

National Immigration Forum

FAX COVER PAGE

To: Leeann Shimabakuro		From : Angela Kelley
Fax Number : 456-7028		Company : National Immigration Forum
Date : 11/4/97	Time : 14:29:10	For Information Call: (202) 544-0004 x.19
Subject : FW:		Fax Number : (202) 544-1905

FYI-- I thought the attached memo might be of interest to you as the "Victims of Communism Relief Act" will likely move forward in the near future. Please call me if you have any questions. (202) 544-0004 ext. #19.

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Nov. 4, 2001 14:56PM

HOGAN & HARTSON DC2

No. 5782 P. 1/24/5

HOGAN & HARTSON L.L.P.**MEMORANDUM**

November 4, 1997

**RE: RELIEF FROM REPATRIATION UNDER THE NICARAGUAN ADJUSTMENT
AND CENTRAL AMERICAN RELIEF ACT**

This memorandum suggests legislative options for granting relief from repatriation to ABC class members under the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (the "Act") without requiring them to demonstrate on a case-by-case basis that they meet the standard for granting suspension of deportation under Section 244(a)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the "INA") as in effect before the passage and enactment of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 ("IIRIRA").

I. Summary of Conclusions

As explained in greater detail below, to avoid even the possibility of a colorable legal challenge to administrative action benefiting the ABC class members, the Act should be amended to articulate affirmatively the standard to be applied. At a minimum, the legislative history should state that the Act does not preclude the INS from granting relief to ABC class members without requiring them individually to establish that they meet the "suspension of deportation" standard.

II. Discussion

Some might argue that the Act as currently written does not authorize the Immigration and Naturalization Service (the "INS") to grant relief to ABC class members without requiring them individually to demonstrate that they meet the standard for granting suspension of deportation. ^{1/} Under established principles of statutory construction, the Act's use of the same language for the standard to be applied to ABC class members as for the standard that applied to those seeking suspension of deportation could be cited as congressional intent that the ABC class

^{1/} Research is being conducted to assess whether the INS administratively may grant relief in this manner if the Act, in either its statutory language or its legislative history, does not expressly authorize this approach.

This memorandum, which was prepared at the request of the Embassy of the Republic of El Salvador, was authored by T. Clark Weymouth, with the assistance of David G. Leitch, Scott M. Deutchman and Irene F. Chang. Hogan & Hartson is registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act on behalf of the Embassy of the Republic of El Salvador. Additional information concerning this registration is on file at the U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

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HOGAN & HARTSON DC2

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members are to be subject to the suspension of deportation standard. 2/ On the other hand, however, the courts generally have deferred to the INS in its exercise of discretionary authority in granting or denying relief from repatriation, 3/ unless the INS either (a) acted arbitrarily or capriciously, or abused its discretion; 4/ or (b) failed procedurally to exercise its discretionary authority properly. 5/

Absent clear legislative intent to the contrary, and assuming that the standard is adopted and applied properly, it likely would be difficult to sustain a successful legal challenge to applying a more lenient, less subjective standard administratively to ABC class members. Nevertheless, to foreclose even the possibility of such a challenge, the better approach is for the Act, in its statutory language and its legislative history, to specify a more lenient, less subjective standard to be applied to ABC class members seeking relief from repatriation. At a minimum, the Act's legislative history should state that the Act does not preclude the INS from granting relief to ABC class members without requiring them individually to establish that they meet the "suspension of deportation" standard.

A. Amending the Act's statutory language

Under established principles of statutory construction, amending the Act's statutory language would provide more persuasive legal authority for reducing the qualifying standard than doing so solely through the Act's legislative history. This objective could be accomplished relatively simply by amending Section 3(b) of

2/ See Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith, Inc. v. Curran, 456 U.S. 353, 382 n.66 (1982) (quoting Lorillard v. Pons, 434 U.S. 575, 580-81 (1978)) ("Congress is presumed . . . to be aware of an administrative or judicial interpretation of a statute and to adopt that interpretation when it re-enacts a statute without change. . . .").

3/ See, e.g., Jay v. Boyd, 351 U.S. 343, 354, 357-58 (1956) (concluding that, in the context of suspension of deportation, the approval of such relief is within the "unfettered discretion" of the Attorney General).

4/ See, e.g., Adel v. Shaughnessy, 183 F.2d 371, 372 (2d Cir. 1950) (the court's review of suspension of deportation determinations is limited to whether there has been "a clear abuse of discretion or a clear failure to exercise discretion"); Blanco v. INS, 68 F.3d 642, 646 (2d Cir. 1995) (Attorney General has "broad discretionary power" over eligibility for suspension of deportation); Babai v. INS, 985 F.2d 252, 255 (6th Cir. 1993) ("The Attorney General . . . exercise[s] very broad discretion It is [the court's] duty to ensure that this discretion is exercised in a way that is not 'arbitrary, irrational or contrary to law.'").

5/ See, e.g., Chen v. INS, 95 F.3d 801, 804-05 (9th Cir. 1996); Zhang v. Slattery, 55 F.3d 732, 749 (2nd Cir. 1995), cert. denied, 116 S. Ct. 1271 (1996).

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the Act (creating a new Section 309(f) in the IIRIRA transition rules) in either of the following manners.

First, proposed new IIRIRA Sections 309(f)(1)(A)(iii) and (iv) could be deleted, thereby eliminating entirely the "good moral character" and "extreme hardship" standards that otherwise would apply to ABC class members. If these deletions were made, those who are eligible for relief but not subject to the stricter "cancellation of removal" standard in proposed new IIRIRA Section 309(f)(1)(B) would qualify for relief if they meet the seven-year continuous physical presence requirement. Removing these inherently subjective standards from the inquiry would reduce substantially both the individual ABC class members' and the INS's burden on establishing and assessing, respectively, whether a person qualifies for relief.

Alternatively, proposed IIRIRA Sections 309(f)(1)(A)(iii) and (iv) could be amended to impose more lenient and less subjective "good moral character" and "hardship" standards. In this regard, proposed IIRIRA Section 309(f)(1)(A)(iii) could be rewritten to provide that good moral character is established if the person "is not statutorily precluded from establishing good moral character under Section 101(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act."

For the "hardship" standard, proposed IIRIRA Section 309(f)(1)(A)(iv) could be amended in several different ways. First, the word "extreme" could be stricken; under this approach, ABC class members would have to show hardship, but the standard would be very low and easily demonstrated. Another alternative would be to substitute another adjective -- such as "significant," "substantial," or "material" -- for the word "extreme;" under this approach, ABC class members would have to show more than nominal hardship, but less than extreme hardship. Finally, IIRIRA Section 309(f)(1)(A)(iv) could be rewritten to create a rebuttable presumption of extreme hardship, requiring the INS to present clear and convincing evidence rebutting the presumption and affording the applicant a reasonable opportunity to respond to such evidence.

Note that none of the foregoing alternatives would amend the "cancellation of removal" standard that would apply to nationals of other countries under the INA. Moreover, if any of these alternatives is pursued, the legislative history should clarify what the standard is, either confirming that Congress purposely eliminated the "good moral character" and/or "hardship" requirements or articulating what must be shown to establish that these requirements have been met. Moreover, the legislative history should state that these standards apply to all ABC class members, regardless of whether they were "in proceedings" as of April 1, 1997.

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B. Supportive legislative history

If IIRIRA Section 309(f)(1)(A) remains unchanged, another alternative would be to state in the Act's legislative history that the Act does not preclude the INS from granting relief to ABC class members without requiring them individually to establish that they meet the "suspension of deportation" standard. In this regard, the INS's settlement of the ABC class action suit, which pre-dated the pending legislation and specifies certain administrative measures for the ABC class members, might then provide separate legal authority for the INS to adopt a different standard for the ABC class members than applies generally to those seeking relief from repatriation.

While a change in the statutory language would be more authoritative legally, supportive legislative history on this point could be cited in the implementing regulations as a reason for treating the ABC class members differently administratively. The deference accorded to the INS in the interpretation and administration of the immigration laws, coupled with the likely limited opportunities to challenge the implementing regulations in court, suggest that implementing regulations favoring ABC class members based on supportive legislative history would not be overturned.

If a more lenient standard is contemplated for ABC class members, the legislative history should justify factually the reasons therefor. In this regard, the legislative history could discuss briefly the circumstances in the ABC class members' home countries that caused them to come to the United States, any disparate treatment that they suffered in seeking relief under the U.S. immigration laws, and the uncertainty and delay that they have experienced in seeking resolution of their cases.

THE WHITE HOUSE
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS
SENATE LIAISON

— FAX COVER SHEET —

NOTE:

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CONFIDENTIAL AND INTENDED FOR THE RECIPIENT ONLY.

DATE: 5/21

TO: Jose Cerda

FAX: 6-7028

FROM: Paul Carey Barbara Chow
Tracey Thornton Ben Freeland
Mike Williams X Rick Gonzales
Jeff Forbes Stacey Rubin

PHONE (202) 456-6493 FAX (202) 456-2604

RE: Hispanic Caucus Action Plan
on immigration.

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06/20/97 TUE 15:53 FAX 202 225 2202

GUTIERREZ

003

Jose Carda

**** CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS ******ACTION PLAN FOR JUST TREATMENT OF CENTRAL AMERICANS IN THE U.S.
May 21, 1997****I. NEW IMMIGRATION LAW CHANGES THE RULES MID-STREAM**

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-108) was signed by President Clinton on September 30, 1996. Although some of the most drastic provisions were eliminated from the final version of the immigration bill, the legislation remains extremely harsh towards immigrants who have yet to obtain their lawful permanent resident status. For thousands of Central Americans who found themselves in legal limbo because of the Administration's actions and inactions, the interpretation of the new immigration law leaves them again with unclear status.

II. BACKGROUND: THOUSANDS RISK REMOVAL FROM THE U.S.

In the 1980's, tens of thousands of people fled El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua which had become Cold War Battlegrounds. Most of those fleeing Central America sought political asylum in the U.S. It was granted to about only 3% of the applicants. Critics charge that the denial of asylum were political because these refugees were fleeing U.S.-backed governments.

A. At least 200,000 Guatemalans and Salvadorans now risk being removed.

In 1985, after 98% of all their asylum applications were denied, 200,000 Guatemalans and Salvadorans filed suit as a class, alleging discrimination against their asylum claims. They became known as the ABC Class. In 1990, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) agreed to a settlement with the ABC Class that ensured a fair hearing on individual cases and also allowed members of the class to live and work legally in the United States while their asylum claims were pending. For years, the INS allowed the claims of the ABC Class to remain mostly in limbo.

- * Under the law at the time, virtually the entire ABC class became eligible for suspension of deportation-- a judicial remedy short of asylum which requires seven years residency in the United States.
- * The Guatemalans in the ABC Class have been promised new asylum hearings as part of the settlement. The INS has only recently begun rehearing the asylum claims. According to the INS, the approval rate at these rehearings is only about 5%.

B. At least 40,000 Nicaraguans now risk being removed.

Immigrant advocate groups have argued that many fled the war in Nicaragua in the 1980's at the urging to the United States and settled here at the behest of the Reagan and Bush administrations as a form of protest against the ruling Sandinistas. As a result of the Nicaraguan Review Program, thousands of Nicaraguans were permitted to remain in the United States and encouraged to apply for suspension of deportation.

- * Under the law at the time, the vast majority of Nicaraguans were eligible for suspension of deportation.
- * On May 14, 1997, a Federal Judge ordered a halt to the deportation of Nicaraguans and other immigrants in Florida, Alabama, and Georgia, who are affected by new immigration law to prevent "irreparable harm." This same judge will hear a class action suit filed on behalf the Nicaraguans and others affected by the interpretation of the new immigration law.

CHC ACTION PLAN

May 21, 1997

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- C. It is unjust to deny the members of the ABC Class and the Nicaraguans, who qualified under the old law, an opportunity to apply for relief.
- Because of past reassurances from the Administration, both tacit and overt, many of the ABC Class and the Nicaraguans did not pursue their suspension applications before the immigration law was signed.
 - The Administration has chosen to change its policy and interpret the law in such a way that virtually all of the members of the ABC Class and Nicaraguans are no longer eligible for any relief. All of their ties to this country, and even the years they accrued toward suspension of deportation will not be considered, because of a Board of Immigration Appeals decision called Matter of N-J-B. The Administration has made it clear that amnesty is not an option.

II. ACTION PLAN

During the May summit in Costa Rica with heads of state from other Central American countries, President Clinton expressed sympathy toward Central American immigrants who came to the U.S. legally, comparing them to boat people who escaped Vietnam in the 1970's. The President also pledged to work with Congress to implement the new immigration law so that it does not produce unfair results. The Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) commends President Clinton for recognizing the problems caused by the new immigration law and fully supports all efforts to help the more than 240,000 Central Americans who are at risk of being removed. The CHC demands an expedient and fair resolution to the unclear immigration status of this group of immigrants.

- A. Our immigration laws should promote, not destroy, family reunification.

The impact of the new immigration law is tearing families apart because not all members are U.S. citizens. Parents are being separated from their school-aged, citizen children, and spouses from each other.

- B. If amnesty is not an option, the only just solution is to "grandfather" the ABC Class and eligible Nicaraguans.

To be able to work constructively with the President, the CHC seeks immediate clarification on the implementation of the President's stated goal to provide some form of relief for this group of immigrants. The CHC supports "grandfathering" this group of immigrants, whether it be through administrative or legislative means.

