

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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PER E.O. 12958,
AS AMENDED
2000-0429-F
JL 8/21/09

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Carlos Andres Perez, President of Venezuela

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Carlos Andres Perez, President of Venezuela
Notetaker: William Pryce

DATE, TIME & PLACE: August 22, 1989, 1:17-1:32 p.m., EDT
Kennebunkport

The President telephoned President Perez regarding the Organization of American States' action on Panama. (Ø)

The President: Hello Mr. President, how are you? (U)

President Perez: Fine, thank you. It's a pleasure to hear your voice. (U)

The President: So glad to hear your voice. I'm sitting up here in Maine by the seashore on a beautiful day, but I was calling you on the matter of the Organization of American States and Panama. (Ø)

President Perez: I'm very interested in hearing your views on that Mr. President because I think the OAS has basically failed. (Ø)

The President: Maybe so, but tomorrow there will be another meeting, as you know. I would like to make a proposal that I hope Venezuela could take the lead on or be supportive of. The OAS Commission has a broad outline of a possible solution: (1) Noriega out by September 1; (2) formation of a transition government on September 1; and (3) new elections. And of course if that takes place, the United States would, as I think I told you, move immediately to lift our sanctions and try to be helpful to the people of Panama. Like you, I am worried about the OAS as you just said. I hope we do not have to say that it has failed totally. But tomorrow we have a chance at the OAS meeting to make it clear that if Noriega has not agreed to leave power by September 1, that he is responsible for the lack of a solution. Then, of course, we'd like to see sanctions which might include

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breaking diplomatic relations, withdrawal of Ambassadors or military attaches, kicking Panama out of the OAS, or applying further economic sanctions. (Ø)

And I have just hung up the phone from talking to your old friend and my new friend, Michael Manley of Jamaica, who incidentally asked me to convey his respects to you. I told him I was calling you and he said Carlos Andres Perez is the most respected figure in our hemisphere for this kind of matter. Manley said he is urging his Ambassador to get the CARICOM Ambassadors, CARICOM countries to strongly support what I have just said, a position he has taken for a long time. We're back where we were. We need a commitment from Noriega to get the hell out of there. There's no point extending, in our view, the OAS Commission unless there's a set date for Noriega. I was telling you this was our view to see if you had any different thoughts, and to encourage support for as strong a democratic action at the OAS tomorrow as possible. (Ø)

President Perez: I fully agree with your viewpoints, Mr. President. I have been talking with other Latin American Presidents myself. I am worried because I know of a great deal of vacillation and because I'm convinced it is absolutely essential that a strong decision be taken in that meeting tomorrow. The OAS must adopt a decision in the terms that you have said -- that the failure of the OAS Commission mandate be ascribed entirely to Noriega for his refusal to leave power by the first of September and there must be an agreement to set up an interim government acceptable to the opposition and that an election be invoked this calendar year. What I do not see is that there's very much spirit in the air for breaking relations. (Ø)

The President: That would be a step that might encourage Noriega to move out if we could get more support for breaking relations, even though none of us want to hurt the people of Panama. (Ø)

President Perez: I understand what you're saying. That's why I'm saying the situation is very difficult. But in the rest of today I'm going to be talking to other Latin American Presidents and to Washington to the OAS Commission to see if we can agree on some formula. I agree with you I share your view that there has got to be a strong resolution of condemnation tomorrow. (Ø)

The President: I appreciate that. I knew that you would be working on this and I just wish we could think of a good formulation to get this man out of there. Manley said "we've got to get this thug out of office." Have you had any vacation this summer? (Ø)

President Perez: It is hopelessly hard for me to take vacation with the problem of the debt. (Ø)

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The President: Are we making any progress? I have talked with my collaborators on this. We want to find a solution with Venezuela. Do you feel there's any progress? (C)

President Perez: There's no progress yet. But I have talked to Mr. Mulford and he told me that you were very interested in an early solution to the problem. (C)

The President: We were pleased with the Mexican situation. I think Salinas was pleased. I realize there are differences with each country. If you see it getting hung up, if you feel they're not being fair to Venezuela's considerations, I would like to hear about that. (C)

President Perez: Thank you, Mr. President. I know I can count on your support in this. (C)

The President: My best to you my friend, and I mean friend. I am pleased we have a good relationship where we can talk about these problems. (U)

President Perez: Thank you so much. You can count on me. I'm so pleased with the way you are handling not only our problem but the problem of Latin America in general. I hope to have something specific on this Panama business by tonight, and if so I will certainly let you know. (C)