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MEMORANDUM

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN *dy*

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT *B*

SUBJECT: Cuba Policy: The U. S. Vote At The Quito Conference

BACKGROUND

United States policy toward Cuba has an importance that goes beyond purely bilateral issues and has broad implications for our relations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

The essence of that policy, the diplomatic and economic isolation of Cuba, is written into the sanctions adopted ten years ago by the Organization of American States (OAS). The policy is also codified in a complex and thorough body of U.S. executive and legislative prohibitions.

OAS sanctions are binding treaty obligations for its member states and have constituted the foundation of our policy over the years. The reasons for their imposition were Cuba's sponsorship of insurgencies in Latin America and their identification as a Soviet sponsored government with all that portended for Western Hemisphere security interests. These sanctions are now under heavy assault.

A majority of Latin countries has now concluded that the cost of maintaining sanctions outweighs their benefits. The range of reasons indicates that the dimensions of the "Cuba problem" are far wider than Cuba's limited influence in the Hemisphere:

-- For those countries where left-wing nationalism or third-world identification is dominant (Argentina, Mexico and Peru among others) the sanctions symbolize U.S. hegemony in the Hemisphere. They are pressing to dismantle the policy in order to signal a new era of more equal relations between the U. S. and Latin America.

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E.O. 13526 (as amended) SEC 3.3
 NSC Memo, 3/30/06, State Dept. Guidelines
 By *MLK* NARA, Date *9/7/2012*



-- Several former strong supporters of sanctions (including notably Colombia and Venezuela) now see the policy as overtaken by detente and the fading of the Cuban threat, as well as a bar to greater Latin American unity.

-- Some of the smaller nations (such as Costa Rica and Ecuador) fear that the erosion of the policy is undermining their own security which they see as linked to the integrity of the Rio Treaty. They want Cuba's situation in the Hemisphere "regularized" to preserve the treaty as a viable instrument for collective action.

-- Only Uruguay, Paraguay and Chile continue to resist any change in the status quo without pressure from the United States.

Fidel Castro still perceives Latin American rejection of United States leadership as the ultimate guarantee of his revolution. Since 1968 he has pursued that objective primarily through selective diplomacy directed at establishing state-to-state relations rather than by the promotion of continental revolution. His strategy is to establish relations and trade with "independent" governments as a means of legitimizing his revolution, while diminishing U. S. influence and weakening the OAS.

The Soviet Union has brought Castro along during these last six years to an acceptance of the necessity to institutionalize the Cuban revolution, to integrate it further into the Soviet system and to follow the Soviet lead in discarding revolutionary adventurism as a policy for Latin America. The USSR evidently hopes Cuba's growing acceptance by other Latin American countries will help legitimize the Soviet role in Cuba and through expanded trade (particularly in Venezuelan petroleum) might relieve some of the economic burden it now carries.

From our own standpoint maintenance of the sanctions has been increasingly complicated by their effect on the third-country operations of American corporations. Our controls on trade with Cuba involving U. S. subsidiaries is regarded in a number of Latin American countries as a direct challenge to national sovereignty. Opposition to the policy has also been growing in the Congress and among opinion makers in this country.

U. S. STRATEGY

The U. S. has two basic interests: to limit Castro's influence in the Hemisphere and to prevent the Cuban issue from disrupting our effort to build a new and more cooperative relationship with Latin America. The



policy of isolation has served the first of these well but now poses a threat in terms of the second. We have followed a dual track of protecting the policy within the OAS while seeking to separate the issue from the new dialogue. We have succeeded so far in postponing the issue and by a few careful concessions (notably licenses for automobile exports from Argentina) keeping it within the multilateral framework. Our strategy has been to control the timing of OAS consideration of the Cuban problem so as to be able finally to shape the process by which it is resolved.

THE SITUATION NOW

Cuba's isolation in the Hemisphere is rapidly coming to an end. Eight countries now have full ties with Cuba (Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Panama and the English-speaking states of the Caribbean).

We can no longer prevent some kind of OAS action to modify or lift the sanctions. At Quito we will be faced with a majority against continuance of the sanctions. However, it may be possible to keep together a blocking third to prevent formal lifting of the sanctions under the treaty.

THE SITUATION AT QUITO

In view of the US position against lifting the sanctions until there is a change in Cuban policy, there are two options to choose between at Quito -- to vote against lifting the sanctions or to abstain. The pros and cons of each of these positions are outlined below:

Vote Against

Pro

- Would probably result in sanctions being formally maintained, although vitiated by several governments individually.
- Would be supported by conservative members of Congress.
- Would please the Cuban-American community.



Con

-- Would probably not prevent a majority from voting to lift sanctions and going ahead to do so unilaterally. In this context, it would be extremely divisive and would set us in a clear opposition to the majority of the members of the OAS at a time when we are attempting to structure a harmonious new relationship.

-- Would be inconsistent with our pledge of flexibility in dealing with Latin issues.

-- Would call into question the credibility of our pledge to respect the opinions of the leading Latin American countries (Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia).

-- Would carry on an inconsistency in our policy on detente by maintaining confrontation where negotiation seems possible.

Abstain

Pro

-- Would indicate some flexibility in the US bilateral approach to Cuba and in our dealings with Latin America generally.

-- Would indicate respect for the viewpoint of important Latin American countries.

-- Would enhance the credibility of our call for a new dialogue with Latin America.

-- Would be consistent with our overall policy of dentente.



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-- Would probably result in sanctions still being formally maintained.

-- Would make it easier to carry on a productive relationship with the OAS community generally and would preserve the institutional credibility of the OAS.

-- Would be supported by liberal members of Congress.

Con

-- Would represent a subtle departure from past policy.

-- Would be opposed by some conservative members of Congress.

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