- C. The members of the ABC Class and Nicaraguans, who qualified for suspension of deportation under the previous law, should be able to have a hearing based upon the old rules.

This group of immigrants should not be punished for the legal limbo the Administration created for them. They should be permitted to proceed under the set of rules that they started under. It is not fair to change the rules mid-stream. The ABC Class and the Nicaraguans find themselves in a unique predicament. If they had not been put into legal limbo, their applications for suspension of deportation could have been filed and heard on the merits long before the President signed the most recent immigration law which drastically reduced the types of relief available to immigrants.

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- D. The INS and the Attorney General have the discretion to "grandfather" eligible immigrants without legislative fixes.

The INS Commissioner, or the Attorney General herself, may certify decisions to the Attorney General that are not based on a correct interpretation of the law, or are not in keeping with the Administration's policy. Specifically, the CHC requests that the President and the Attorney General examine the Board of Immigration Appeals' divided opinion in Matter of N-J-B.

Notwithstanding Board decision in Matter of N-J-B, the INS has the discretion to promulgate regulations which implement the changes in immigration law vis a vis the rights of these unique groups.

The INS has the administrative flexibility to grant provisional "suspension" status to all those who are found eligible during any fiscal year. Applicants granted this status could then apply for adjustment of status in the next fiscal year.

- E. In the absence of an administrative remedy to this urgent problem, the CHC members propose a legislative initiative to "grandfather" this group of immigrants and urge President Clinton to strongly support this legislation.

The CHC believes that administrative fixes would be the more expedient solution to the dilemma of the thousands of Central Americans in the United States, who had the rules changed mid-stream. However, in the absence of an administrative remedy, the CHC will actively pursue an initiative to "grandfather" the ABC Class and eligible Nicaraguans.

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

FAX COVER SHEET

Office of Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

**NATIONAL
SECURITY
COUNCIL**

17th & Penn, N.W.
Washington, D.C.
20504

Did you get a complete,
clear transmission? If
not, please call:

(202) 456-9141

From: SCOTT BUDY

To: PETER JACOBY 6-2607

Agency: LEANNE SHIMABUKURO 6-7028

Fax Number: JOHN MORTON 514-9077
ROB WEINER 6-1647

Date/Time:

No. of pages to follow: 2

Message: MARIA ECHAVASTE CALLED FROM
BRAZIL AND SAID THAT IT IS HIGHLY LIKELY
THAT POTUS WILL BE ASKED ABOUT CENTRAL
AMERICAN INITIATIVE TOMORROW DURING
"TOWN MEETING" IN ARGENTINA. SHE, MCCURRY,
+ STEINBERG INDICATED A WISH FOR

GUIDANCE THAT WAS STRONGER IN OUTLINING
OUR PROPOSAL + RAISING CONCERNS
W/ THAT OF SMITH, DIAZ-BALART. PLEASE

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

FAX COVER SHEET

***Office of Democracy, Human Rights
and Humanitarian Affairs*****NATIONAL
SECURITY
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Washington, D.C.
20504****Did you get a complete,
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not, please call:****(202) 456-9141****From:** SCOTT BUSBY**To:** LEANNE S.**Agency:****Fax Number:** 6-7028**Date/Time:****No. of pages to follow:** 3**Message:**

National Immigration Forum

PRESS CONFERENCE

November 3, 1997
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Judy Mark
(202) 544-0004, ext. 14

IMMIGRANT LEADERS AND ADVOCATES CRITICIZE "VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM RELIEF ACT" Leaders Call for Fairness in Latest Congressional Proposal

WHAT? The *Los Angeles Times* reports today that Congressional leaders will seek to pass legislation in the next few days titled the "Victims of Communism Relief Act." In its original form, the bill sought to provide fairness for Central American refugees who were subject to mass deportation. The immigrant community is extremely concerned about how the bill's latest version distorts the original intent of the legislation and sacrifices fairness at the altar of political expediency.

(For more information, see attached statement.)

WHEN? Tuesday, November 4, 1997 10:00 am

WHERE? 1539 Longworth House Office Building

WHO? Representatives of the following organizations will speak at the press conference:
National Immigration Forum
Salvadoran-American National Network
National Coalition for Haitian Rights
National Council of La Raza
United States Catholic Conference

more...

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Date: 10/30/97 Time: 15:18:43

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National Immigration Forum

THE NATIONAL IMMIGRATION FORUM'S VIEWS ON LEGISLATION AFFECTING CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEES AND OTHERS Monday, November 3, 1997

Late last week an agreement was struck by some Congressional leaders regarding legislation which will benefit Central American war refugees and other immigrants. We are troubled that this latest proposal strays from the principles enshrined in the original legislative proposals introduced earlier this year. As drafted originally, the bills would have 1) offered humanitarian relief to Central American war refugees from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua on an equitable basis; and 2) made sure that strict new rules for humanitarian relief from deportation were not applied retroactively to old cases.

We knew the legislation faced an uphill battle and that opposition from the author of the immigration bill of 1996, House Immigration Subcommittee Chair Lamar Smith (R-TX), would be formidable. However, as the tide turned in favor of corrective legislation, Rep. Smith joined in the negotiations, apparently in an attempt to influence the compromise package. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that these negotiations have yielded a proposal which distorts the shape of the legislation from that which was originally proposed.

Our Major Concerns

Where's the equity? Under the newly-proposed version of the bill, entitled the "Victims of Communism Relief Act," Nicaraguans and Cubans would get amnesty, while Salvadorans and Guatemalans would face enormous obstacles to winning permanent residence, and similarly-situated Haitians get nothing. All fled civil strife and persecution in the 1980's and the early 1990's, all were temporarily protected from deportation, all have been kept in legal limbo, and all have built new lives in the United States. Deportation to any of the fragile democracies in the region could be destabilizing. What is the justification for such disparate treatment?

Changing the rules in mid-stream is acceptable for some? Under the Victims of Communism Relief Act, tough new rules governing humanitarian relief from deportation would be applied retroactively to old cases. However, the bill would carve out special consideration for those from Warsaw Pact countries and the former Soviet Union. This approach seems to go out of its way to hurt those not covered. What is the justification for refusing to retroactively apply new rules to old cases for some nationalities but not others?

Robbing Peter to Pay Paul? Under the Victims of Communism Relief Act, legal immigrant visas would be temporarily reduced by 10,000 slots annually as an offset for permanent resident visas won by Salvadorans and Guatemalans. Although a significant improvement over an earlier version, this "off-set" implies that humanitarian relief for some can only come at the expense of legal immigration slots for others. What is the justification for mixing apples and oranges in a way that penalizes some in order to help others?

Let us be clear. We are pleased that the Congressional leadership is moving in the direction of offering more help to more immigrants than anticipated in the original legislation. What disturbs

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us is that the proposal seems to sacrifice fairness at the altar of political expediency. We call on the Clinton Administration and Congressional leaders to work together this week to produce a final bill that meets these simple tests: 1) those similarly-situated should be treated equitably; 2) new rules should not be retroactively applied to old cases; and 3) Congress should not rob Peter to pay Paul by linking reductions in legal immigrant visas to the proffering of humanitarian relief visas.

Possible Solutions to Achieve Equity and Fairness

With respect to equity, we support the generous treatment offered to Nicaraguans, and believe that Salvadorans and Guatemalans should be given the same. However, if Congress refuses to pass legislation offering parity of *process* for Nicaraguans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans alike, there are a range of legislative and administrative actions that could assure parity of *outcomes*. In addition, Congress and the Administration should find a way to provide equitable and meaningful relief to similarly-situated Haitians. With respect to retroactivity, Congress should remain silent on this issue and defer to the Attorney General, who is expected to rule that last year's immigration law should not be applied to cases already in the pipeline. And Congress should de-link orderly legal immigration from wholly separate humanitarian relief policies.

If Congress and the White House keep faith with these principles, we are optimistic that good legislation can indeed be fashioned in the remaining days before Congress recesses. Such legislation is urgently needed.

As we turn into the homestretch, we want to salute the tireless work of Reps. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL) as well as Senators Abraham (R-MI), Mack (R-FL), Kennedy (D-MA), and Graham (D-FL). Without their determination and drive over the past few months, legislation would not be so close at hand. We also want to thank the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and Congressional Black Caucus for their stepped up efforts to fight for equity in this legislation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact Angela Kelley at (202) 544-0004 extension 19 or Judy Mark at extension 14.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Buenos Aires, Argentina)

For Immediate Release

October 16, 1997

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN TELEVISION TOWN HALL

Univision Television Network
Buenos Aires, Argentina

4:07 P.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jorge and Maria Elena. And I thank Univision for giving us the chance to have this conversation. I want to thank all the young people here in Buenos Aires and joining us from Miami and Los Angeles for being a part of this.

I am near the end of a remarkable trip which my wife, Hillary, and I, a distinguished group from our Cabinet and the United States Congress have taken to Latin America to celebrate the changes that have taken place -- the moves from dictatorship to democracy, the moves from closed economies, high inflation and big debt to stability and growth -- the moves that are bringing all of us closer together.

I came here to talk about what we have to do to prepare for the 21st century, how we have to work together to seize the promise of education and technology, to shoulder the burdens of preserving our environment and dealing with new security threats from drugs and crime and terrorism.

Most of all, I came to reaffirm the commitment of the United States to be a good partner with Latin America as we move ahead, and especially to emphasize the fact that our fastest growing minority of Americans are Hispanic Americans. We are growing together in more ways than one, and today I hope we'll talk about what we can do to build the kind of future we all want together. (Applause.)

still in Latin America behind -- and still in our country, I might add.

MODERATOR: We're jumping back and forth. We're going to jump from Cuba to other subjects. Let's go to one of the most multicultural and multiracial societies in the world, Los Angeles, with Maria Antonieta. Go ahead, please.

MODERATOR: Here in Los Angeles, Mr. President, (questioner) -- is an immigration lawyer and she works for the Center of Resources for Latin Americans, and she has this question.

Q Mr. President, on behalf of -- in Los Angeles and the Central American community in the United States, I'd like to thank you for the leadership you have demonstrated through the initiative of the legislation presented to Congress several weeks ago. As you well know, last week two Republican members of Congress announced an agreement which has not yet been finalized, and a legislative proposal. My question is, what possibility is there to see legislation passed that is fair and just in the way that Salvadorans, Nicaraguans and Guatemalans are treated -- all of these people who are under special immigration programs?

THE PRESIDENT: Just very briefly, for the benefit of all the people here in Buenos Aires and who are listening to this who may not know what we're talking about -- in the political upheavals of the '80s in Central America, the United States gave special permission to people who were affected by these troubles to come to the United States, in theory for a limited amount of time until democracy or peace had been restored to their country. Then they were to return home. By the time that happened, they had been here quite a long while, particularly Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Nicaraguans.

Under a law passed by our Congress last year, they would all have had to go home immediately. So our Attorney General, working with me, issued an order to stop that while we tried to fix it. I think the chances are excellent that we will be able to at least return to the former system, where we'll be able to leave people here on humanitarian grounds who have made marriages and made families, had children and started their lives. And I'm encouraged that finally we have also gotten a positive response from some of the Republican members. Some of that legislation, as you know, is directed to benefit only

Nicaraguans. I think we should help them, but I don't think we should forget about the Guatemalans and the Salvadorans either. I think the chances are excellent that we will have legislation which will enable us to do the humane, decent thing. Thank you.

Let me also say, if I could just make a point about Los Angeles. While Hispanic Americans are the fastest growing group of Americans, Los Angeles County, our largest county, has people from at least 150 different racial and ethnic groups -- in one of our counties. So we are becoming a multiethnic democracy in ways that we never have been before. And if we do it properly, it will be a great thing for our future.

Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Mr. President, the next question is from Javier Fernando Nunez, Argentine. He's a lawyer and he specializes in patents and intellectual properties.

Q Good afternoon, first of all, Mr. President. The United States, on the one hand, is promoting the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the FTAA, and has now embarked on its own regional integration project which is NAFTA. On the other hand, it says that it would be against integration blocs in Latin America that would limit the exports or imports of third parties. Now, my question is this: How can you simultaneously hold both positions, which at first sight seem to be contradictory?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, let me tell you what my position is. I supported the establishment of NAFTA. I supported the strengthening of Mercosur. I support the Andean Pact. I support CARICOM. Why? Because when countries that are neighbors lower their barriers and trade with each other, they increase growth and wealth. They also acquire a political closeness that makes former conflicts unthinkable, and they begin to look to the future and to their children, instead of to their pasts, prejudices, or difficulties. They tend to work together to solve problems the way we're working with Argentina and Brazil, for example, to help Peru and Ecuador resolve their problems on the border.

Secondly, I believe that being for Mercosur, being for NAFTA, being for these other pacts is sort of a first step toward trying to have a larger hemispheric economic integration.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first, let me state what my position is. My position is that the status of Puerto Rico should be for the Puerto Rican people themselves to decide. Whether a commonwealth, independence or statehood -- it should be totally up to the people of Puerto Rico.

If Puerto Rico were to become a state, among other things, under our laws the educational system of Puerto Rico would be primarily the constitutional responsibility of the state of Puerto Rico, so that to whatever extent the state wanted to have a cultural support for the native culture, the native customs and the native language would be a decision for the state to pursue that the federal government should not try to undermine.

