to overreact. But when the British went into the Falklands, they didn't exactly go in with a hit squad, did they?

NBC

NBC's Deborah Norville interviews NBC's Jim Miklaszewski at the White House:

Norville: This is nothing new to the Bush Administration, the fact that Americans are at the Marriott Hotel, the fact that it would be a natural target as it has been in the past. Why were no precautions taken? Why were no steps implemented?

Miklaszewski: Why specifically the military did not take those precautions, I haven't gotten that answer here. But, you know, whenever the U.S. enters into a military action like this, the President -- before him President Reagan, now President Bush -- feels he needs U.S. public support to take that action. What better motive for Americans to support than for the U.S. military to be protecting American lives. Now you remember that was the reason that President Reagan cited for going into Grenada in 1983, to rescue those medical students -- when in fact what the United States wanted to do was rid Grenada of their communist-leaning government and shut down that airstrip which the U.S. thought could have been used by the communists.

Norville: Right. I think if you go through those four objectives President Bush outlined this morning, while safeguarding the Americans who are in Panama is indeed one of them, also on that list is apprehending Manuel Noriega, and that is probably in reverse order.

Miklaszewski: Right, and no matter what items are on the list, ousting Noriega was the number one priority of this Administration.

Norville: There is always a risk, and it certainly seems to be evident this morning, anytime you take any kind of military action in particular people are going to second-guess your decisions. Given that fact, shouldn't the United States have had better intelligence? They've acknowledged all along it's been difficult to get information from Panama, but it would seem that they didn't have a clue where Noriega was....

Miklaszewski: But having heard from Noriega's supporters this morning, the U.S. clearly telegraphed its punch. After Noriega made this declaration of war last Friday, the response from the Administration was, well, they treated it with humor, actually.... One official at the White House called Noriega and Panama the mouse that roared, for example. Then suddenly they did a flip-flop; they started to speak in more strident terms talking about American lives. And there are indications from U.S. officials this morning that this major military operation that was carried out today was in fact in the planning stages for at least several months and that the Bush Administration was just looking for an excuse, the excuse here being the declaration of war and of course the killing of that U.S. serviceman on Saturday night.

Norville: Which may have been the event that happened that gave them a good opportunity to go through, but the intelligence as to exactly how to proceed necessarily wasn't quite as good as they would have like, given the news events that precipitated all this.

-more-

Miklaszewski: If I may make one point here, although his title is Commander-in-Chief, President Bush and people here in the White House are not interested at this particular moment in trying to micromanage what's going on down there in Panama. They're going to let the military mop that up as best they can. But I can tell you that the political operatives here in the White House are starting to do their own mopping up operation. They're looking very closely at all the political reaction, domestically and foreign, and so far they are very pleased with what they hear.

NBC's Jane Pauley interviews Sen. Connie Mack:

Mack: Certainly all of us are disappointed and concerned about the capture of an American, whether it's a hostage or whether it's a military situation, but we've got to remember at least one of the figures that I heard was that there are as many as 25,000 U.S. citizens in Panama. It's virtually impossible for the armed services to provide individual attention or protection for each of them. So I think that there might be a little bit too much focus here on the specific issue --

Pauley: Well, you're right; you can't provide one-on-one protection, but there probably isn't a higher concentration of civilians -- American civilians -- in Panama than at that very hotel, so wouldn't it seem a likely choice for the PDF to make a last stand?

Mack: As I say, I think all of us are concerned about the safety of any U.S. citizens or personnel, but the reality at least from what I can determine so far is that the President made the right decision. He showed tremendous restraint over these months, has now concluded that because of the actions of Noriega and his comments that his country is at war with the United States, the concern about protecting those American lives, protecting the canal, clearly the President made the right decision. I think he's going to have overwhelming support both in the Congress of the United States and around the country.

Pauley: Senator, that may all be very, very true and well put. But it still begs the question, has the President been let down once again by faulty intelligence?

Mack: Again, my reaction to that is there's an assumption in that question that the action will only be successful if we get Noriega. I would say that's not the case -- that what we were trying to do is to get Noriega out of power. I think in fact that that will occur.

