

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 31, 1989

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation Between the President and President Barco of Colombia

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Paul Lebras, White House Situation Support Staff,
Notetaker
Rita Boren, Interpreter
Brenda Hilliard, NSC Steno

President Barco

DATE, TIME May 16, 1989, 6:35 P.M.- 6:43 P.M.
AND PLACE: Residence, White House

The President initiated the call, following up an unsuccessful attempt to make the call in mid-afternoon. After an initial exchange of greetings, the President asked President Barco how he was. President Barco responded that he was very well. The President said he was calling to consult about the present situation in Panama.

President Barco said fine.

The President said that he was hoping that the OAS resolution shaped by countries south of the United States would be strong. He said he didn't know President Barco's feeling but clearly the abuses were so strong that strong OAS action was needed.

President Barco said he had some information on the situation. He said his information was not official, but that he had heard that Peru and the Central Americans -- Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras -- were engaged. He said he thought there were several things in the air at this time. The Foreign Minister (of Colombia), who is a very able man and a career diplomat, will be in Washington tomorrow. The Foreign Minister has invited 17 or 18 other Foreign Ministers, who have accepted, to breakfast at the Colombian Embassy. President Barco then said that the Colombian Foreign Minister arrives tonight at 9 p.m. The Foreign Minister will try to get a feel and see what are the best possible parts of the proposal that can be put together.

President Bush said he has great respect for him (the Colombian Foreign Minister) and the US is hoping for something strong. He also said that he thinks there is a chance that with concerted effort Noriega will recognize the will of the people.

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Barco said that there were rumors in the news today that Perez of Venezuela said that if Noreiga would step down, he would give Noriega permission to live in Venezuela. (Unidentified interruption on the line at this time.) Barco reiterated that Carlos Andres Perez of Venezuela had offered to give asylum to Noriega if he leaves.

President Bush thanked him for his leadership and said it is very important. He told President Barco that the US is trying to consult with other leaders to get action and that maybe the OAS meeting will be a turning point.

Barco said we will be able to see the possibility more clearly after the breakfast meeting.

The President said he had spoken with President (Elect) Endara. He stated that Endara's health is good. The President said he had his doubts about Endara's health after the injuries to his head. He also wanted to make one other point. He wanted to make clear that the US is not opposed to the Panamanian Defense Forces. They have a useful role to play under a democratic regime. That is important because some Panamanian Defense Force members think that the US has a vendetta, but that is not so.

Barco said yes, the record over the years is clear on that.

The President then told President Barco that he was looking forward to seeing him soon and that his staff is looking into scheduling possibilities. President Barco then said he had a long talk yesterday with the Foreign Minister and Ambassador McNamara and that it is hard trying to predict results, but that he had told the Ambassador of all his efforts to reach a viable solution in Panama.

President Bush said "good", to which Barco replied that he was trying his best and that he was trying to be helpful. The President then responded that if Noriega goes, we will make every effort to improve our relations with Panama.

Barco said that he will tell the Foreign Minister to keep in touch with someone from the President's office, and inquired who from the President's office would be at the breakfast.

The President said he had just learned of the breakfast while talking with President Barco and said he would check.

Barco asked for a name to pass to the Foreign Minister.

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The President said Bernie Aronson is handling this for him.

Barco said he would give that to his Foreign Minister and tell him to keep in touch with Mr. Aronson.

After an exchange of courtesies, the call was terminated.

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