So that's my position. I don't think you'd have to worry about that. There are complicating questions on both sides of that issue. But I think the preservation of the unique and wonderful culture of Puerto Rico would not be a problem probably in either way. But there may be some specific problems I'm unaware of. But I would say that people should make their decisions about commonwealth and statehood probably based on what they think is best economically, rather than that. I believe that we'll be able to preserve the culture no matter what.

As a matter of fact, if you look at what's happening in Miami, what's happening in Los Angeles, what's happening in Chicago, what's happening in the Fairfax County school district across the river from Washington, D.C., where there are people from 180 different national groups in one school district -- we're going to do a lot of cultural preservation in the years ahead.

MODERATOR: We're going to go directly now to Los Angeles.

MODERATOR: Yes, Mr. President, this is the coordinator for the Coalition for Human Rights of Immigrants in Los Angeles. He wants to ask you something.

Q Yes, Mr. President. The new immigration law of 1996 has caused major crisis for immigrant families. In the past you have said that life was not going to be made more difficult for those immigrants who have complied with the law in this country and who are seeking the American Dream. What I'd like to know is what do you plan to do so that the immigration laws are more humane for the people coming from those countries?

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, I think it's important that you look at the changes that we just put into the recently passed budget. As you know, I was bitterly opposed to the immigration law changes made by Congress last year, and I said I would do all I could to reverse the harshest aspects of them. Those laws were largely reversed in their impact in the budget that we just passed.

Now, for people who are there without legal approval, they may be eligible to become legal immigrants and, if so, they should try to get legal status. For some legal immigrants that may still lose some public benefits, our information is that over 70 percent of them are eligible to become citizens. I would urge them to become citizens.

We just had a big report from our Immigration Commission saying that we in the United States government should do more to try to push citizenship and help new citizens to integrate more successfully into our society. So we're going to be looking at that to see if there are some people who have fallen between the cracks, that we can change their status so they won't be put in a perilous circumstance.

But I'm confident that most of the people's problems were taken care of by the recent budget law. The others, I think, we'll have to work hard, particularly moving people into citizenship because most of the people who don't have benefits now because they're legal immigrants and not citizens are older people who aren't in dire health conditions. But almost all of them are eligible to become citizens and I think we have to move them through the system as quickly as we can.

MODERATOR: You wanted to talk to future leaders --here's one of them. He's from Chile, he's 33 and is already president of his own company. It's a technological computer company for Latin America.

Q Mr. President, in the United States seeking MMNA status for Argentina, the armed forces of Argentina, no doubt, would also be given a new status by the U.S. government. Don't you think that a rivalry can be generated between these neighboring countries in the south and also produce democratic instability in the region in an arms race that could be unleashed through this decision?

THE PRESIDENT: No, but let me explain why. It's a fair question. And let me say if someone -- an Argentine might stand

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Buenos Aires, Argentina)

For Immediate Release

October 16, 1997

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN TELEVISION TOWN HALL

Univision Television Network
Buenos Aires, Argentina

4:07 P.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Jorge and Maria Elena. And I thank Univision for giving us the chance to have this conversation. I want to thank all the young people here in Buenos Aires and joining us from Miami and Los Angeles for being a part of this.

I am near the end of a remarkable trip which my wife, Hillary, and I, a distinguished group from our Cabinet and the United States Congress have taken to Latin America to celebrate the changes that have taken place -- the moves from dictatorship to democracy, the moves from closed economies, high inflation and big debt to stability and growth -- the moves that are bringing all of us closer together.

I came here to talk about what we have to do to prepare for the 21st century, how we have to work together to seize the promise of education and technology, to shoulder the burdens of preserving our environment and dealing with new security threats from drugs and crime and terrorism.

Most of all, I came to reaffirm the commitment of the United States to be a good partner with Latin America as we move ahead, and especially to emphasize the fact that our fastest growing minority of Americans are Hispanic Americans. We are growing together in more ways than one, and today I hope we'll talk about what we can do to build the kind of future we all want together. (Applause.)

still in Latin America behind -- and still in our country, I might add.

MODERATOR: We're jumping back and forth. We're going to jump from Cuba to other subjects. Let's go to one of the most multicultural and multiracial societies in the world, Los Angeles, with Maria Antonieta. Go ahead, please.

MODERATOR: Here in Los Angeles, Mr. President, (questioner) -- is an immigration lawyer and she works for the Center of Resources for Latin Americans, and she has this question.

Q Mr. President, on behalf of -- in Los Angeles and the Central American community in the United States, I'd like to thank you for the leadership you have demonstrated through the initiative of the legislation presented to Congress several weeks ago. As you well know, last week two Republican members of Congress announced an agreement which has not yet been finalized, and a legislative proposal. My question is, what possibility is there to see legislation passed that is fair and just in the way that Salvadorans, Nicaraguans and Guatemalans are treated -- all of these people who are under special immigration programs?

THE PRESIDENT: Just very briefly, for the benefit of all the people here in Buenos Aires and who are listening to this who may not know what we're talking about -- in the political upheavals of the '80s in Central America, the United States gave special permission to people who were affected by these troubles to come to the United States, in theory for a limited amount of time until democracy or peace had been restored to their country. Then they were to return home. By the time that happened, they had been here quite a long while, particularly Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Nicaraguans.

Under a law passed by our Congress last year, they would all have had to go home immediately. So our Attorney General, working with me, issued an order to stop that while we tried to fix it. I think the chances are excellent that we will be able to at least return to the former system, where we'll be able to leave people here on humanitarian grounds who have made marriages and made families, had children and started their lives. And I'm encouraged that finally we have also gotten a positive response from some of the Republican members. Some of that legislation, as you know, is directed to benefit only

Nicaraguans. I think we should help them, but I don't think we should forget about the Guatemalans and the Salvadorans either. I think the chances are excellent that we will have legislation which will enable us to do the humane, decent thing. Thank you.

Let me also say, if I could just make a point about Los Angeles. While Hispanic Americans are the fastest growing group of Americans, Los Angeles County, our largest county, has people from at least 150 different racial and ethnic groups -- in one of our counties. So we are becoming a multiethnic democracy in ways that we never have been before. And if we do it properly, it will be a great thing for our future.

Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Mr. President, the next question is from Javier Fernando Nunez, Argentine. He's a lawyer and he specializes in patents and intellectual properties.

Q Good afternoon, first of all, Mr. President. The United States, on the one hand, is promoting the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the FTAA, and has now embarked on its own regional integration project which is NAFTA. On the other hand, it says that it would be against integration blocs in Latin America that would limit the exports or imports of third parties. Now, my question is this: How can you simultaneously hold both positions, which at first sight seem to be contradictory?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, let me tell you what my position is. I supported the establishment of NAFTA. I supported the strengthening of Mercosur. I support the Andean Pact. I support CARICOM. Why? Because when countries that are neighbors lower their barriers and trade with each other, they increase growth and wealth. They also acquire a political closeness that makes former conflicts unthinkable, and they begin to look to the future and to their children, instead of to their pasts, prejudices, or difficulties. They tend to work together to solve problems the way we're working with Argentina and Brazil, for example, to help Peru and Ecuador resolve their problems on the border.

Secondly, I believe that being for Mercosur, being for NAFTA, being for these other pacts is sort of a first step toward trying to have a larger hemispheric economic integration.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first, let me state what my position is. My position is that the status of Puerto Rico should be for the Puerto Rican people themselves to decide. Whether a commonwealth, independence or statehood -- it should be totally up to the people of Puerto Rico.

If Puerto Rico were to become a state, among other things, under our laws the educational system of Puerto Rico would be primarily the constitutional responsibility of the state of Puerto Rico, so that to whatever extent the state wanted to have a cultural support for the native culture, the native customs and the native language would be a decision for the state to pursue that the federal government should not try to undermine.

So that's my position. I don't think you'd have to worry about that. There are complicating questions on both sides of that issue. But I think the preservation of the unique and wonderful culture of Puerto Rico would not be a problem probably in either way. But there may be some specific problems I'm unaware of. But I would say that people should make their decisions about commonwealth and statehood probably based on what they think is best economically, rather than that. I believe that we'll be able to preserve the culture no matter what.

As a matter of fact, if you look at what's happening in Miami, what's happening in Los Angeles, what's happening in Chicago, what's happening in the Fairfax County school district across the river from Washington, D.C., where there are people from 180 different national groups in one school district -- we're going to do a lot of cultural preservation in the years ahead.

MODERATOR: We're going to go directly now to Los Angeles.

MODERATOR: Yes, Mr. President, this is the coordinator for the Coalition for Human Rights of Immigrants in Los Angeles. He wants to ask you something.

Q Yes, Mr. President. The new immigration law of 1996 has caused major crisis for immigrant families. In the past you have said that life was not going to be made more difficult for those immigrants who have complied with the law in this country and who are seeking the American Dream. What I'd like to know is what do you plan to do so that the immigration laws are more humane for the people coming from those countries?

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Unskilled 3rd Preference

Total	11,849
Principals	6,010
Spouses	2,409
Children	3,430

Top Ten Countries (Principals 6,010)

	#	%
El Salvador	815	13.5%
Trinidad	541	9.0%
Philippines	472	7.8%
Korea	387	6.4%
Mexico	317	5.3%
Guatemala	314	5.2%
Jamaica	303	5.0%
Peru	239	4.0%
Guyana	225	3.7%
Colombia	223	3.6%

Immigration

May 1997 Mexico Trip / Central
Americans



White House Press Release

Press Conference Of The President And Central American Leaders

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary
(San Jose, Costa Rica)

For Immediate Release

May 8, 1997

Press Conference Of The President
And **Central** American Leaders

National Theater
San Jose, Costa Rica

1:20 P.M. (L)

President Figueres: Good afternoon, friends. I wish to express on behalf of the heads of states and government of **Central America** and the Dominican Republic how pleased we are with the results of the extraordinary work session we have had this morning with President Clinton. It has been a very sincere dialogue, a very realistic dialogue, a very human dialogue, and especially, a very friendly dialogue.

I would like to share with you four main conclusions which are the outcome of our discussions and which are reflected in the joint declaration which we have just signed. First of all, we've inaugurated a new phase, a new stage in the relations among our countries. We attach a very special importance to this alliance. It reflects a new visional mood, a more optimistic one, a more mature one, and a more propositional one. And it also demonstrates the existence of a shared agenda, the fundamental objective of which is the well-being of our peoples through the consolidation of economies which are more and more open and integrated. And we have ratified this will.

Secondly, we wish to emphasize the brotherly spirit, the friendship and the understanding which have prevailed in our discussion of topics which we knew were sensitive and complex. We have made a special effort to reach agreements, to compromise and to understand the realities which our governments face. Beyond those realities, we found a will to work together and we have opened areas for this dialogue to continue and for our collective action.

Third, we underlined the importance of having maintained as a constant concern of this meeting the social issues, the importance of which for Latin **America** and for our region is more vital today than ever before. We share a special concern with the more needy, a concern which reflects solidarity, not charity, as a means to generate opportunities for productive employment and to ensure the dignified life which our peoples demand.

I especially wish to recognize the contribution of women to the developing of economic democracy and how urgent it is to guarantee non-discriminatory treatment for them in the workplaces, in political life and in social relations generally. All this should have a significant impact in the improvement of the quality of life of the coming generations.

Finally, we wish to stress the significant role which environmental issues continue to have on our agenda. We

have deepened and expanded the scope of the joint declaration of **Central America** and the United States, Concausa, and in doing so, we have helped our region move even further forward as one of those regions which are noted throughout the world for their commitment to the rational use and intelligent use of our national resources. In this regard, we can state that the

decisions we've adopted in this field in this declaration can be characterized as revolutionary at a hemispherical level.

An essential element to attain institutional strengthening and to ensure good governance of our countries has to do with the possibility of expanding our markets and stimulating investments, which generate employment and improve the quality of life. I believe that with respect to both topics -- free trade and investment -- we have moved forward in an impressive manner in attaining a better understanding and in acceptance that reciprocity should be the new byword in the establishment of all our discussions.

Moderator: Ladies and gentlemen, the President and the Prime Minister of Belize and the Dominican Republic would like to make a special mention to the democratic circumstance that prevails in all the region: We are committed to strengthen and perfecting it.

We are aware that, at the threshold of the 21st century, it is not enough to guarantee access to free, fair and transparent elections for our citizens. Threatened by formidable enemies such as narco trafficking and organized crime, it is indispensable to fortify democratic institutions and to ensure ways in which civil society can participate more effectively in the decision-making process.

Nonetheless, it is through the development of dynamic economies and more equitable social structures that we will be able to fully grasp the benefits of democratic governance. To this regard, we are convinced that one indispensable element to ensure such democratic governance has to do with the possibility to expand our markets and, with it, stimulate investments that generate employment and improve the quality of life of our populations.

Both issues -- trade and investment -- were positively reinforced during our meeting with President Clinton, and we would like to emphasize our satisfaction as the new criteria that will guide our next steps towards the construction of free trade zones in the **Americas**.

In closing, let me emphasize the warmth of this

meeting. You, President Clinton, with your insight and your thoughtfulness, have come to **Central America**, and with our friends from the Dominican Republic, have given a new dimension to our relations. We all came here with high expectations. We had the opportunity to share out thoughts, but express the feelings of our hearts. And we all part full of optimism, ready to continue our work -- work that is circumscribed by the need we all have to continue bettering the conditions of living of our people. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

President Clinton: President Figueres has given an excellent statement. I will just make a few brief comments. First of all, I know I speak for all of us who are guests here in thanking the President and the people of Costa Rica for their warmth and hospitality.

