

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Chancellor Helmut Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Chancellor Helmut Kohl
Interpreter: Gisela Marcuse
Notetaker: David Pacelli

DATE, TIME December 20, 1989, 10:50 - 11:03 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Helmut? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Hello. (U)

The President: How are you? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: [Indistinct]

The President: Well, listen, I have been following your trip with great interest and great respect. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I hope to be able to report to you in detail very soon. I do hope that we get ahead, a good deal, as we indicated at Dresden. (U)

The President: That is encouraging. If you have a moment, I would like to fill you in on Panama. In the first place, we had tried to use multilateral diplomacy, including the OAS. I have had consultations with the Presidents of the Central American countries, South America, and other leaders. We have become increasingly frustrated with Noriega. (U)

Last Friday, Noriega was declared the maximum leader, and then he declared a state of war with the United States. Subsequent to that, one of our Marines was killed, an unarmed Marine. Another soldier was beaten up. Another officer and his wife were brutally interrogated. He was reported to have been kicked and i abused, and his wife was threatened with sexual abuse. An obligation of a President is to protect the principle and coherence of a lot of people in Panama, and not just Americans. So I've decided that this force that you have read about had to be brought to bear on the situation, to protect American lives,

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to bring an indicted drug dealer -- Noriega -- to justice, and then to help restore the democracy that the Panamanian people voted for in a certified election several months ago. (Ø)

The military operation is almost over. We have recognized Endara as soon as he took the oath of office, which happened at 12 o'clock last night. We are lifting our sanctions against Panama. We are returning our Ambassador. And of course, we will go forward with the appointment of a Panama Canal Administrator, recommended by the democratic government of Panama, since we could not do that with a Noriega government. We are convinced that there will be widespread public support for Endara just as soon as people saw they had nothing to fear from Noriega. (Ø)

In doing what I had to do, I realized that some countries in Latin America would have concerns about U.S. force. I understand that. But given the threat to American lives, and in particular, Helmut, the one thing that moved me was the fondling and sexual harassment of a Navy lieutenant's wife. And I said, "enough is enough;" I'm going to do something about this. We have obligations and rights under the Canal Treaty and those people were there with every legitimate right to be there. I thought I must move to protect American lives. (Ø)

I am convinced that countries, as soon as the dust has settled, will start to recognize Endara, and I'm sure they will. And I am convinced the Federal Republic will recognize that government as soon as you get all the facts. We understand that Costa Rica has already recognized Endara. And Endara told me that Venezuela was going to do that. It is good to hear that. (Ø)

Knowing your political system, I have no doubt that some of your countrymen will be highly critical of us. I want you to know the facts. This has not been a reckless action. We have conducted a number of consultations. And I wanted you to have the facts from your friend. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Thank you very much. I really do understand what you are telling me because it is scandalous what those people did. I issued a statement when I returned from Dresden, which was published. The statement said:

After the developments in Panama, and in particular after the events of the last few days, and seeing the danger that exists regarding American citizens, the Federal Republic of Germany has an understanding of the American attitude and the American action. (Ø)

The President: I appreciate that. I don't want to ask you to do anything that causes you problems. But I appreciate those comments. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: It is not only that I have no problems with that. Because this is a matter where [indistinct].

The President: Thank you sir, and I am looking forward to hearing of your fascinating times over there. The closer we stay in touch, the better off we are. Because I don't want anyone to try to drive wedges between us. I respect what you are trying to do. I look forward to hearing from you and your concerns. (✓)

Chancellor Kohl: Thank you very much. And give my best to Barbara. (U)

The President: Thank you. I appreciate that. And the very best wishes for you in 1990. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Thank you. (U)

The President: Alright. My love to Hannelore. Goodbye. (U)