

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

## MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with President Perez  
of Venezuela (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Carlos Andres Perez  
Interpreter: Stephanie van Reigersberg  
Notetaker: David Pacelli

DATE, TIME December 20, 1989, 3:26 - 3:40 a.m. EST  
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

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

President Perez: Good morning, Mr. President. We are very upset  
about the reason you are calling. (U)

The President: We are upset too. But I wanted to call and to  
tell you what is happening. (U)

President Perez: Thank you very much. I am delighted to listen  
to you. (U)

The President: Excuse me. I have to turn down the television.  
It is a little loud and I can't hear. (U)

Two or three days ago, the Panamanians under Noriega made a  
declaration of war, unanimously supported by his puppet Congress.  
That was on Friday. On the next day, the PDF shot to death an  
unarmed U.S. serviceman and wounded another. They beat another  
serviceman and sexually harassed his wife. Indeed, they kept her  
up against a wall for 30 minutes until she became so exhausted  
that she collapsed. Somewhere in there, I said to myself, and my  
advisers also said, that's enough. (U)

I decided to try to apprehend Noriega and put an end to this.  
We have tried for a diplomatic solution. We have tried for a  
solution with the OAS. Many of your friends in the south have  
been very helpful, including yourself, in this. But finally  
there arrived a moment, where I feared that more innocent lives  
would be taken and I just had to take action. (U)

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At 12:01 this morning, Endara, Calderon and Ford were sworn into office by Panamanian magistrates. They welcomed our actions and they stated their intention to install a totally democratic government. All international observers recognize they were legitimately elected and I expect they will be asking for recognition from everyone. Obviously, we hope that others will recognize them. (Ø)

We will not only do that, but we will lift the economic sanctions, send our Ambassador back to Panama, and help in any way we can. (Ø)

The situation on the ground . . . , there still is some fighting going on. An American was being held without charges in Panama, and he was released. (Ø)

After the coup attempt, Noriega locked up a lot of the better PDF officers. This operation has now freed these people, and they were very, very happy to be freed, I might add. (Ø)

I have been concerned about the number of recent incidents, and the Panama Canal. Now, we will have the ability to support a new Panamanian Administrator for the Canal. (Ø)

Finally, I am committed to implementing the Treaty and to turn it over to the Panamanians as called for. But I know how strongly you find the principle of nonintervention. I certainly have fundamental respect for that principle. This is a situation, unique, where American lives were threatened and the integrity of the treaties was put in jeopardy. And I have a special duty to defend both. What I hope is that we can find a way to help the Panamanian regime to restore democracy. (Ø)

We hope that this military action will be over soon. I think it will. And when it is, we will remove the additional forces we sent there to save lives. (Ø)

But that is where we are. I wanted to report this to you personally. If you need any more information, we will be happy to provide it to you. (Ø)

We don't know the fate of Noriega right now, but that is the situation as of right now. (Ø)

And I hope that after you have had a chance to think about it, you will be able to support the new regime. (Ø)

President Perez: Thank you very much for your call. I knew that it would end this way. We around here in Venezuela feel guilty for what has happened. Of course, we have much regret that there has been intervention by the United States. Just a few days ago in the Galapagos Islands, I told the Andean presidents that this could happen. (Ø)

The President: Uh huh. (U)

President Perez: I thought that the declaration of a state of war could unleash these events. I have no doubt that we will recognize the Endara regime. But I feel compelled to tell you what I feel about the reaction to your armed intervention. I will try to soften reaction as much as possible because we have to recognize that we would have done much the same thing in these conditions. I will be in touch with the other presidents. I will get in touch with Endara. I will act quickly to recognize Endara and to get established clearly what our position is on the intervention part. I certainly am a witness to the open attitude you have shown through this entire process. And now we'll just have to see how these things turn out. (Ø)

The President: I appreciate all you have said. You have been magnificent in all of this. I wish your views had prevailed, since all of this would have been avoided. I appreciate your position, and I look forward to consulting on moving Panama down the democratic road. I am looking forward to seeing you soon.

(Ø)

President Perez: Thank you. Goodbye. (U)