This is truly a new day for **Central America**. The transition from conflict to cooperation has changed the relationship among the **Central American** countries and between the United States and **Central America**. A decade ago, we focused on civil wars; now, together, we are fighting against poverty and fighting for prosperity, stronger democracy and the sustainable development of our precious resources.

It is this new reality, this new agenda that we share which brings us here to San Jose for the first summit meeting between the leaders of the United States, **Central America** and the Dominican Republic in 30 years. The people of **Central America** have chosen peace and democracy. We must help them to prove that they made the right choice, that democracy delivers.

Today, we agreed to an intensified ongoing dialogue between the United States, **Central America** and the Dominican Republic to work together on issues that will make a real difference to the lives of all of our people with a high level follow-on structure to make sure that our commitments are realized.

Together we looked at ways to strengthen our democracies and to combat the drugs, crime and corruption that threaten to undermine them. I'm encouraged by the growing cooperation among **Central American** law enforcement authorities, including the creation of a joint center for police studies in El Salvador. To advance it further, the United States plans to establish an international law enforcement academy in Latin **America** by the end of this year, modeled on our successful academy in Budapest. We also agreed to modernize extradition treaties and to apply them vigorously. Those who commit a crime in one nation in our region should know that they will have no place to run and hide elsewhere in the region.

We took important steps to broaden the benefits of open and competitive trade. Our trade with **Central America** exceeded \$20 billion last year. That is a 120-percent increase since 1990. This dramatic increase is the direct result of the progress the nations of this region have made toward improving their economies and opening their markets.

To identify concrete actions we can take to expand commerce even more, and to explore ways to move toward our common goal of a free trade area of the **Americas** by 2005, we created a ministerial level trade and investment council.

The open skies agreement we signed today -- the first in our hemisphere -- are a powerful example of how we can

first in our hemisphere -- are a powerful example of how we can move forward together. They will allow our air carriers greater freedom to increase passenger and cargo services, to lower prices for travellers and shippers, and literally to bring the **Americas** closer together.

Today, we also agreed that our labor ministers will meet later this year to exchange ideas on promoting respect for worker rights and improving working conditions. And we discussed the issue of **immigration**. I'm proud that the United States has a tradition of generous legal **immigration**. Last year, over 900,000 people legally **immigrated** to the United States. I will do what I can to preserve it because I believe **America's** diversity is one of our greatest strengths as we move into a new century in an increasingly global society.

But to maintain that tradition and to do what is right by people who **immigrate** to the United States legally, it is also necessary that we be more effective in stopping illegal **immigration**. Our new **immigration** law is designed to accomplish that objective. I appreciate the decision by several **Central American** nations to criminalize the terrible practice of alien smuggling, which is also a scourge to all of us.

I do want you to know that enforcing our laws, I am determined to balance the need for firm controls against illegal **immigration** with common sense and compassion. Our country has greatly benefitted from the talents and the energies of **Central Americans** who came to our shores because they were fleeing civil war. Today, the remarkable progress in that region means that many can return home. But we want that to occur in a manner which avoids destabilizing the nations and the economies of **Central America**, or creating enormous hardships for children and families.

There will be no mass deportations and no targeting of **Central Americans** under this law. I am working with Congress to implement the new law so that it does not produce these unintended results.

Finally, we explored ideas to make a good education the birthright of every child in this region. We agreed that education should be a centerpiece of next year's Summit of the **Americas** in Santiago, for which today's summit is an important building block.

This has been a full and a productive session. Again, let me thank my colleagues for the passion and the depth of commitment they bring to this enterprise, and to our shared vision for a new partnership between the United States and **Central America** on the brink of a new century. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Q Good afternoon. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I have two questions. For you, Mr. President Figueres, I'd like to know, within the declaration, in the chapter on strengthening democracy and good governance, I'd like to know what should be understood in the paragraph that says that we take on the commitment to update our extradition treaty and apply it vigorously to make sure that criminals are taken to justice, where the effects of their crime are felt more severely.

If we are dealing here with a paragraph that is somehow suggesting for the future any possibility of extraditing

our citizens -- that the **Central** American contingency meet in order to be considered by your country to be part of the free trade agreement and if so, if we are, after Chile, the next one --

President Clinton: I was listening -- you started talking in Spanish.

Q Okay, so here again. My question is,
(laughter) --

President Clinton: It's been a long day.
(Laughter.)

Q Thank you. What do you think the conditions that **Central** American countries should meet in order to be considered by your country to be part of the Free Trade Agreement, and if we do meet those requirements, are we the next after Chile? Thank you.

President Figueres: The biggest -- is that respecting our constitutions and the independence of the branches of government in our countries, the judiciary and the legislative. We will continue cooperating in these areas which have to do with ensuring citizen security. And in accordance with our responsibility as Presidents with respect to our population, I think we should work out together combatting drug trafficking, money laundering and these modern scourges which have been developing in our societies and which can only cause harm to our societies.

This is a reaffirmation of our will to continue working in that direction, with respect to our constitutions and to our legal provisions. We are all states under the rule of law, fortunately.

President Clinton: I would like to make one comment about that from the point of view of the United States. We do not believe that our sovereignty is undermined by extraditing people through other countries as long as they follow the same rules with us, so that we both respect each other's criminal justice system.

Now, let me answer your question. First of all, I believe that the nations of **Central America** have already gone a long way toward becoming part of a free trade area by embracing democracy, open markets and committing themselves to expanded trade, and committing themselves to increasing international cooperation. After all, we have the President of the Inter-American Development Bank here; we have the Secretary General of the Oas here. We are all working together more. We are committed already, the United States is, to working with all the nations that are here present to establish a free trade area of the **Americas** by 2005, which is not so very far away.

Now, in between now and then can we do more to have more reciprocal open trade with the **Central** American countries? I believe we can and I have agreed to two steps. The first is that we have set up a ministerial trade and investment council here, as a result of this communique, to identify what the next concrete steps are. But, before that, I have proposed in my budget an expansion of the Caribbean Basin Initiative and I have funded it over the next five years, which would permit us to reduce or eliminate tariffs on a large number of other items

coming from **Central America** that would further deepen our trade relations.

So, I'm strongly supportive of it. I think the big steps have already been taken. The next steps are subject to agreement by our trade negotiators and people who are concerned about investment. And they can be worked out if we stay on the path we're on.

Terry.

Q Mr. President, some of the leaders here today and some other prominent **Central American** figures have complained in recent days that the United States pays attention to this region only in times of war and in times of natural disaster. Do you think that that has been a valid criticism?

And to President Figueres, what, if anything, has President Clinton said today that makes you think that that attitude would change?

The President: Well, first of all, I think there is some validity to that criticism -- that is, I think there are some sectors of our society that may have been more interested in **Central America** when it was a battleground in the Cold War or when it could at least be interpreted to have been a battleground in the Cold War. But I don't think it's a fair characterization of **America** as a whole or of the attitude of this administration.

After all, we convened a summit of the **Americas** including all the democratically-elected leaders of **Central America** and the Caribbean and the rest of Latin **America** in 1994. We have worked diligently since then in meeting with and working with various leaders in this area. We have worked for the cause of peace in **Central America** and applauded it when it prevailed.

And this meeting here, which as I said, is the first time since 1968 when President Johnson met with the leaders of the **Central America**, the Dominican Republic that such a meeting has occurred -- and this one has a different agenda. This is designed to send the message that we believe it is in the interest of the United States and the people of the United States as well as the right thing to do to have an economic and a political partnership with **Central America** as we move into the new century.

President Figueres: I come to this meeting with a completely different perspective of what our relationship should be. The old relationship that we have had in the past is no

longer the one that can most benefit us in the world of a globalized economy. And today, we have all come as true partners to share the responsibilities of our development and to look for common paths through which we can develop. **Central America** today, fully democratic and in peace, is willing to pull its own weight and we are perfectly well aware of the responsibilities in that respect that we have as leaders of our nations. This is truly the beginning of a great new partnership.

Q Good afternoon, Presidents. For President Clinton. The countries of **Central America** have been complaining -- complaining that the United States has abandoned **Central America** lately. Aside from progressively, steadily liberalizing trade, in what other way could the United States help the people of **Central America** -- for meetings such as this not be considered

as social events with rather rhetorical results that have nothing to do with reality?

President Clinton: Well, I think there are lot of specific ways we can work with **Central America** apart from trade, and I mentioned one in my remarks. We intend to establish a law enforcement academy in Latin **America** that will serve the people of **Central America** in helping them to develop professional police forces that are effective and respects human rights and effective judicial systems.

We did this in **Central Europe**, with one in Budapest, and we have worked with a lot of former communist countries in the area of law enforcement cooperation in a way that has been extraordinarily well received there and I believe will be here.

Last night when President Figueres and I had a chance to meet, and again today in our larger meeting, I reaffirmed our willingness to work with countries of **Central America** to help to expand educational opportunities and to bring the benefits of educational technology to all students. And I think there are great opportunities there. I think there are enormous opportunities for us to cooperate in the environmental areas in ways that will be helpful to the long-term stability of the nations that are represented here.

So those are just three areas in which I expect there to be significantly increased cooperation in the years ahead. In addition to that, as you know, we still have some modest aid programs. The Peace Corps is active in many of these nations, doing very constructive things. So I expect that there will be other things which will be done in the years ahead.

Keep in mind, the United States has finally voted for the first time since 1969 -- at least we have an agreement with the leaders of the Congress -- to balance our budget. And that will permit us the freedom and the economic stability, I think, to be a better partner with our neighbors in a whole range of other areas. But the most important thing is for you to prove that your economy will work. And I think the plan we're following will enable you to do that.

Paul.

Q Mr. President, **Central American** leaders before this meeting were saying the new U.S. **immigration** laws are causing major economic and political headaches. A State Department official was quoted today as saying that, given the situation in Congress, all you have been able to offer them today was "words and promises and hot air." Did that turn out to be true, and what do you realistically expect to get from Congress on **immigration** between now and the date of September 30th, set out in the statement today?

And, for President Figueres, if you could, are the **Central American** leaders overreacting to the situation?

President Clinton: Well, first of all, let's describe what the situation is. There are a lot of **immigrants** living in the United States from the countries that are represented here today who came to the United States primarily because of upheaval caused in their countries during wars. Some of those **immigrants** are there legally, but not as legal **immigrants**. That is, there is a separate category of our

immigration law which says if you're, in effect, fleeing political disruption in your own country you can stay in our country, but you don't become a legal **immigrant** with the right to apply for citizenship after five years. But many of them have been there quite a long while. Some of them are not legal under that status, but they've been there quite a long while and they did come because of the political upheaval.

There are two real problems with just shipping all of them up and sending them home, aside from the practical problems of whether it can be done or not. One is that a lot of them have been in the United States so long that they have families there, they have children in school, they have lives that are intertwined with their communities. And it would be significantly disruptive and unfair to the families and the children.

The other is that a lot of -- such a dislocation would rob a lot of these countries of cash remittances that a lot of these folks are sending back home to their families which take the place of a lot of foreign aid or domestic economic activity in keeping the country going. And also, that level of influx would destabilize them.

So I think it's fair to say that everyone who studied this understands that the **Central America** countries -- a number of them are in a very special category when it comes to dealing with the **immigration** laws.

The **immigration** law that we passed was designed to help us stop illegal **immigration** at the border, in the workplace, and in the court system. And it will achieve that. But we have to implement it in a way that is humane and recognizes the special problems created here.

So what I have said is that, number one, for the **immigrants** that are there legally, but not as legal **immigrants** -- that is, they're in the category of people fleeing political problems at home -- the law says that I can only exempt 4,000 people from being sent back to their countries. I will not trigger that law until September, the end of September, during which time I will work with Congress to try to figure out how to implement it.

As to people who are generally not in **America** legally, there will be no mass deportations and no targeting of any citizens from any country. They will have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

And again, I will say, I'm not so sure, as whoever your anonymous source was, that the Congress will be unwilling to recognize the fact that these **Central American** countries are in a rather special category. After all, the United States government was heavily involved with a lot of these countries during the time of all this upheaval. And just as we were quite generous -- and we should have been -- in welcoming Vietnamese people to our shores after the termination of our involvement in Vietnam, where our country did not prevail, in these nations where democracy has prevailed and we want to work with them to succeed, it seems to me we ought to be sensitive to the disruptions that were caused during those tough years that we were involved in as a nation. So I'm not so sure we can't get some treatments.

But the law itself, I want to say, as I said in

Mexico, it's a good thing that we try to stop illegal **immigration** because if we don't, we won't be able to keep the American people in support of legal **immigration**. So we have to stop it, as much as we can. But we have to understand, these **Central American** countries are in a different category because of what they went through in the 1980s.

President Figueres: I feel that we have advanced a lot on this subject, which is certainly important to the **Central American** nations for many of the reasons that President Clinton has just mentioned. But on this issue of **immigration**, your question was, has there been an overreaction in **Central America**. I don't believe that there has been an overreaction and I believe that we have achieved substantial progress.

If I may, on that, I would like to call perhaps on President Armando Calderon Sol, because he is really the one that, in terms of **Central America**, with President Arnaldo Aleman led the conversation.

President Calderon Sol: I would just like to add that; for us, this new relationship that we have begun between **Central America** and the United States, at the time of President Clinton's visit is profoundly significant. It represents a recognition by the United States, a recognition of the contribution that our people make to their economy, a recognition of the human drama that our people are experiencing in the United States because of what happens here, because this was the theater of operations of the Cold War.