Pauley: No, my reference to faulty intelligence was not to the question of whether it was known or not known, his exact whereabouts. I was talking about that...it seems to have been well known or at least speculated upon that Noriega had a strategy that were there an assault that hostages would be taken, and that having said that, that no one at the Pentagon can give her an answer as to why the Marriott Hotel, which was good pickings for potential hostages, was not protected.

Mack: I think that's a legitimate question and obviously I don't have the answer to that, but I think it is one that certainly is going to continue to be raised and I'd be interested in the response as well....

-more-

Pauley interviews Sen. Lugar:

Lugar: It seems to me that the President was remarkably well-served by the intelligence, by the entirety of our armed forces, by the extraordinary congregation of 23,000 people who have accomplished a tremendous mission. I would suspect in the course of time, and we'll know the details about the Marriott and surveillance of various other situations. But the fact is democracy now exists in Panama, the canal treaty can proceed with the proper appointment of a Panamanian. We're going to have a different situation diplomatically in the Latin American situation. And the prestige of George Bush and the United States has risen very substantially....

NBC's Bryant Gumbel and Tom Brokaw interview NBC's Brian Ross and NBC's John Dancy:

Ross: Underlying all these [U.S. planning] meetings was intelligence that apparently was given to the President over the weekend that Noriega's drinking had become worse than ever...and there was a certain mental deterioration. And the intelligence was picking up information that what Noriega had in mind as his salvation was to create almost a second Tehran, to take a select group of American hostages and hold them and hold back any American efforts to go after him....

Dancy: There has been no word from the State Department on the matter that you were discussing before, which is why the Marriott Hotel had not been secured earlier, but I think the State Department people would defend themselves by saying, look, we put out travel advisories for the past year telling Americans not to travel to Panama....

CNN

CNN's Bob Cain interviews Sen. D'Amato:

D'Amato: Yesterday...I predicted...the President would take this course of action, given the killing of an unarmed U.S. serviceman. There was no, I think no other alternative. I think what we now have to look for is not so much the capture of Noriega. That would be like the cherry on top of the pie, to bring him back to the United States to try him for his crimes of drug dealing with the international cartel....

-end-

12:15 A.M. NEWS UPDATE

PANAMA (Panama City/AP) -- American troops backed by fighter jets and waves of U.S.-based reinforcements attacked Panamanian army bases today in a bid to capture Gen. Noriega and break his defiant grip on power. Noriega fled and was in hiding, and his top bodyguard said on Panamanian radio that the ruler was directing his battered forces to resist the vastly superior numbers and firepower of the advancing U.S. units. A man identified only as Major Caballero said on National Radio that "40 Americans have been detained," but that figure could not be confirmed. In an earlier radio report, he said 41 were being held. Also, two soldiers who said they were Noriega loyalists seized three Americans from a hotel in the capital.... NBC television, meanwhile, said a CBS producer and an ABC producer were taken away from the Marriott at about 9:30 a.m. by plainclothes policemen carrying weapons. Meanwhile, casualty reports were climbing. Dr. Marcel Pena of the Santo Tomas Hospital in Panama City said wounded had been coming in all night and the number increased with daybreak. "There are many more than 50 dead and an enormous number of wounded," he said.

PANAMA/CONGRESS (UPI) -- President Bush decision to use military force in Panama won quick bipartisan support Wednesday from Congress, whose leaders said it was a grim necessity in response to the actions of Gen. Noriega.... Rep. Ford said, "The safety of Americans in Panama, the security of the Panama Canal and the removal of Manuel Noriega from the international drug-dealing scene -- all made this intervention necessary." Sen. Lugar...said the venture is an "overwhelming success because democracy has now been inaugurated and installed in Panama.... General Noriega is still at large, but as General Powell accurately summed up, his government is decapitated; he is a fugitive. He is going to be found at some point, in my judgment, and brought to trial, and we all hope that he will." Rep. Farnsworth...said, "The president acted properly and decisively.... The president was right to ask how many more Americans could be killed by Noriega before the United States acted." Sen. Gramm said, "The president's action has re-established democracy in Panama and has toppled a drug thug who thumbed his nose at America and all the civilized people of the world. The president's decision was a tough one but it was totally justified and the right thing to do." Rep. Mavroules said, "I'm certainly going to support the president without having all the facts before me." ... "Frankly, I think the situation had reached such an untenable point with the murder of an American military officer that clearly this action was appropriate," Sen. McCain told CNN. "This operation will be judged...by how quickly it succeeds and what kind of human life, American lives, are endangered and lost." ... "I think the president did what he had to do," Sen. D'Amato told CNN. "Many of us expected him to take some sort of action, particularly after the killing of the unarmed American Marine.... I believe...the level of activity was such that the president had no choice but to act sooner rather than later," D'Amato said. "I think the president did the correct thing and Congress will be supportive of his action." Sen. Grassley said, "I see it as the president's obligation as the chief of state and commander-in-chief to protect the lives of Americans." Sen. Dodd...said on CNN that Noriega had invited the action by last week's declaration of war...and the shooting of a Marine officer. "I have to say the president took the right action," Dodd said.

