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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: The President's Telephone Conversation with Argentine President Raul Alfonsin

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Stephanie Van Reigersberg (State Department, Translator)  
David Pacelli (NSC, Notetaker)

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: May 13, 1989, 6:38 p.m. - 6:51 p.m.  
Air Force One at Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi - Presidential Residence

The President initiated the call from his aircraft which was on the ground at Columbus Air Force Base.

The President began by saying, "How are you, sir?"

President Alfonsin said he was delighted to hear from the President, asking, "How are you?"

The President said he was fine. He said he was calling from his airplane which was on the ground; he hoped the connection was good.

President Alfonsin said that he could hear very well.

The President said he first wanted to convey his respects and to simply ask for any thoughts President Alfonsin might have on Panama. The President said he had been talking to various other leaders and was happy to have the opportunity to talk to President Alfonsin. He said he recognized the need for other leaders to be taking the lead for solutions in Panama. He added that he wanted President Alfonsin to know that we are looking for the OAS meeting to be successful. If you have any ideas or advice, he said, please tell me in the spirit of consultations. The President said he was very sensitive to the United States not being dominant in the search for a solution with respect to democracy in Panama. The President again asked if President Alfonsin had any thoughts to share on the subject.

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President Alfonsin said that he agreed ["coincido"] with the President's thoughts on Panama. He thought that we would be able to work together for a solution in the OAS, saying that he believed the meeting would take place on Wednesday. President Alfonsin stated that he thought the meeting would be very important. Monday, he and his foreign minister would be in Asuncion for the Paraguayan presidential inauguration. He hoped to get the opportunity to speak to U.S. State Department people there and to come up with some suggestions. He would be delighted to call the President and discuss his ideas.

The President said he appreciated that and said he would contact U.S. officials attending the inauguration. The President said, incidentally, his daughter would be in the U.S. delegation at Asuncion. The reason for that is to convey in a personal way our commitment to democracy in Paraguay. He added, "If you see a beautiful girl in our delegation, it is my daughter, Dorothy."

President Alfonsin said, "Good, I'll have the pleasure of giving her a kiss."

The President said that he appreciated that. The President asked President Alfonsin to telephone him after the visit or send a written message with his thoughts, whichever was easier.

The President continued by saying that he wanted to raise a last point, some remarks he made to the press today. "I said that if Noriega left Panama" there would be an instant normalization of relations. The President also stated that he had said there could be a useful role for the Panama Defense Forces in the future. There is nothing in the Noriega problem which is a repudiation of the Panama Defense Force as an institution. Of course, he said, we want to see the recognition of Endara as the legitimate victor of the election. "I made a public statement, not in an inflammatory way, so that the people will know that there can be an instant betterment of relations with the United States, including the lifting of sanctions and improvement in economic relations as well."

President Alfonsin said it seemed like a very intelligent statement. It opens the path to negotiations that can be fruitful. Anything I can get, he said, I will call you. President Alfonsin said, in reality, it seemed that Panama is a special case. Noriega's actions are anti-democratic, but the "moral aspect" is important as well.

The President thanked President Alfonsin for his comments and said he appreciated Alfonsin's leadership. He wished President Alfonsin all the best, told Alfonsin of his respect for him, and asked him to please call with his ideas.

President Alfonsin thanked the President, saying he was very kind. He sent his warmest greeting to Mrs. Bush.

The President said he would, adding that she is doing very well. He repeated that he would convey Alfonsin's good wishes and said good bye, whereupon the conversation was concluded.