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Special Envoy for the Americas-McLarty, Thomas (Mack)

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INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY GROUP

October 27, 1997

Mr. Thomas (Mack) McLarty
Counselor to the President of the United States
and Special Envoy for the Americas
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. McLarty:

It was a very special pleasure to meet you at the October 23 Council on Foreign Relations luncheon. While I certainly don't want to break any rules and regulations, I would love to send you a complimentary subscription to the daily *Latin America Advisor*, the weekly *Telecom Advisor* and the monthly *Latin America Banking Overview* -- especially if you and/or your colleagues would find the publications useful. Bo Cutter has been on the Board of Advisors for some time and I feel confident will give us a good reference.

Because of your numerous comments concerning press freedom issues in Latin America, I am taking the liberty of enclosing a folder about the International Advisory Group. Along with publishing newsletters, we also do a great deal of work helping companies (many of them media companies), non profit organizations, and universities with communications strategies. You will find sample invitations of events we have produced for the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, and the *Columbia Journalism Review* which focus on First Amendment and press freedom issues. In addition, we have expertise in New Media and have worked with Gartner Group, the Markle Foundation, the Aspen Institute, and Siegel & Gale, to bring industry and public policy leaders together to discuss various aspects of the impact of the new technologies.

I tell you all this because for a number of months my partner, Jonathan Zemmol, and I have been contemplating the possibility of organizing a seminar or roundtable on press issues at the April Santiago Summit. Meeting you, and listening to your remarks, prompts me to ask if you think such an event would make sense and if it would be viable?

In closing, please know that if you'd ever like to write a comment piece for the *Latin America Advisor*, we would be honored to publish it.

With best regards.

Sincerely,

Catherine Gay
Principal

Nelson J. Gay

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S. Beve-

Please review and
return to me w/
your views.

4/20

File -
Summit
- Deliverable

United States Information Agency
Office of Inter-American Affairs

File
- Summary
- Deliverable

December 4, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR: Steve Ronnel
Senior Advisor to the Counselor to the President

FROM: Barbara C. Moore
Deputy Director
Office of Inter-American Affairs

SUBJECT: Freedom of the Press in Latin America

As democracy has flourished throughout Latin America in recent years, so has freedom of the press. There are striking examples in Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Paraguay where the sheer numbers of (independent) media operating now are an indication of how much opportunity there is for a free press to flourish. Each of these countries can recount individual stories of triumph over persecution, people like Dona Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua, or returned exiles in Haiti like Mr. and Mrs. Jacques Sampeur whose Radio Antilles Internationale was machine gunned and burned but is rebuilt and again on the air. In country after country, by all important indicators, the media is free and exercising its important role in the balance of powers and in informing the public. This has allowed many countries the "luxury" of moving the debate on to such areas as privacy issues, access to public information, etc., all of which presuppose a free and activist media.

Threats to a free press persist, however. While death squads are gone from Guatemala, journalists continue to be gunned down by drug traffickers in Colombia and Mexico or even, allegedly, by corrupt local officials in Argentina. Less dramatic but still significant is the issue of intimidation by government as in the recent cases of Gustavo Gorriti, the Peruvian journalist in Panama whose criticism of the government led to efforts to expel him on a visa technicality, and Baruch Ivcher, the television station owner in Peru who has been critical of the Peruvian government and has lost administrative control of his station on charges of irregularities in his nationality.

In many countries in the hemisphere, press freedom is affected by a more subtle concern: the conflict between the personal political and economic interests of media owners and the responsibilities of their media in a democracy. Often, Latin American media is a platform for advocacy by the actual or aspiring politicians who own it or is affiliated with one or another political current. This can also produce the kind of tension with practicing journalists which leads the writers and reporters to seek protections like national licensing requirements which we find inimical to the interests of free press. Similarly, the power of the State to withhold or endow

media with important advertising revenues can lead to self- or internal censorship, as the State's often non-transparent awarding of broadcast licences can lead to a less than impartial array of opinion.

All of this would seem to lead to the conclusion that freedom of the press is too fundamental and yet still fragile enough to merit attention by the hemisphere's leaders. As you are aware the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) meets at the OAS in Washington next week. If this issue is to be addressed formally in Summit documents, it would be useful for you to pursue it within the U.S. delegation before then.