PANAMA/POOL REPORT (Fort Clayton, Panama/Pool Report) -- The American charge d'affaires said Wednesday that until Gen. Noriega is captured or otherwise removed from the scene in Panama there is going to be fear among Panamanians. "Having him loose does raise the potential that he might raise more mischief," said John Bushnell, the highest ranking U.S. official in Panama. "I have the concern that until he is in custody, there is still going to be a great deal of concern and fear among the Panamanians...." The new leadership was kept in hiding because it was still too risky for them to appear in public, Bushnell said, refusing to disclose their whereabouts.... Bushnell discussed different scenarios for Noriega should he elude speedy capture. "Noriega may take to the hills and be very hard to find...but he wouldn't have a significant force to actually do anything," Bushnell said. "He will get very little support from the people." Bushnell also raised the possibility that Noriega could slip into Nicaragua or Cuba. "He may be in the embassies right now, hiding."

PANAMA/LATIN AMERICA (Bogota/AP) -- Latin American nations expressed concern over the U.S. intervention in Panama, and seven of them agreed to hold an emergency meeting in Bogota to discuss the crisis. Foreign ministers of Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay, Peru, Venezuela and Colombia planned the meet in Bogota tonight to discuss the developments in Panama and issue a declaration, the Colombian Foreign Ministry announced.... Venezuela, which has long opposed Noriega, condemned the U.S. attack but recognized that the action was necessary.... In Buenos Aires, Argentine Foreign Minister Domingo Cavallo...told reporters that President Bush spoke by telephone with President Menem early today "to explain the North American position." "This is a situation of heavy confrontation between North American and Panamanian troops as well as armed civilians who are acting in coordination with the Panamanian Defense Forces," Cavallo said.

PANAMA/U.N. (U.N./Reuter) -- Secretary General Perez de Cuellar expressed concern Wednesday over the U.S. military intervention in Panama and said the Security Council would meet shortly to take up the issue. "Of course I am concerned, we are all concerned, aren't you?" he said to reporters when he entered the U.N. complex. Perez de Cuellar said Secretary Baker called him during the night "to tell me what has happened. Since then I have had constant calls and haven't slept." The Security Council is convening Wednesday morning, at the request of Nicaragua, to discuss U.S. military intervention in Panama, in what is expected to be a stormy session.

PANAMA/SOVIETS (Moscow/Reuter) -- The official Soviet news agency Tass accused the U.S. Wednesday of resorting to gunboat diplomacy in Panama as part of attempt to turn Latin America and the Caribbean into its backyard. The Tass commentary followed a Foreign Ministry statement which denounced the U.S. armed intervention in Panama as a violation of the U.N. Charter and called on Washington to withdraw its forces immediately.... Tass said: "Reports of the invasion by U.S. troops of the territory of such a sovereign state as Panama, whatever the justification, has caused deep concern on the part of the Soviet Union. These actions, a violation of the U.N. Charter and of the universally accepted norms of inter-state relations, are to be condemned by the world community. The United States should stop its armed intervention in Panama immediately."

PANAMA/JUSTICE DEPT. (AP) -- A team of FBI and DEA agents was dispatched to Panama today to help American forces round up fugitives wanted on U.S. criminal charges, the Justice Department said. In addition to Gen. Noriega, there are a number of other fugitives from U.S. law, said Justice Department spokesman David Runkel. "We will round up as many people as we can who are wanted in this country on charges, many of them drug-related," Runkel told reporters.

