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Folder Title:

South America Trip-Climate Change Issues, October 1997

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42	6	2	3	V

Blinken, Antony J.

From: Piccone, Theodore J.
Sent: Tuesday, September 02, 1997 8:13 AM
To: Sandalow, David B.
Cc: Dobbins, James F.; @PLANNING - Strat Plan & Comm
Subject: RE: climate change/Latin America trip [UNCLASSIFIED]

Just returned from a week out and have not discussed with Jim yet but I have two quick questions/comments off the bat:

1. Would help a great deal if we were seen to be consulting with Latins (esp. Brazil) BEFORE any announcement.
2. Could we squeeze in an announcement after such a meeting with Cardoso (and Caldera...better yet, after Menem), say on the Friday POTUS is in Iguazu Falls? Would go a little further toward prep for Bonn and perhaps we could work out a compromise with Brazilians that will satisfy everyone (?)

-----Original Message-----

From: Sandalow, David B.
Sent: Tuesday, September 02, 1997 12:21 AM
To: @NSA - Natl Security Advisor
Cc: @KERRICK; @INTERAM - Inter-American; @PLANNING - Strat Plan & Comm; Antholis, William J.
Subject: climate change/Latin America trip [UNCLASSIFIED]

SANDY AND JIM:

Rob Malley tells me you'd like a short memo on climate change and the Latin America trip. Quick thoughts are below:

1. Background

The climate treaty was signed at Rio in 1992. More than 150 nations are parties.

Negotiations concerning next steps under the climate treaty are scheduled to conclude this December in Kyoto. The last negotiating session before the Kyoto conference will be October 20-30 in Bonn.

One of the most contentious issues in the current round of negotiations is the role of developing countries. The original climate treaty established "differentiated" levels of commitment for the developed and developing world. It called upon developed countries to take the lead in addressing climate change and aim to return emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000. It called upon developing countries to adopt policies and measures to address climate change, but provided no aim similar the year 2000 goal.

With Brazil and others in the forefront, the G-77 now argues that developed countries have failed to "lead" and that new developing country commitments should await real emissions reductions in the developed world. In stark contrast, 95 members of the US Senate this summer called upon the administration to refrain from signing any agreement under the climate treaty that fails to include "new specific scheduled commitments" for developing countries.

At the UNGA in June, the President said "[W]e will bring to the Kyoto conference a strong American commitment to realistic and binding limits that will significantly reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases." Recent press accounts quote the chair of the climate convention (an Argentine diplomat) saying that a US policy announcement on targets and timetables is one of the most important missing elements as the Kyoto conference approaches.

2. Fall '97

The calendar this fall presents huge challenges in managing this issue. Following are some key events:

September 22: POTUS UNGA speech

October 6: White House Climate Change Conference

Planned as a major media event with heavy POTUS involvement. Todd Stern in the lead.

October 12-20: POTUS Latin America trip

October 20-30: Last negotiating session before Kyoto under the climate treaty (in Bonn)

October 29: Jiang Zemin state visit

late November: APEC summit

December 1-12: Kyoto climate change conference

3. Latin America trip

The following factors will be important in managing the climate change issue in connection with the Latin America trip:

- US media will focus heavily on climate change in the week before the trip;
- the climate treaty was signed at Rio;
- the Latins strongly oppose additional commitments for developing countries under the climate treaty in this round of negotiations (while most of the US Senate insists on this);
- the last negotiating session before the December Kyoto conference starts the day the Latin America trip ends.

Among the important questions are:

1. Should major US policy announcements on climate change come before or after the Latin America trip?

An announcement before departure would allow the President to advance the US position during his trip; allow US negotiators to advance the US position at the negotiating session in Bonn; and capitalize on the media attention surrounding the White House conference. However, if the policy includes a call for additional developing country commitments under the climate treaty, the President will face difficult bilateral discussions on this issue.

An announcement after the trip would allow the President more time to make important decisions following the White House conference and potentially avoid difficult bilateral discussions during his travels. However, such a schedule would make it difficult for our negotiators to achieve our objectives under the climate treaty (not knowing what those objectives are, in the final negotiating session before the Kyoto conference). The US would be criticized for scuttling all chance of an agreement at Kyoto.

At least in theory, the US could announce our position under the climate treaty in the several days following the Latin America trip (and the first few days of the Bonn meetings). In practice, there may be considerable difficulties with such a schedule (which would require either making a decision before departure and keeping that decision quiet for more than a week, or making a decision immediately upon the President's return).

Of course, the magnitude of the decision, diversity of views and press of other events will make it challenging to keep to any schedule for decision-making on this issue.

2. What impact will this issue have on any environment event in the trip?

Climate change will dominate any discussion of environment issues in the trip. No environment issue approaches climate change in importance or prominence.

Climate change will also be a factor in any Presidential visit to Rio. (In 1992, George Bush traveled to Rio to sign the climate treaty and attend the "Earth Summit." During the trip, he was heavily criticized in the media for weakening the treaty).

I will coordinate further with Jim Dobbins and others on this issue in the next few days.