



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

April 30, 1974

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. John O. Marsh  
Office of the Vice President

Jack:

Here is the informal memorandum of conversation I made up following Tack's conversation with the Vice President.

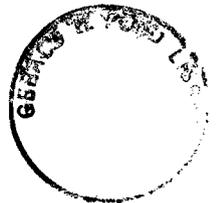
From my viewpoint, it can remain an "uncleared" memorandum. I simply needed a record to show to the people throughout this government who deal daily with Panama. It has gone to them on a CONFIDENTIAL-EXDIS basis.

Again, many thanks for making this visit possible. It was extremely useful to us.

S. Morey Bell  
Deputy United States Negotiator  
and Country Director for Panama

Attachment:  
Memorandum of Conversation.

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5  
NSC Memo, 11/24/96, State Dept. Guidelines  
By ALM/MS, NARA, Date 10/24/00



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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

April 15, 1974,  
10:45-11:15 AM  
Vice President's Office,  
EOB

PARTICIPANTS:

**PANAMA:** H.E. Juan Antonio Tack, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Treaty Negotiator  
H.E. Nicolas Gonzalez-Revilla, Ambassador of Panama to the United States and Deputy Negotiator

**UNITED STATES:** The Vice President  
Ambassador at Large Ellsworth Bunker, Chief Negotiator  
S. Morey Bell, Deputy Negotiator and Country Director for Panama  
Mr. Jack Marsh, the Vice President's staff  
Interpreter Neil Seidenman

**SUBJECT:** Panama-U.S. Treaty Negotiations

(The following is an uncleared version of the conversation taken from the Deputy U.S. Negotiator's notes).



The Vice President Mr. Minister, it is nice to see you. I am extremely grateful for your taking time to come and see me.

The Minister Mr. Vice President, I am delighted to have this opportunity to see you, especially since I know of the numerous commitments you have.  
May I convey to you the greetings of the President of Panama, Mr. Lakas, and of the Chief of Government, General Torrijos.

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5  
NSC Memo, 11/24/90, State Dept. Guidelines  
By h/hm, NARA, Date 10/2/00

We in Panama have followed closely the Vice President's brilliant career in the Congress and we are fully aware of his dedication to his nation and his service to it.

The Vice President

Thank you very much Mr. Minister. I must say in the last five months my life style has changed quite a lot.

I want you to know that I have always kept abreast of these negotiations. Indeed, I have followed them all throughout Ambassador Anderson's tenure. I know that both parties have worked extremely hard at this.

The Minister

Yes, we have been working very hard indeed -- in fact, we have been working ten years now, but with no success. The success began with Ambassador Bunker's appointment and since that event we have advanced in a very substantive manner toward a treaty.

I want you to know that the people in the Government of Panama have confidence in the present leadership of the United States -- in President Nixon, yourself, the Secretary of State, and Ambassador Bunker. They have all demonstrated a deep knowledge and, in fact, understanding of our problem.

The Vice President

The fact that the President has given this assignment to Ambassador Bunker indicates how important this negotiation is to him. After all, Ambassador Bunker is the foremost American diplomat and he never gets the easy tasks. In fact, I don't think he's ever had an easy task. (Laughter).

The Minister

Yes, and now they have put him in charge of two canals.

The Vice President

I remember that in the mid-50's there was a revision of the treaty. I believe it had something to do with an increase in payment.

The Minister

Yes. That was the 1955 Treaty which revised the 1903 Treaty. We have agreed now that we shall abrogate the 1903 Treaty and arrive at an entirely new one.

The Vice President

I fully support the President's efforts to find new answers to this problem. A new treaty is desirable from the viewpoint of both parties. But, of course, there are difficulties, as you know, with a treaty in the Congress. A two-thirds vote is required in the Senate by the Constitution. In the House, the interest is indirect, but I can tell you that the interest is very vocal indeed. (laughter).

The Minister

Yes, Secretary Kissinger told me recently that the letters which he received opposing his policy with respect to the treaty are so many that he thought there were probably several million people living in the Canal Zone itself. I told him that there were only some 40,000, and he said, Well they still make lots of noise. (laughter).

The Vice President

To be candid, I have watched very carefully the reaction in the House over the years. There is a group led by my good friend Dan Flood, but there are others too. More recently, I was surprised at the resolution in the Senate in opposition to the treaty which received support from 34 Senators. This is, of course, more than one-third. And if there is not the right kind of agreement, then we are in for trouble. Another point is that I was surprised at the bi-partisan nature of that resolution.

The Minister

Well, the position of the negotiators is very difficult. Each has to defend his country's interests, but both are committed to a new treaty so that as a matter of practice we have to take all elements in both countries into account.

The Vice President Yes, I am sure you have no unanimity of view in your country, either, just as we do not in the United States.

The fact of the matter is, if we want a treaty, then we have to find an answer that satisfies two-thirds of the Senate.

The Minister I understand that. This Government is willing to take the political decisions necessary to reach an agreement which we hope will be acceptable to the Congress. We have made a great deal of progress since we have stopped consulting the lawyers in our country.

The Vice President Well, I am surprised we have gotten as close as we have on some very difficult issues.

The Minister Yes, and we have done that despite the fact that there are 1.5 million negotiators in Panama -- that is, the entire Panamanian population.

The Vice President I suppose you have some very loud ones too. (laughter).

The Minister We are convinced that we are now on the road toward achieving a just and equitable treaty. Of course, it is fundamental that the treaty include nothing that will cause conflicts between the two countries in the future.

The Vice President I certainly agree with that. It is not in the interest of either side to have elements in the new treaty which would undermine our future relations.

The Minister I believe that for the United States the best security for the Canal is to have friends on both sides of it.

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The Vice President There is no question about that. It would be a very, very unstable situation from our point of view if things were otherwise.

Let me be clear, Mr. Minister. I believe that the majority of our people basically want a solution to this problem. However, they of course do not know all of the details and many of those details are extremely difficult so the task ahead is going to be arduous.

The Minister Mr. Vice President, my entire visit here has been very positive and useful and I intend to tell that to the President of Panama and General Torrijos. May I hope that you, Mr. Vice President, will on some occasion have an opportunity to visit our country. It would be a great honor for us.

The Vice President I have been in your country once, for about 24 hours, on a Navy carrier passing through the Canal, and I would like to go back some time. As you know, a very dear friend of mine, Congressman Bow, had been appointed Ambassador, but unfortunately died before he could arrive in Panama, and I had intended to visit him.

I wish you would convey my respects and my gratitude for that kind invitation to visit your country to your President and the Chief of Government. I would hope to be able to travel to Latin America once a few of the problems with respect to the Congress are solved.

The Minister It has been a great pleasure for me to see you and I hope to have an opportunity to see you again whenever you are in my country.

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