

## Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/PAN:JPBECKER (TEXT RECEIVED FROM WHITE HOUSE)  
APPROVED BY ARA:CBRAY  
ARA/PAN:RRWYROUGH  
S/AB:EBUNKER  
S/AB:SLINOWITZ  
S/S - MR. BRIDGES

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O 100056Z MAR 77  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 053007

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO GENERAL TORRIJOS

TO JORDEN FROM BUNKER AND LINOWITZ

1. PRESIDENT HAS APPROVED TEXT OF LETTER TO GENERAL TORRIJOS REPLYING TO GENERAL'S MESSAGE DELIVERED TO NEGOTIATORS DURING FEBRUARY 22 SESSION ON CONTADORA. WE HOPE YOU CAN DELIVER ENGLISH TEXT TO GENERAL AT EARLIEST POSSIBLE TIME.

2. IN VIEW OTHER INITIATIVES WE WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING CONFIRMATION OF DELIVERY OF LETTER PRIOR TO SATURDAY.

3. TEXT OF PRESIDENTIAL LETTER FOLLOWS. BEGIN TEXT.

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DEAR GENERAL TORRIJOS: AMBASSADORS ELLSWORTH BUNKER AND SOLM. LINOWITZ HAVE MET WITH ME AND HAVE REPORTED ON THEIR FEBRUARY TALKS WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVES. THEY HAVE DELIVERED YOUR PERSONAL MESSAGE AS WELL AS THE PANAMANIAN POSITION PAPER OF FEBRUARY 22.

I SHARE YOUR HOPE THAT WE MIGHT ESTABLISH A MODEL FOR THE TYPE OF RELATIONS THAT SHOULD EXIST BETWEEN A LARGE AND SMALL COUNTRY. OUR COMMON INTEREST IN MAINTAINING A FREE, NEUTRAL AND EFFICIENT CANAL SHOULD FACILITATE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUCH A RELATIONSHIP AND LEAD TO THE EARLY CONCLUSION OF A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY TREATY.

TO MAKE OUR COMMON COMMITMENT MEANINGFUL, WE WILL OF COURSE HAVE TO SHAPE A TREATY ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH OUR PEOPLES. FOR THIS REASON, PRIOR TO THE FEBRUARY TALKS I ASKED AMBASSADORS BUNKER AND LINOWITZ TO EXPLORE WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVES POSSIBLE UNDERSTANDINGS ON THE MAJOR OUTSTANDING ISSUES. THE VARIOUS SUGGESTIONS WHICH WE OFFERED REFLECTED A GENUINE ATTEMPT TO SEARCH FOR A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE EXPRESSION OF OUR INTEREST IN A CANAL OPEN TO ALL NATIONS, AN INTEREST THE OTHER COUNTRIES OF THE HEMISPHERE SHARE WITH BOTH OF OUR COUNTRIES.

OUR ACTIONS DEMONSTRATE OUR DESIRE FOR A BALANCED AGREEMENT. SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR OUR APPROACH TO THE NEGOTIATIONS BY AFFIRMING ON JANUARY 31 THIS ADMINISTRATION'S SUPPORT FOR THE 1974 JOINT STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES. THESE PRINCIPLES CONTEMPLATE EARLY TRANSFER OF JURISDICTION TO PANAMA, INCREASING PARTICIPATION BY PANAMA IN THE ADMINISTRATION AND DEFENSE OF THE CANAL, AND A TREATY OF FIXED DURATION. ALTHOUGH THESE IMPORTANT CONCESSIONS TO PANAMA HAVE STIRRED CONSIDERABLE CONTROVERSY IN THE UNITED STATES, WE ACKNOWLEDGE THEM AS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF THE TREATY WHICH WE ARE SEEKING TO CONCLUDE.

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HOWEVER, IF A NEW TREATY IS TO BE BALANCED AND MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE, IT MUST BOTH MEET PANAMA'S ASPIRATIONS AND PROTECT UNITED STATES INTERESTS. AS I HAVE SAID RECENTLY, MY PURPOSE LIES IN ASSURING THAT THE CANAL WILL REMAIN PERMANENTLY OPEN AND OF USE TO THE SHIPS OF ALL THE WORLD. THE TREATY SHOULD PROVIDE FOR AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH ALLOWS THE UNITED STATES TO MEET ITS RESPONSIBILITY TO OPERATE THE CANAL DURING THE TREATY'S LIFETIME AND WHICH RECOGNIZES OUR SECURITY INTEREST IN THE CONTINUING NEUTRALITY OF AND ACCESS TO THE CANAL AFTER THE TERMINATION DATE OF THE TREATY.

I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THE UNITED STATES WISHES TO PROCEED COOPERATIVELY TO MEET THE PROPER CONCERNS OF BOTH PANAMA AND THE UNITED STATES. I KNOW THAT YOU WILL JOIN ME IN WORKING TOWARD THAT END. TO UNDERLINE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TREATY AND OF THE NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES, I WILL BE PLEASED IF WE CAN AGREE ON A NEW TREATY

AND MEET PERSONALLY TO SIGN IT ON BEHALF OF OUR TWO COUNTRIES. SINCERELY, JIMMY CARTER. END TEXT.

4. SIGNED ORIGINAL FOLLOWS BY POUCH.

5. LETTER IS SECRET AND NOT INTENDED FOR PUBLICATION. IF PRESS SHOULD GET WORD OF LETTER, DEPARTMENT PLANS TO RESPOND ALONG LINES THAT WE CANNOT PROPERLY COMMENT ON CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN HEADS OF GOVERNMENT.  
VANCE

SECRET

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