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THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN....



OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON

April 26, 1974

GMC

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PLACE: OEOB
 TIME: 10:45 a.m.
 DATE: April 25, 1974

SUBJECT: Visit of Panamanian Ambassador, Gonzalez-Revilla

PARTICIPANTS: The Vice President
 Mr. John O. Marsh, Jr.
 Lt. Col. A. A. Sardo

Nicolas Gonzalez-Revilla, Panamanian
 Ambassador to U.S.
 Ambassador at Large Ellsworth Bunker
 Foreign Minister Tack, Panama
 S. Morey Bell, State Department

Ambassador Revilla extended President Torrijos' greetings to the Vice President and indicated that the interesting and brilliant career of the Vice President had been closely followed by President Torrijos. The Vice President expressed his appreciation. The Vice President indicated that he had the opportunity to be kept abreast of the negotiations on the Panama Canal over the years, and that his acquaintance with the negotiations extended back to the days of Bob Anderson. The Ambassador pointed out that the negotiations had been going on for ten years, and that until now a satisfactory agreement had not been approached.

The Ambassador pointed out that since the arrival of Ambassador Bunker, substantial progress had been made toward a new treaty. He stressed the great trust and confidence of the



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E.O. 13526 (as amended) SEC 3.3
 NBC Memo, 3/30/05, State Dept. Guidelines
 By HR NARA, Date 8/27/12

Panamanian government in the present U.S. leadership on this issue, to include President Nixon, the Vice President, Secretary of State Kissinger and Ambassador Bunker, all of whom have shown an understanding of the Panamanian viewpoint. The Vice President replied that President Nixon's assignment of Ambassador Bunker as negotiator was in itself an indication of the relative importance of the Canal problem. The Vice President recalled the 1955 revision of the basic treaty under President Eisenhower, which in essence increased the payments due Panama. The Ambassador replied that the two countries are now in agreement that the 1903 treaty should be entirely replaced by a new treaty. The Vice President stressed his support of the President's attempts to find new answers to the problem, as well as the desirability of a new treaty. The Vice President cautioned, however, on the potential difficulties with Congress in ratifying a new treaty, stressing the requirement of a two-thirds vote in the Senate as well as the potentiality of vocal opposition in the House of Representatives. The Ambassador agreed that there might be potential problems in ratifying the treaty, citing Secretary Kissinger's receipt of substantial numbers of letters opposing negotiations on the issue. The Vice President indicated that he had closely followed the Congressional reaction on the Canal issue over the years. In the House, opposition to any modification has been lead by the Vice President's good friend Representative Dan Flood. In the Senate the Vice President expressed surprise that 34 senators had signed a joint letter raising questions concerning any modification on the status of the canal, and particular surprise at the bipartisan representation among the 34. The Ambassador acknowledged that the negotiators face some difficult problems. Each of the negotiators wants an agreement that is satisfactory to their respective countries, and each has to take into accord the differing forces on this issue within their respective countries. The Vice President emphasized that we have to find an answer that satisfies two-thirds of the U.S. Senate, a very real and practical problem.

The Ambassador indicated his understanding of the problem and stressed the need to make political decisions in order to reach an agreement. The Vice President indicated that he frankly didn't think 10 years ago that we would be this close to an agreement on the issue.

The Ambassador concurred and expressed confidence that an agreement can now be reached on a just and fair treaty. He stressed, however, that a treaty should not be developed which would retain elements of potential conflict. The Vice President agreed and concurred that we should not leave any issues hanging. The Ambassador emphasized that for the U.S. the best defense of the canal was to have it surrounded by a friendly and sympathetic nation and people. The Vice President indicated that there was no question that this was true.

The Ambassador concluded the conversation by expressing his appreciation for the opportunity to carry on this dialogue. He indicated that he would transmit the results of his conversation to President Torrijos, and in turn expressed the gratitude of President Torrijos for this opportunity. He had found the conversation very profitable and useful. The Ambassador concluded by hoping that he would see the Vice President visiting Panama in the near future. The Vice President expressed gratitude for the kind invitation and hoped indeed that he would be able to visit Panama and other Latin American countries at some future date.

Prepared by: Lt Col Sardo *(initials)*
Approved by: John O. Marsh *m*