Here in **Central America**, to hear this from the President of the United States and to hear the profoundly humane position that he adopts when he looks at the people which have had so much pain, for us is very encouraging. And he has stated very clearly that there will not be mass deportations, that they will seek to work more flexibly with the new **immigration** law. But there is time from now until September for a joint initiative with the Congress and to awaken more awareness within the Congress concerning this issue which is so important for **Central America**.

Today is a very important day, a day of great hope for all **Central Americans** who, because of some of the tragic conditions of violence, had to leave to seek new shores, to find refuge in the United States.

President Figueres: One last question.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. The question first for President Figueres, don't you think there's very little scope in having the support of the U.S. government for a draft that would provide to expand the benefits of the Caribbean Basin Initiative when the countries of the region would like to have something more specific than that before the year 2005?

And, President Clinton, don't you think that mere support of goodwill for a draft is actually a very small guarantee for the **Central American** countries when there is a Congress which is actually against anything that has to do with free trade or unions or even the democrats, themselves?

President Figueres: With respect to trade I feel that we have made major progress. These countries have benefitted from the Caribbean Basin Initiative for a number of years now. And this program is the basis on which we have been

able to expand our exports from the entire region into traditional markets and also into new markets.

The program that the executive branch of the United States is submitting to the Congress differs from the situation of the past. It contains funds to be able to counteract the loss of tariff income, which would mean expanding the list of products and the exemptions for many of the products coming from this region.

Moreover, I think it is vitally important that we have agreed here to ask our ministers, the ministers who are involved in foreign trade, to task them with finding new ways, new creative ways to continue working together as a region with an eye to the year 2005, the date for which our continent plans to integrate. So the idea would be that we could advance even more in the field of trade before that date comes.

With respect to trade, we need to stress investment. I think this meeting, this summit meeting, in many ways, is a stamp of approval for the profound reforms that have been led by the Presidents of the area in the different countries. Today, the economies are much more open and much more competitive. They are true democracies, and, of course, this opens up our doors to greater flows of investment. And ultimately, this is the way for us to integrate better.

President Clinton: I'd like to try to respond to your question with two points. First of all, this is not a -- from our point of view -- a vague commitment. I think you should see this in three steps -- the question of how we might expand our trade between the United States and **Central** American countries.

Number one, I have presented a budget to the Congress which, if the Congress will go along, provides for the reduction of tariffs over the next five years on a lot of other goods which would increase trade with both **Central America** and the Caribbean. It is fully paid for in my budget. And therefore, I think we will have -- we have some chance of passing it, perhaps a good chance. And I certainly intend to fight hard for it. So there's that step.

Then the second step is that we have agreed to bring our trade and investment ministers together to identify what we do after that, what more can we do. Then the third step is adopting the free trade area of the **Americas** by 2005.

I know 2005 sounds like a long time away -- especially if you're very young, but it's not so very long. And if you think about what will then be a trading area of over a billion people, it is a stunning achievement if we can pull it off. So I am not excluding the possibility that we can do more than expand the Caribbean Basin Initiative, nor am I taking for granted that it will be done, but that is the three step process I see.

Now, the larger point you made is that the Congress of the United States is opposed to free trade. That may not be true. There are strong opponents of expanded trade in the Congress, but there are also very strong supporters. Some people are just against trade because they think it gives the United States a bad deal. I think the evidence is squarely against them. The more we open our markets, the better our economy does.

And we have wages going up for the first time in 20 years, and last year, more than half the new jobs, for the first time in many years, coming into our economy were above average wage. So trade is good for us, not bad.

Secondly, we can get a lot of people in my party --you mentioned my party specifically -- we can get a lot of people in my party to vote for a fast track authority if our trading partners will give serious attention to the question of making sure that all people in our country get to participate in the benefits of expanded trade and wealth. That's why I have advocated that we set up a labor forum to go with the business forum that will meet as we work toward a free trade area of the **Americas**. The more Americans believe that all ordinary working people in other countries will benefit from expanded trade, the more likely we are to find support for it in the Congress.

Yes, ma'am.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. I have a question for you and one question for the Presidents of **Central America**. Regionally, **Central America** was looking for Nafta parity, and then later they changed things, that they preferred to have a free trade agreement. Given the sentiments in Congress, what do you personally believe is the best venue, the most effective to get that free trade agreement? And also, when do you expect to have a fast track authority with Congress?

And also, for the Presidents of **Central America** -- President Figueres or any of the other Presidents that you are going to seek an amnesty with regard to **immigration**. I don't know if you asked for that amnesty of President Clinton, and if so, what was his response?

President Clinton: Let me answer your question quite succinctly. I think the best course is for me first to try to pass my budget which contains an expansion of the Caribbean Basin Initiative; and second, to try to pass fast track authority in the Congress this year, which I fully intend to do my best to do. We're going to work very hard on that. And at the same time, then, to consult with leaders of the Congress in both parties who favor this approach about what they believe the best way to proceed is, because we're all going to have to work together on this.

While we're consulting with Congress, there will be this meeting of our ministers, all of our ministers, identifying what they think the next step should be to continue to expand trade. So I think that our road map is quite clear, and that is the one I intend to pursue.

President Figueres: With respect to the question of **immigration**, it has already been covered by Armando Calderon Sol, but I would like to go back to your question with respect -- that, first, **Central America** wanted parity and then later on began to look for other ways to acquire more investment and how do we think is the best. Don Alvaro Arzu discussed this issue extensively this morning in the forum, and I would like to invite him to answer your question.

President Arzu: Thank you. What we have stressed and tried to demonstrate is that the region of **Central America** is prepared, is ready. It's no longer time for us to be reaching

out our hands to ask for support, although we are grateful for the support we have received. But instead, we have a desire for a more longstanding, a more permanent relationship of partnership, and more than that, we want a free trade agreement. This is our aspiration.

We need to follow certain parameters, which are requirements, with Congress for example; also with public opinion, the press, -- in communication. But what we mostly want to tell the American union is that we are ready. In **Central America** we are ready to compete. We are ready to receive investment. We are ready to generate production. And we are ready to diversify the results and the profits that we attract among the large mass of impoverished people in our region in order to begin shrinking the very profound socioeconomic gap that we still have. So we want to go beyond that and I think we can do it.

Thank you.

President Figueres: Thank you. This concludes the press conference.

End

2:03 P.M. (L)



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White House Press Release

Press Conference With President Clinton And The Caribbean Leaders

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary
(Bridgetown, Barbados)

For Immediate Release

May 10, 1997

Press Conference With
President Clinton And The Caribbean Leaders

Prime Minister's Residence
Barbados

1:33 P.M. (L)

Prime Minister Arthur: Mr. Chairman, President of the United States of **America**, fellow Caribbean heads of state and government, Secretary General of Caricom, distinguished delegates, members of the press: First, I should like to say that my wife and I are pleased that you could find it possible to come to share the residence with us. It is my pleasure to inform you that the just concluded Caribbean-United States Summit has been a great success.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles is tangible expression of the new partnership between the Caribbean states and the government and the people of the United States of **America**. Equally important is a plan of action which gives concrete expression to the commitment of the Caribbean states and the United States of **America** to cooperate on trade and development, finance and the environment, as well as on justice and security.

The summit has afforded our region the opportunity to present as one its perspectives on several concerns which we share with the United States of **America**. History and shared traditions already unite us. As technology and globalization bring us closer together, it is inevitable that meetings of this type will be necessary to share perspectives, coordinate actions and to find solutions to common problems.

On this historic occasion, we have been able to take a detailed review and analysis of critical aspects of the relationship between

the Caribbean nations and the United States of **America**. We have also been able to lay the foundations for future cooperation and consultation.

This summit is but the first step in a process of reaffirming and redefining a partnership between our two societies. We have come a long way in a short time from our first meeting at Sam Lord's Castle through the meeting of the working groups and subcommittee in Tobago and St. Lucia, to a just concluded summit at Sherburne and here at Ilaro Court.

Through these discussions, Mr. President, your Special Envoy, Mr. Richard Clark, has been a valuable and critical advocate in advancing our discussions. (Applause.) The need for an accessible contact between us cannot be overstated. It is my hope that any arrangement of this type would not end with the summit activities, but will continue to allow future consultations between the governments of the Caribbean and United States to prosper.

In the preparatory stages for the summit, the states of the Caribbean have been ably represented by the Foreign Minister Ralph Maraj of Trinidad and Tobago -- (applause) -- Foreign Minister, Mr. Rohee of Guyana -- (applause) -- Attorney General David Simmons of Barbados -- (applause) -- and Ambassador Richard Bernal of Jamaica. (Applause.) I wish to place on

record as well our appreciation for the magnificent contribution of the Secretary General of Caricom and his staff and the advisors. (Applause.)

Barbados is proud and honored to host this summit, the first of its kind between the Caribbean states and the government of the United States of **America**. I am confident that history will recall this summit as having forged a new and a lasting bond between the people of our nations and those of the United States of **America**. It is in this spirit, therefore, that I now have the greatest pleasure in introducing the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Right Honorable P.J. Patterson, Chairman of the Conference of Heads of Governments of the Caribbean Community to address you. I thank you.

Prime Minister Patterson: President of the United States of **America**, Haiti, Suriname and Guyana, colleague heads of government, ladies and gentlemen: In the closest of families, difficulties are bound to arise from time to time in their relationships. For those relationships to endure, it is essential that they must have the capacity from time to time to meet within the bosom of the family and to sort out whatever difficulties may have arisen.

Today is one such occasion. And as a result of the family meeting we have had among all the nations that are a part of the Caribbean, including the United States, we have agreed to chart a course that will enable us to move forward and together in the days ahead.

We have discussed matters relating to democracy, development and security, recognizing the considerable interlinkages which necessarily exist between all these important subjects.

Today we have signed the Bridgetown Declaration and a plan of action which charts a course for progress and for unity and for integrated development within our region. We were very pleased at the firm and unequivocal commitment given by the President of the United State and his administration at the

priority which is to be attached to the question of Nafta parity. And we are pleased at the prospect of that legislation being presented to the consideration of the Congress of the United States and will do everything in our power to make representations that will ensure its favorable consideration and early passage.

Not surprisingly, we spent some time on the issue of bananas. And I have the authority of the Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Dr. Vaughn Lewis, to quote something he said to us today: "For many of our countries, bananas is to us what cars are to Detroit."

Here in Bridgetown, we have reaffirmed our resolve to fight crime, violence, corruption, trafficking in drugs and illegal weapons by a seamless alliance between the United States of **America** and the sovereign nations of the Caribbean. We cannot allow the drug cartels and international criminal organizations operating in or across our borders to threaten our democratic institutions to pervert our system of justice and destroy the health and well-being of our citizens, young or old.

We have also raised the need if we are to be engaged in partnership for there to be a process of collective evaluation and decision-making, rather than unilateral assessments. And we have established some machinery that will enable us to facilitate this.

We are committed to the notion of a trans-Caribbean community which would embrace all the countries washed by the Caribbean Sea. This we see as a major plank in the new

partnership which today's summit is intended to forge between the sovereign nations and the United States. We see here in Bridgetown the opening of a new chapter, the start of a meaningful dialogue. It was good for us to be here and, together, we intend to do it the Caribbean way. (Applause.)

President Clinton: Good afternoon. Prime Minister Arthur, Prime Minister Patterson, fellow Caribbean leaders. Let me begin by thanking our Barbadian hosts for their hospitality and all the leaders for their hard work in making this summit a success.

I'm honored to be here with the Secretary of State and several members of my Cabinet, as well as a distinguished delegation, interested in the Caribbeans, -- from the Congress, Congresswoman Maxine Waters, the Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, and Congressman Carlos Romero Barcello, the delegate from Puerto Rico, and Governor Roy Schneider from the Virgin Islands.

The Partnership for Prosperity and Security in the Caribbean that we signed today is a broad and ambitious plan of action. It can make a real difference for our people's lives and livelihoods, promoting open and fair trade, protecting the environment, strengthening education, spreading telecommunications, extending loans to small businesses and combatting international crime and drug-trafficking.

Just as important as the commitments we've made is our determination to see them through with an ongoing intensified process of Caribbean cooperation. The follow-up structures we've put in place, including an annual meeting among our foreign ministers and high-level working groups on justice and security,

and on development, finance and the environment will help us to turn our action plan into actions.

I want to highlight two areas where our cooperation is especially important: helping our people to thrive in the global economy, and fighting crime and drugs. The move toward open and competitive trade around the world and in our hemisphere is bringing new opportunities for people to prosper. But rapid change is disruptive, as well, as people struggle to acquire new skills and nations strive to compete. The United States is working to ensure that the transition to free trade in our hemisphere is fair to our Caribbean partners.

When I return to Washington I will submit a Caribbean Basin Trade Enhancement act to Congress. When passed, this legislation will increase trade for all the Caribbean nations and help them to prepare to take part in a free trade area of the **Americas**.

We're also committed to help the Caribbean nations diversify their economies and become more competitive. I discussed with my fellow leaders their concern for the Caribbean banana industry. In pursuing and winning our case at the World Trade Organization, our target was a discriminatory European system, not the Caribbean nations. I made it clear that as we work toward a solution with our European partners, we will continue to support duty-free access for Caribbean bananas in the European market and we will seek ways to promote diversification of the Caribbean economies.