KOHL/REUNIFICATION (Dresden/UPI) -- Chancellor Kohl insisted Wednesday that the U.S. agrees with his vision of a unified Germany and that France and Great Britain support the German people's right to determine their own future.... Kohl said at a news conference before he left for Bonn after a two-day visit to Dresden that the hope for German reunification is "the most natural thing in the world." "Germans, like any other people, have the desire to live together," he said. Asked if President Bush opposed the concept, Kohl said, "I cannot detect even a trace of disagreement." He also said President Mitterrand has confirmed Germany's right to self-determination and that Prime Minister Thatcher "is, of course, for self-determination."

###

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

December 20, 1989

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

The Oval Office

7:20 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: My fellow citizens, last night I ordered U.S. military forces to Panama. No President takes such action lightly. This morning, I want to tell you what I did and why I did it.

For nearly two years, the United States, nations of Latin America and the Caribbean have worked together to resolve the crisis in Panama. The goals of the United States have been to safeguard the lives of Americans, to defend democracy in Panama, to combat drug trafficking, and to protect the integrity of the Panama Canal Treaty. Many attempts have been made to resolve this crisis through diplomacy and negotiations. All were rejected by the dictator of Panama, General Manuel Noriega, an indicted drug trafficker.

Last Friday, Noriega declared his military dictatorship to be in a state of war with the United States and publicly threatened the lives of Americans in Panama. The very next day, forces under his command shot and killed an unarmed American serviceman, wounded another, arrested and brutally beat a third American serviceman, and then brutally interrogated his wife, threatening her with sexual abuse.

That was enough.

General Noriega's wreckless threats and attacks upon Americans in Panama created an imminent danger to the 35,000 American citizens in Panama. As President, I have no higher obligation than to safeguard the lives of American citizens. And that is why I directed our Armed Forces to protect the lives of American citizens in Panama and to bring General Noriega to justice in the United States. I contacted the bipartisan leadership of Congress last night and informed them of this decision, and after taking this action, I also talked with leaders in Latin America, the Caribbean, and those of other U.S. allies.

At this moment, U.S. forces, including forces deployed from the United States last night, are engaged in action in Panama. The United States intends to withdraw the forces newly deployed to Panama as quickly as possible. Our forces have conducted themselves courageously and selflessly. And as Commander-In-Chief, I salute every one of them and thank them on behalf of our country.

Tragically, some Americans have lost their lives in defense of their fellow citizens, in defense of democracy. And my heart goes out to their families. We also regret and mourn the loss of innocent Panamanians.

The brave Panamanians elected by the people of Panama in the elections last May -- President Guillermo Endara and Vice Presidents Calderon and Ford -- have assumed the rightful leadership of their country. You remember those horrible pictures of newly-elected Vice President Ford, covered head to toe with blood, beaten mercilessly by so-called "dignity battallions." Well, the United States today recognizes the democratically-elected government of President Endara. I will send our Ambassador back to Panama immediately.

MORE

Key military objectives have been achieved. Most organized resistance has been eliminated. But the operation is not over yet. General Noriega is in hiding. And nevertheless, yesterday a dictator ruled Panama, and today, constitutionally-elected leaders govern.

I have today directed the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of State to lift the economic sanctions with respect to the democratically-elected government of Panama, and in cooperation with that government, to take steps to effect an orderly unblocking of Panamanian government assets in the United States. I'm fully committed to implement the Panama Canal treaties and turn over the Canal to Panama in the year 2000.

The actions we have taken and the cooperation of a new democratic government in Panama will permit us to honor these commitments. As soon as the new government recommends a qualified candidate, Panamanian, to be administrator of the Canal as called for in the treaties, I will submit this nominee to the Senate for expedited consideration.

I am committed to strengthening our relationship with the democratic nations in this hemisphere. I will continue to seek solutions to the problems of this region through dialogue and multilateral diplomacy.

I took this action only after reaching the conclusion that every other avenue was closed and the lives of American citizens were in grave danger. I hope that the people of Panama will put this dark chapter of dictatorship behind them and move forward together as citizens of a democratic Panama with this government that they, themselves, have elected.

The United States is eager to work with the Panamanian people in partnership and friendship to rebuild their economy. The Panamanian people want democracy, peace, and the chance for a better life in dignity and freedom. The people of the United State seek only to support them in pursuit of these noble goals.

Thank you very much.

END

7:26 A.M. EST