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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Prime Minister
Mulroney of Canada (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Brian Mulroney
Notetaker: David Pacelli

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: December 20, 1989, 2:52 - 3:00 a.m. EST
The Oval Office

The President: Brian. (U)

Prime Minister Mulroney: Yes, George. (U)

The President: I hate to call you at such an hour. I want to tell you about our operations in Panama. I'm sure that you have heard of them. (Ø)

As you know, we have done this after having made a concerted effort to try to work things out bilaterally and diplomatically, working with the Central Americans and the South Americans, all of whom were outraged by Noriega's behavior. (Ø)

The reason for our actions are the declaration of war that was made, the killing of a Marine officer, and the sexual harassment of a Navy lieutenant's wife. And that incident moved me as much as anything else. I just couldn't tolerate any longer these type of incidents and the threats to innocent American lives. We have to get Noriega out. And we hope to promote the institutions of a democratic government. (Ø)

At 12 o'clock, Endara took the oath of office from a Panamanian magistrate, and Calderon and Ford were sworn in as Vice Presidents. They went on the air to ask the PDF not to fight and to ask the PDF to support democracy. (Ø)

We have recognized the Endara government. We want to help Panama restore democracy. There are lots of U.S. forces in there now. The fate of Noriega is uncertain. He has been reported in two places, in the city and in the countryside. (Ø)

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There are lots of indications that the PDF does not want to fight. They also liberated a prison which contained 47 PDF officers who were imprisoned by Noriega after the last coup. They were delighted. They were PDF officers and they were delighted. And there is strong support from the people. There has been some loss of life for the United States and among Panamanians. Fortunately, the numbers are low. And I hope they stay low. (Ø)

So that is the state of play at the moment. I hope that down the line, you will recognize Endara. It is our intention to bring home the additional forces we sent down there as soon as we can. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mulroney: How many are down there? (Ø)

The President: In total? About 18,000. There were 12,000 in the Southern Command and about 6,000 in reinforcements. We sent airborne forces, and I am told that the situation is under control. Most of the PDF recognize this and say it is over. They are pulling back and laying down their arms. I hope before long it will be over, without much loss of life. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mulroney: I could tell that something was going to happen earlier tonight. I recognized that the killing of the Marine and the harassment of the wife is something that you would have to respond to. (Ø)

The President: I hate to send in kids to fight. But I worried about what happens in future incidents. There are special rights of the United States under the treaty. There was the attack on the Marines, and a number of other incidents. Nevertheless, with the killing of the Marine lieutenant, I hope the Canadian people understand, and how hard we tried diplomacy. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mulroney: We wish you well. We will be in the House of Commons tomorrow morning to answer questions and we will explain things to the Canadian people. (Ø)

The President: If there are any facts you need, we will be delighted to provide them. To direct our boys to go down there is a tough thing to do. But the military commanders fully supported it. This was not a macho use of force. But they had worked out contingency plans and I am told that Colin Powell is quite pleased. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mulroney: I certainly hope there is no further loss of life by the U.S. military. (Ø)

The President: There have been 5 or 6 American military killed so far, and 12 PDF. At last report, the Commandancia was on fire. One U.S. citizen, Kurt Muse, was being held in prison without charges, and one part of the operations was to free him.

That has taken place and he has been freed. Forty-seven PDF prisoners were freed. They were being held after the coup attempt. This will help with the PDF because in this body are many officers who are respected. (S)

Prime Minister Mulroney: Well, good luck on this. Good luck to you. We will be at the other end of the phone if you should need me. God bless and goodbye. (S)

The President: Thank you and goodbye. (U)