When economies are strong they can better resist the pressures of organized crime -- the drug pushers, the gun runners, the alien smugglers, the criminal gangs. But to truly conquer them we must work together. That's why I'm pleased we've been able to conclude agreements for maritime law enforcement cooperation with most countries in the region, including most recently Jamaica and Barbados.

Today, the United States committed to help our Caribbean partners strengthen their fight against drug-trafficking, providing aircraft and Coast Guard cutters to patrol the sky and the sea. We will participate in international negotiations to outlaw and prevent traffic in illegal arms, and we will help to establish a Caribbean institute to train investigators and prosecutors to combat money-laundering, so that criminals will no longer be able to scrub the fingerprints off their profits.

Working together, we can build a future of prosperity and security for our people. But the scope is broad and a commitment is deep as the waters that link our shores. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Q Mr. President, I wonder, first of all, if you could comment on the tone of your discussions and your reception here today, given the admitted lack of U.S. attention to the region in the past. And specifically, given the political baggage that accompanies U.S. policy toward Cuba, were the Caribbean leaders able to offer you any constructive suggestions on how you could shift your handling of Havana more from the negative to the positive? And I'd also like to extend that question to any Caribbean leader who would like to take it.

President Clinton: Well, first of all, we did not

discuss Cuba. We talked about what those who are represented here could do together.

And, secondly, I believe that I have demonstrated my good faith and the good faith of this administration toward the Caribbean in many ways. We have already been together in Washington, right before our operation to restore democracy in Haiti. Most of us were gathered in Haiti when we celebrated that restoration. And I think it is well-known that at the time we fought for and succeeded in passing Nafta in Congress, I made a strong plea that we make sure that the Caribbean nations not be discriminated against.

I think we have now found a formula that will permit us to do that that I believe has a good chance of passing in the Congress, and it is included in my budget. And so I feel quite good about the legislation I'm going to introduce and I'm going to work hard to pass it and to establish a closer, more ongoing relations with all these nations.

Do you want one of them to reply?

Prime Minister Patterson: Our working sessions included a business session this morning, which we have just concluded, and a working lunch, to which we will now embark. There are a number of matters that could not be covered in the business session, and the opportunity of a working lunch among the heads will afford us an opportunity of discussing those subjects in the intimacy of that setting.

The views of the Caribbean leaders are well-known insofar as Cuba is concerned. Cuba is a Caribbean territory. We would like to see steps taken that would integrate Cuba fully not only in the Caribbean family, but into the hemispheric family of nations. And we would certainly want to use the opportunity to indicate to the President over lunch the steps we think would be possible to secure that objective.

Prime Minister Arthur: If I may, quickly. It should not escape your attention that this is the first ever summit between the government of the United States of **America** and the Caribbean that has ever been held on Caribbean soil. And that, in and of itself, should represent the sense of partnership that we are trying to build on matters of crucial importance to the two sets of societies.

The spirit has not only been parlayed in the diplomatic sense of the word, but has been constructive to the extent that it has sought to address matters of immediate consequence, as well as to lay a framework for the long-term development of the relationships between the two sets of societies.

We have approached this summit with a sense of pragmatic optimism. We do not believe that all of the concerns between our two sets of societies will be dealt with in one swoop. But we feel that the putting in place of a partnership and a mechanism for the follow-up of actions will allow us to be able to redress some of the imbalances in the relationships of the past and chart new directions for the future.

Q In the just signed document, Partner for Prosperity, the Chief of States and government at the summit pledged to give priority consideration to technologies such as

the Internet. President Clinton, if asked by President Preval, will your administration tangibly support a plan to link all public schools in Haiti to the Internet by the year 2004 on the 200-year anniversary of Haiti's independence?

President Clinton: Well, this is the first I have heard about the specific proposal, so I hate to answer a question yes when I don't know whether I can do it or not. But let me say, you may know that we are attempting to link all of our classrooms and libraries to the Internet in the United States by the year 2000, and then we want to move aggressively to try to establish those kinds of interconnections with our allies elsewhere. And I believe that with Haiti struggling to both preserve democracy and overcome economic adversity, the nation and the children would benefit immensely if that could be done.

So I would certainly be willing to try to help. If I know I can do it, I will tell you yes, I can do it. But I haven't had time to be briefed on it. But I am very open to the suggestion; trying to help.

Q Thank you very much, Prime Minister Arthur. I wonder if all of you would be interested in reacting to the open letter from Oscar Arias that was written to President Clinton while he was in Costa Rica, appealing to him not to lift the U.S. arms embargo to sell sophisticated war planes to countries in Latin **America** which is on the agenda right now.

And, President Clinton, I wonder if you've made up your mind whether or not you're going to sell F-16s and other sophisticated war planes and hardware to these countries, at a time when he says -- former President Arias -- that they need their money for more productive purposes as opposed to weaponry? And with the indulgence of your host, I wonder if I could ask you a parochial question. Kenneth Starr of the Whitewater Independent Counsel at this hour is scheduled to be delivering a speech in which he says the White House is an impediment to his investigation, and I wonder if you have any reaction to his comment. Thank you.

President Clinton: I don't object to the Prime Ministers commenting on -- is this on? Now can you hear? I'll just speak up. I don't object to the Prime Ministers commenting on the arms decision, but on that I can tell you that no decision has been made yet.

The United States will not knowingly do anything that will spark a new arms race or divert funds from defense to -- from nondefense to defense areas in Latin **America**. The real question is whether or not the armies in question where the militaries have discussed this with our country are going to upgrade their militaries anyway, and whether it would be better

in fending off future conflicts and controlling defense spending for the United States, their hemispheric partner, to be the main supplier or someone else to be the main supplier.

We have no interest in doing this for purely economic reasons and we have no interest in promoting an arms race in Latin **America**. So the judgment that I'm trying to make -- and I haven't received a final recommendation on it from my administration top personnel -- is whether or not, given the facts in the various countries, it would be better for them and better for us and better for peace over the long run in Latin **America** for these airplanes essentially to be supplied by the

United States as opposed to someone else.

Now, on the other issue, I think that Mr. Starr must be -- I haven't seen the speech, but I think he must be referring to the 8th Circuit case, the facts of which have now been made public, and I don't have anything to add to what my counsel said. I think that it's obvious that for several years now we've been quite cooperative and we'll continue to be. The White House Counsel made his statement and I think it's clear and self-evident what he said and why.

Would you like to say anything about the arms issue -- either one of you?

Prime Minister Patterson: I would say very simply that I have participated in a gathering at the Conference Center a few weeks ago at which the proposal conveyed by former President Arias to President Clinton was fully discussed and endorsed. Jamaica as a government supports the appeal.

Q President Clinton, what guarantees can you give us here in the Caribbean that your new **immigration** laws won't lead to mass repatriation of illegal Caribbean **immigrants** in the United States?

And my second question is for Mr. Patterson. Can you tell us if you've got any assurance from the President that criminals in the United -- Caribbean criminals in the United States won't be sent back home without any information being conveyed to you, without any mechanisms being put in place to deal with them when they arrive here?

President Clinton: First of all, let me point out that I believe the United States has the most generous **immigration** policy of any large nation in the world. Last year over 900,000 legal **immigrants** were admitted to the United States.

In order to sustain a policy that generous, it also has to have some integrity. And looking at it, I suppose you could say we had two choices. We could just lower the legal **immigration** target dramatically to take account of all those who are entering illegally; or instead we could reward those who wait, play by the rules and obey the law, and try to strengthen our capacity to stop illegal **immigrants** from coming into the country, which we propose to do by stiffening our controls primarily at the border, in the work place and when people get into the criminal justice system.

Now, having said that, I can assure you, as I told the leaders of the **Central** American countries, no one nation or region will be targeted and there will be no mass deportations. We are increasing our capacity to deal with people we find in the workplace, at the borders, in the criminal justice system.

Finally -- Prime Minister Patterson and Prime Minister Arthur might want to comment on this -- I do not believe it is right for the United States to send people back to their native lands who have been in our criminal justice system without appropriate advance warning and notice. And I pledged to them

that I would set up such a system. It is not right for us to do it otherwise.

Would you like to say something?

Prime Minister Patterson: By recognizing the right of each state to determine its policies on deportation subject to international law, the plan of action to which we agreed set out a number of specific measures that should be put in place. The President has referred to one of them, the provision of adequate advance notice to designated authorities prior to the deportation of anyone.

We also think that adequate information should be provided regarding the persons to be deported, and, of course, it must be established by the person being deported is a national of the receiving state.

Let me say very frankly why the problem is so acute. We have found in several cases people being deported who have lived in the United States not only for all their adult life, but have gone there from the days of early childhood with their entire families, and they have no family connection back in the Caribbean and no social contact to the communities to which they are being returned. And we, therefore, think if it is not to fuel the criminal problem, it is a matter that we have to address within the ambit of the cooperation to which we have pledged ourselves.

Prime Minister Arthur: I wish to add, please, that on the matter of the possible effects of U.S. law on Caribbean **immigrants** was a matter that was frankly discussed at our summit today. We represented the concerns of our nationals and we have impressed on the President the need for any legislation to be applied in a manner that is not discriminatory, nor is unfair and nor that -- and you put at risk the security and prosperity of legal **immigrants** in the United States of **America**.

And I just want to add on the second matter that as regards the matter of deportees, Barbados has managed to work out a comprehensive framework with United States of **America** on all matters pertaining to the fight against drugs. And I'm pleased to say that I'm advised by my Attorney General that included in that comprehensive framework is a protocol establishing the rules that will be applied in the return of Barbadians to Barbados. And we regard this as a substantial advance. And I'm also pleased that our plan of action sets on a multilateral approach to dealing with this potentially -- issue.

Q You promised -- on every stop of this trip, including today, you have promised to try to soften the new **immigration** law and try to extend trade preferences. But you can't get any of that done without congressional approval and, in the case of bananas, without cooperation with the European Union. What happens to these relationships here in **Central America** and in Mexico if you can't deliver on your rhetoric?

President Clinton: Well, first of all, with regard to the **immigration** law, the only thing that I was attempting to change in the **immigration** law the congressional leadership has agreed to change. They've agreed to restore benefits to legal **immigrants**, which I thought was important.

We can under the existing law have the kind of protocols that Prime Minister discussed where we pledge not to violate the human rights of any particular group of people; we pledge not to target any particular group; we pledge not to engage in mass deportations. That is not required under our law, nor was it contemplated.

To say that a country should and must have the capacity to enforce its **immigration** law is not the same thing as saying that there's going to be some huge roundup here. We just want to be able to enforce the law when we come in contact with people who have plainly violated it. So I don't agree that we need congressional cooperation there, although I believe it's consistent with what Congress intended when they passed the law.

Now, on this trade issue and on the question of getting fast track authority from Congress generally, I think that everyone understands, and I made it clear in our meetings that all I could do was ask the Congress for its support, that there was opposition in both parties to expanded trade, but there was strong support in both parties to expanded trade. We've been through these arguments before in the last few years, but I would say the last time we had the debate back in '93, the American economy was not in nearly the shape it's in now, and the Congress did the right thing for the future of **America** and the future of the **Americas**, and I believe it will be inclined to do so again.

Q My question is directed to President Clinton. To fight the high cost of living, the government of Haiti has put in place a program of agrarian reform to provide Haitian farmers with technical means and rural credit to increase their capacity of production. I would like to know if the United States is ready to help in realizing this agrarian reform in Haiti, because it is important for agriculture and for the people to find something to eat. That's number one.

But number two, I would like to mention that in Haiti, there is a sense of profound gratitude towards you, personally, President Clinton, and towards the Usa for the role played in the restoration of constitutional order in Haiti after the military coup d'etat, that overthrew the first democratically-elected President of Haiti, Jean Bertrand Aristide. And following that, there were a lot of promises that gave hope to the Haitian people. But since then except for some very limited contributions, there is a sense that the American administration, under your leadership, has not done enough to help meet the expectations and the most crucial needs of the Haitian people. My question is, what are the next steps that the United States intends to take to show that democracy can bring prosperity as promised in Haiti?

President Clinton: Well, first of all, that is a complicated question because it requires significant actions on behalf of the Haitian people, as well as those around the world who wish to support Haiti.

I am going to have a meeting with President Preval later this afternoon, after lunch, and we are going to discuss that, and I will have some other examples of specific things the United States intends to do. But I can tell you that I believe that we should be involved over the long run in trying to help to restore the economy and to restore the environment of Haiti -- without which the economy cannot be sustained -- and to maintain the integrity of the democracy. So we will be working hard on all those issues within the limits of our ability to do it. We will do as much as we can. It's very important to me.

Q I know you answered Wolf's question, but you didn't go very far, and Ken Starr really came out quite strongly today. I wonder if you have begun to take this a little bit personally. And also today he said very strongly that he

believes that White House lawyers are paid by the federal government, they represent the federal government and, as such, they are duty bound to disclose relevant information to a federal grand jury. As President, do you agree with that? And, again, as I asked before, do you feel that this has become a little personal?

President Clinton: Well, not on my part. Perhaps on -- you know, you said he's the one that came out strongly. I'm just over here doing my job in the Caribbean. (Laughter and applause.)

I can only say what I have said before. Chuck Ruff, whom I believe has a reputation as a lawyer of impeccable integrity and who is an expert in these kinds of processes, came to me and said that the effect of the decision would be not confined to the President, the First Lady, the Chief of Staff at

the White House -- any group of people; that the position that the Special Counsel was arguing for would, in effect, abolish the lawyer-client privilege between a federal government lawyer and a federal employee at any level under any circumstances.

Now, the law firms in **America** might be ecstatic about that because it would certainly make a lot more private business for lawyers. But he came to me and said, I cannot tell you how emphatically I believe that this case must be appealed. He said, I'm your lawyer, I know you haven't done anything wrong, I know you've made all the evidence available to them. This is a major constitutional question and, Mr. President, you do not have the right to go along with saying that every federal employee in **America** should lose the attorney-client privilege under these circumstances if the federal employee has a lawyer in the federal government.

Now, that's what he said to me. I cannot enlighten you any more. If you want to know any more about it, you've got to ask him.

Moderator: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Prime Minister Patterson. Thank you, Prime Minister Arthur.

Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes our press conference.

End

2:13 P.M. (L)



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Date: 05/01/97 Time: 17:29

bTranscript of White House Briefing on Mexico (3 of 4)

To: National Desk

Contact: White House Press Office, 202-456-2100

WASHINGTON, May 1 /U.S. Newswire/ -- Following is a transcript of a White House press briefing by National Security Advisor Samuel Berger, Secretary of Treasury Bob Rubin, President's Special Envoy to the Americas Mack McLarty and Director of the Office of Drug Control Policy, Gen. Barry McCaffrey (3 of 4):

Q Sandy, why has it taken until the fifth year of his presidency for the President to go to Mexico, our biggest -- you know, our neighbor to the south and visit these other areas? And, secondly, what agreements do you expect? General McCaffrey touched on some drug things. What agreements do you expect to come out of this trip? Could you outline them?

MR. BERGER: Well, first of all, on the first question, I think the President wishes that he could have gone earlier, but we certainly have had, as Mack has suggested, a very active policy with respect to Latin America. During the first term, the President has met with most of these leaders. He convened the first ever Summit of the Americas in Miami, and there has been an active engagement and sort of a laying of a foundation in the first term, but I think his feeling now is this is the moment where we have to move to really consolidate that.

We'll have to wait and see in terms of agreements. I would hope that, coming out of the binational commission and in Mexico there will be progress made in the area of narcotics, in the area of immigration, in the area of environment, education, and across the board. Each of these subgroups, hopefully will move the ball forward in terms of a very, very broad relationship. And I'm not sure that any one of these agreements, in and of themselves, will be dramatic. But I think when you accumulate the steady progress that's being made on all of these fronts, it will be a solid record.

Q You mentioned the binational commission meeting. One member of President Zedillo's Cabinet was arrested in February and found to be living under the same roof as one of Mexico's worst drug lords. Another member of his Cabinet, the attorney general, resigned and now he claims that President Zedillo knew about this corruption. When you sit across the table from these people, what assurance can you have that they can be trusted to cooperate with the United States on matters like drug enforcement?

MR. BERGER: I think -- let me answer first, and then if Mack or Barry want to add anything -- that you judge President Zedillo by his actions. I mean, this is a President who has said that the number one national security threat to his country is drugs. And when he found the general that you referred to, was allegedly engaged with drug-trafficking, he arrested him immediately, even though that came a week or so before our certification debate; it may have been convenient for that not to happen so quickly. He moved swiftly when he had the information to arrest this gentleman and he's now in prison.

I think we have a high level of confidence in the Zedillo government in terms of what they've done on the economic front, what they're seeking to do on the narcotics front, and what they're doing on the political front, which is moving that country towards a multi-party democracy from what has been a one-party system.

Q If I could follow up with a specific on that, Raul Salinas has

been in jail for something like two years now and the United States has repeatedly tried to get access to him to talk to him about some matters involving United States violations in a number of money-laundering cases. How can you talk about cooperation when federal prosecutors can't even get in to talk to a key figure who had tried to intervene?

MR. BERGER: I don't know -- I'll ask Barry or someone else to comment on the Salinas case in particular, but you have to look at cooperation. Is there corruption in the Mexican system? I think that President Zedillo would be the first to acknowledge that there is. But when you look at what he is seeking to do just today or yesterday announced -- and Barry can comment on this more -- the dismantling of their drug police, an effort to build an entirely new, vetted, more professional drug police. Twelve hundred members of the police last year were fired for alleged corruption. I think this is a government that understands the problem, understands the threat. And we have to deal with this cooperatively. We --

Q Are you satisfied with the level of cooperation they're giving you?

MR. BERGER: I think there is an unprecedented level of cooperation, and we want to see more. But let me ask Barry to comment on this.

GENERAL MCCAFFREY: To be direct, it seems to me you have to put it in context -- it's not whether there's violence and corruption --there is, massive amounts. And I might add -- on both sides of the border. There isn't symmetry to this argument, but I'm always concerned a bit about creative hypocrisy because it's \$49 billion of U.S. money on drugs that is acting as an engine drawing 60 percent of our own cocaine, marijuana, heroine coming through Mexico or adjoining Pacific or Caribbean waters.

Now, having said that, we've watched Mexican police lose literally hundreds of officers, murdered in the line of duty. They've had 25 major assassinations. There is no question that their democratic institutions are under attack from within. It is our own view that Madrazo, Cervantes, the President are trying to deal with this problem, and that it seems to us that cooperating not only with the judicial systems and the armed forces, but also with these binational task forces that we're putting together is the best way to protect both people.

Q What about access to drug traffickers like Salinas for U.S. prosecutors?

GENERAL MCCAFFREY: Well, we've had -- these are all attorney general to attorney general matters. They're not political judgments, but case by case. Extradition works that way. There's a packet with a person's name on it, and it either meets or doesn't meet the legal requirements of the other country. There has been cooperation on sharing of evidence and intelligence, training. We are indeed in contact with these people.

And I -- just to reiterate the point about Guitierrez Rebollo who is apparently a thug working for one criminal gang against other criminal gangs, the INCD director. The Mexicans picked up on this, arrested him and put him in the slammer 62 days after they put him in office. This was a bigger psychological blow to Mexican confidence than probably anything that's happened to them in years. But they did face up to it. They're trying to roll up his gang right now. And we're watching that, trying to support their own efforts. They just arrested another general who had offered a bribe, alleged, of a \$1 million a week to not do the guy's job.

So, this is a very serious challenge, but we think they're struggling for their own democratic institutions.

Q I would like to ask you about the immigration problem. In the past, every time an American President has gone to Mexico and immigration has been on the agenda -- always very low -- the Mexican President, whoever is in power at the time, has always said, that's your problem to the U.S. President. How cooperative are they on the question of illegal immigration?

MR. BERGER: Well, we are -- there's a great deal of cooperation that is taking place. I wish Doris Meissner were here to go into more detail with you, but there is a strong cooperative relationship on working together to stop illegal immigration. And there will be specific discussion while we are in Mexico about ways to make that stronger.

We have new legislation, as you know -- excuse us -- new tools to deal with illegal immigration, some aspects of that law have created some concerns in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, and we'll try to deal with those. But I think the cooperation with the Mexican government has been strong in this area.

Q Sandy, do you think that the political timing of this in Mexico right now, in terms of the coming election, could be send the wrong message to the Mexican people, seeing the President of the United States meeting with President Zedillo and supporting all his economic and political ideas?

MR. BERGER: Well, we're going to Mexico because of the extraordinarily important relationship that the four of us have been talking about. This meeting was originally scheduled for earlier and was postponed a bit because of the President's injury. But we are going to Mexico to meet with the Mexican government to talk about ways in which we can cooperate together. We're not going to become engaged in internal Mexican political debates or discussions. There is an election going on for the legislature in July. But if we didn't go anywhere when there was a pending election, we wouldn't go anywhere.

(more, more)

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APNP-05-01-97 1742EDT

Date: 05/01/97 Time: 17:21

bTranscript of White House Briefing on Mexico (1 of 4)

To: National Desk

Contact: White House Press Office, 202-456-2100

WASHINGTON, May 1 /U.S. Newswire/ -- Following is a transcript of a White House press briefing by National Security Advisor Samuel Berger, Secretary of Treasury Bob Rubin, President's Special Envoy to the Americas Mack McLarty and Director of the Office of Drug Control Policy, Gen. Barry McCaffrey (1 of 4):

The Briefing Room

2:42 P.M. EDT

MR. MCCURRY: I've been waiting the arrival of Sandy Berger, the President's National Security Advisor; Robert Rubin, the Secretary of the Treasury; General Barry McCaffrey who is the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy; and Mack McLarty, the President's Special Envoy for the Americas. They're here to tell you more about the trip. Please do not pester the Secretary of the Treasury with budget questions; he will not tell you anything more than I have told you just now, so it would be useless to spend any time in the briefing on that subject.

And I'm happy to turn it over to you.

Q Will he tell us what the FBI told him about the Chinese connection?

MR. MCCURRY: I did that one for Sandy's behalf yesterday, so don't ask him about that either.

MR. BERGER: In response to your overwhelming questions about the trip -- (laughter) -- let us now turn to the upcoming trip to Latin America. This is a trip beginning on Monday. It is the first of three trips the President will make to Latin America over the next year. This trip will involve Mexico, Costa Rica where he will meet with all of the Central American Presidents, and the Caribbean, where he will meet with the Caribbean leaders. This is part of a very intensive effort that the President really launched in Miami back in 1994 and is now carrying forward with great intensity I think into the second term.

This is a moment of great possibility in the Americas, because the Americas are coming together around values that we share. And it is really -- we've focused an enormous amount of thought and attention on what's happened in Central Europe over the last decade. But what has happened in our own hemisphere over the same period is equally dramatic.

Now, we have every nation a democracy, whereas 10 years ago we were dealing in many cases with authoritarian dictatorships. We had civil wars, certainly through Central America; we now have governments, largely democratically elected, focusing on economic development and sustainable projects in the environment and other things for their people.

This region and its future is extraordinarily important to the United States. Because it is our neighbor, because it is an area where there is now a convergence of values and interests, we have a tremendous opportunity over the next several years for the United States. It is a opportunity for political alignment as well as economic growth.

The scenario that is now very rapidly growing, very rapidly integrating, but it will -- it will continue to integrate. It will not necessarily integrate with the United States unless we are proactive in that respect. I would point out, for example, that the Mercosur countries in South America, for the first time in 1996

sold more to -- purchased more from the EU than the United States. So we have to be aggressive in cultivating the trends in our own hemisphere that are extraordinarily compatible with our interests.

Let me very quickly walk through each stop, and then ask Mack McLarty to put this in a little broader context in terms of the hemisphere.

The U.S.-Mexican relationship I think arguably is the deepest and broadest of any relationship that the United States has. We have a 2,000-mile border; whether it is jobs or growth or environment or drugs or migration we are -- our destinies, our fates, our well-being is inextricably intertwined. By the same token, the problems that we have defy unilateral solutions. All of the problems that I've talked about really what happens there matters to us, what happens here matters to them.

Now, the President will be arriving in Mexico and after meeting with President Zedillo will be joining a meeting of the binational commission. This is a structure set up several years ago, chaired by the Secretary of State on our side; chaired by the Foreign Minister on the Mexican side. And there will be quite a collection of Cabinet officials from the United States government and from the Mexican government who will have been meeting since Monday in a series of working groups dealing with education, dealing with the environment, dealing with drugs, dealing with migration. And as in the past, this is a group that meets periodically and, as in the past, has moved our cooperation forward, and we hope that that will happen at this next meeting.

The two Presidents will join that meeting and will listen to and receive the reports from General McCaffrey and from Secretary Albright and others on the various areas that I've discussed and what has been accomplished in those areas. The President will have a press conference and talk about the range of issues involved in our relationship.

Second day in Mexico will be one in which he goes off to a village and will be -- the major event of that day will be a speech that he gives to the Mexican people, and then a trip out of Mexico City, where he will be in a more informal setting in a village outside of Mexico City.

We then go on to Costa Rica where all of the heads of Central America will be gathered. Again, I would urge you to pause for a moment and think about -- if I was standing here 10 years ago talking about Central America, I would have been talking about the war in Nicaragua, the war in El Salvador, the war in Guatemala, I would have been talking about military regimes that were dominant and sometimes repressive. And in each of these places, we now have democratically-elected civilian regimes that are moving to an entirely new agenda, and they want to get on with the future.

And this is what the summit meeting that will take place in Costa Rica will talk about. They'll take about trade and immigration and environmental issues. And the second day, the President will go out and visit an environmental area in Costa Rica, which has been one of the leaders in developing its parks and developing a program of sustainable environment, which was a regional initiative that was launched in connection with Miami, if you recall, back in 1994.

And then the final stop is in Barbados where, for the first time ever, an American President will have a summit meeting with all of the democratic leaders of the Caribbean nations. This has never happened before. And it's really a statement by this President that we are a Caribbean nation and that we want the new kind of partnership with -- it doesn't seem that way in Washington, I know,

but if you go a little farther south -- and that we want a different kind of partnership with the Caribbean than has taken place before. And there will be a discussion among them of issues where we can intensify our cooperation on law enforcement and security, on trade and development, and on a range of other issues.

And then the President, I believe, will stay on for a few days, and back on Monday. We will come back on Saturday.

But if you look at this in its larger terms, it's part of a larger initiative building on the Summit of the Americas of '94 to take advantage of the extraordinary developments that are taking place in our own hemisphere for the benefit of the American people.

Now, let's just go -- why don't we go through the presentations and then we'll come back.

(more, more)

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White House Press Release

Press Briefing By Mike Mccurry, Commissioner Of Immigration And Naturalization Doris Meissner, Deputy National Security Advisor Jim Steinberg, Senior Director Of The National Economic Council For International Economic Policy Lael Braine...

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary
(San Jose, Costa Rica)

For Immediate Release

May 8, 1997

Press Briefing By
Mike Mccurry,
Commissioner Of **Immigration** And Naturalization
Doris Meissner,
Deputy National Security Advisor Jim Steinberg,
Senior Director Of The National Economic Council
For International Economic Policy Lael Brainerd
And Geoff Pyatt

Camino Real Hotel
San Jose, Costa Rica

3:12 P.M. (L)

Mr. Mccurry: Good afternoon.

Q What's so good about it?

Mr. Mccurry: We're having a great day, a very exciting day, filled with lots of exciting words, lots of paper and the prospects of an early evening for members of the press. And I didn't see many of you requesting autographs, along with your counterparts at the end of the press conference. Maybe that's a feature we should institute at news conferences in the future.

I've asked Jim Steinberg, Deputy National Security Advisor, to give you a little overview, a sense of flavor of some of the discussions today. A lot of you have questions specifically about **immigration**, about some of our consultations with Congress on the effect of the 1996 **immigration** law, so I also am pleased to have Commissioner **Doris Meissner** here from the

so I also am pleased to have Commissioner **Doris Meissner** here from the **Immigration** and Naturalization Service. Lael Brainerd is Senior Director at the National Economic Council for International Economic Policy -- is here and put a lot of work into putting together the communique that was issued today. And Geoff Pyatt is here, too, and everyone here can probably address any questions you have about -- remaining on some of the paper we put out.

I've got some domestic things at the end that I'll tell you about, too. And we'll do this as quickly as we can.

Mr. Steinberg.

Mr. Steinberg: Thank you, Mr. McCurry. As we are all that stands between you and the Costa Rican sunshine, I'll make this brief and try to answer your questions.

Let me say a couple of words about the general tenor of the discussions at the summit meeting today and some of the key conclusions that they reached. I think the thing that was most striking to all the participants was that there really is a sense of a new kind of relationship developing between Central Americans and the United States. They want to talk about a new era and a new language of discourse between the United States and

these countries. There's a sense that because we now have a region that are all democracies, that with the Guatemalan peace, that the region is peaceful and that the commitment to economic reform means that we can have a relationship that has common values and can talk about common challenges.

There has been, obviously, a concern among leaders in the region that with the end of the Cold War that there would be somehow a lessening of attention to them, just at the very time when they are succeeding and doing all the things that we had hoped very much would happen for the region. And I think what you could hear from President Figueres's comments in the press conference today, which were very much reflected in the discussions, was a sense that the President's presence here and the kinds of approaches that we are taking, in his words, represent insight and thoughtfulness that really gave them a sense of optimism and a sense of confidence that we could build this new kind of relationship.

I think there were two elements to point to in the discussions that really reflect that. First, in terms of how we are going to relate to each other, there is a set of agreements that develop a much more structured and intensified dialogue between the United States and Central America. We have the annual meetings that Secretary Albright will be having with her foreign minister counterparts, the joint investment committee which is going to be dealing with the trade and economic issues. We have Attorney General Reno's meetings; Commissioner **Meissner** is meeting with her colleagues. And I think for those of you who have been with us and saw the evolution of the Binational Committee process in Mexico, you can see that as you get more similarities between these countries and more shared sets of interests, you can have a much richer and broad-ranging dialogue.

The President, for example, pointed extensively and they talked quite a bit during the meeting about education as another area where they can cooperate together. So I think that it is this sense that with peace and democracy in the region, that we can have a much more structured dialogue that gives the countries a sense that their concerns are not going to be neglected and that we do have a shared agenda.

In the specifics, I think that they focused their discussions on three topics. The first was on law enforcement and regional security. But it was interesting in the discussions that there was a great deal of discussion about the significance of democracy to these countries. They talked a lot the development of civil society. They talked a lot about the need to develop independent police forces, to separate the police and the military, and really a very profound understanding about sort of the structural changes that democracy brings. And it was something that interested a lot of them to talk about those shared experiences.

On the specifics, they obviously agreed on the importance to deal with creating stability both in a regional security sense and also in terms of crime and corruption. The President indicated his intention to go forward with the international law enforcement academy in the region, expanded training for law enforcement personnel. They had a discussion, as you heard, about extradition and Attorney General Reno's indications that she is going to follow up with her colleagues in that area.

They also had, as you heard, an extensive discussion of the economic issues. I think one of the most interesting moments in the discussion was at the beginning of the discussion of the economic issues -- and I'm paraphrasing, not directly quoting -- but President Arzu indicated that he had come to the discussion with long prepared remarks about their hopes and goals in terms of a new economic relationship with the United States. And he said, I don't need to read these remarks because what I've heard from you gives me confidence that we're moving in that direction.

I think the structure that the President outlined in the press conference reflects the approach that we're taking, and

I think that you could hear from all the remarks that there was a sense that this really is recognition on our part that we have a great deal of interest in the economic development of this region, not only because it creates new markets for the United States, but also because economic prosperity will help solidify democracy and regional peace and could also help deal with the kinds of social dislocations that can lead to problems with migration.

Then the third topic that they discussed in detail was migration and I will leave it to Commission **Meissner** to talk about the details of the migration issues.

They intend to talk at lunch about environment and sustainable development issues, which will be the focus of tomorrow's activities. The President will give a speech in connection with his visit to the cloud forest, where he will outline the importance of sustainable development issues to this region, to the hemisphere and to the globe.

It's obviously significant that we do this here in Costa Rica because Costa Rica has really been a leading force in a number of ways, a number of innovative ways, on environment and sustainable development issues in terms of their own work with the private sector, to involve them there; the idea of joint implementation working with the private sector to develop effective strategies to deal with environmental issues; the tremendous emphasis they put on using the environment as a source of jobs through ecotourism; innovative strategies for clean air,

such as the increased use of electric vehicles; and the really remarkable park system here, which is a real reflection of the commitment of this country to environment and sustainable development, and the interesting historical connection between the head of their park service who, after having visited the United States and seen our national parks came back and was inspired by that vision.

The President will talk about efforts that we are engaged with in this region to work with them on environment and sustainable development, and will also talk about our global environmental agenda.

Commissioner **Meissner**: Well, following on what Jim said, the discussion of migration this morning really took off from the discussion of democracy in that the Presidents all talked about the importance of economic prosperity to the survival of their democracies and really led into the **immigration** discussion by talking about how they wanted their countries to be not only peaceful after wars, but prosperous and offer life, hope, future to their people so that they no longer needed to be sources of illegal **immigration** and no longer needed to be countries that were poor, wringing the United States and, therefore, a problem to the United States from the standpoint of illegal migrants.

At the same time, they were very concerned about the new **immigration** law and concerned about its consequences for nationals from their countries that are in the United States, and here, we're talking principally about Nicaragua and El Salvador -- to some extent Guatemala -- but it's basically those three countries and it was primarily the Nicaraguan President and the El Salvadoran President that spoke to these issues.

And they recounted how the wars in their region in the '80s were not only the result of domestic issues and turmoil schisms in their own societies, but also were battlegrounds for the Cold War and for the geopolitical confrontations that were going on during that period, that large numbers of their nationals had, therefore, left, seeking safety in the United States, and had been now in the United States for in many cases many years -- that the disruption in the near turn that would

come with return of large numbers of those people concerned them a great deal both from the standpoint of the humanitarian issues of disrupting the lives of people who had planted roots in the United States and also from the standpoint of the economic effect on the countries themselves because these people provide remittances that are very important to the economies of Nicaragua and El Salvador. And in the case of El Salvador in particular, the President talked about the severe difficulty that there would be in jobs being available for those people if they returned.

Q What kind of numbers are you talking about, Central Americans who may have come during the war years, versus any other numbers of people who have come to the United States, legally or otherwise?

Commissioner **Meissner**: Well, there are all kinds of numbers that are being talked about. There actually was no discussion of actual numbers this morning among the --

Q Do you think the vast majority of those who came from Central America came because of the war situation?

Commissioner **Meissner**: I think it's fair to say that the people that came in the '80s from Central America came largely -- overwhelmingly, because they were fleeing civil unrest and upheaval.

Q Can you give us a ballpark number on that, how many people we're talking about?

Commissioner **Meissner**: I don't think anybody really knows. The numbers that we are working with are basically somewhere in the neighborhoods of 300,000-plus as among all of those nationalities, that we --

Q Of Central Americans?

Commissioner **Meissner**: Of Central Americans. And we break it down basically somewhere in the neighborhood of about 150,000 Salvadorans, about 100,000 Guatemalans and about 40,000 Nicaraguans. So somewhere in the neighborhood of 300,000-plus. But as I say, there are many -- those are good numbers from the standpoint of the **Immigration** Service, but lots of numbers have been thrown around.

Anyway, let me just finish and then we'll do questions.

So that what the President answered was, in the first place, to clearly demonstrate to them an understanding of the problem. He made very, very clear that the **immigration** law that was enacted last year was an important law for the United States. We are a nation of **immigrants**, we want to maintain our tradition as a nation of **immigrants**. In order to do that, we have to be able to control illegal **immigration** better.

At the same time, these are people who have come for some period of time, and he recognized that there was both a humanitarian issue where they and their families were concerned, as well as a broader economic issue for these countries. He said that -- he repeated for them what we have told them all along: we will not engage in mass deportations, we will adjudicate these cases on a case-by-case basis, that we are suspending -- that we are holding off until the 1st of October actually implementing a deadline which creates a cap of 4,000 cases on a particular group of hardship decisions that can be made -- it's a provision called suspension of deportation -- and that we will be working with the Congress between now and October 1, during this period, to see whether there are some ways of achieving some flexibility.

Q Could you explain the suspension of deportation thing? I'm not clear on how that works.

Commissioner **Meissner**: Well, there is a provision by which people can apply for what's called suspension of deportation; in other words, deportation is suspended if **immigration** judges grant it. And that's a provision that many Salvadorans and Nicaraguans and Guatemalans have in fact filed for. In the case of Salvadorans and Guatemalans it's particularly pertinent because it was part of a lawsuit that was settled in their behalf called "the Abc lawsuit." They were allowed to apply for asylum again and if they didn't achieve it, there was this other avenue of relief. That has been severely curtailed under this new law, and it's something that the administration is working with the Congress to try to modify to some extent.

Q -- suspending it, so you're actually suspending it until October 1?

Commissioner **Meissner**: Yes, we're doing that as a regulatory matter. In other words, the Congress put a cap of 4,000 on the numbers of these that could be granted, but there were some timing difficulties in the way the statute was written, and we basically, in order to actually implement it effectively, we're going to begin to implement it on October 1st. That gives a little time for some further discussion on these issues.

Q Did these leaders ask you to give legal status to this group, or to give amnesty to this group?

Commissioner **Meissner**: Yes.

Q What was your response?

Commissioner **Meissner**: The Salvadoran President did suggest -- did make the proposal for an amnesty. The President did not answer that point directly. The President answered as I suggested to you.

Mr. Steinberg: It was the Nicaraguan President. The President of Nicaragua who asked for --

Commissioner **Meissner**: Let's check our notes. We'll check our notes.

Q And what exactly did he ask for and what was the response?

Commissioner **Meissner**: At the end of his remarks he suggested that one way of dealing with this might be an amnesty. As I said, the President did not answer that point directly. The President answered in the way that I described to you. In other words, the President -- I'm not trying to avoid you, Mark, I'm just --

Q My irritation wasn't with you.

Commissioner **Meissner**: I'm sorry. Sometimes it is. (Laughter.) I mean, he answered as I said, you know, case by case, no deportations, we'll be working with Congress on the suspension provisions. He didn't address the question of amnesty.

Q What does it really mean to say that you're going to work with Congress on this? I mean, Congress seems an unlikely place to find the kind of compassion that the President pledged today. I mean, why is this not simply a finesse? If the law is enforced at all, it's going to mean thousands or tens of thousands of deportations, isn't it?

Commissioner **Meissner**: Well, let me just -- there are some numbers here that are really very instructive. But what it means to work with the Congress is that when you enact an enormously complex law like this with lots of different provisions in it, there are sometimes things that haven't been fully thought through. And in this particular set of provisions, there are some timing issues which don't work properly from the standpoint of trying to implement them and there are some unattended consequences which -- I'm not sure that the entire

Congress fully appreciated.

So we've been in discussions, as we are on all the provisions of the law as we write the regulations. We're in discussion with the committees and with the committee staffs to be sure of what they intended and how we are interpreting the law. And this is one of those where we are making some suggestions on ways that could rationalize it.

Q But in the meantime, if I could follow up, will you hold back on any action? Will you not begin deportations until these consultations are finished?

Commissioner **Meissner**: Our normal enforcement operations will continue. They continue as we speak. I mean, we focus on deporting criminal aliens, we enforce the law in workplaces. But this particular provision that has a cap of 4,000 on the numbers of people who are granted suspension of deportation, we will hold off actually implementing those removals until the first of October.

Q If you say no mass deportations in the short run, but assume that nothing happens in Congress and you enact the law on October 1st --

Commissioner **Meissner**: And we begin to implement October 1st.

Q At what points do we begin to see mass deportations which the law calls for?

Commissioner **Meissner**: Generally, when people talk about mass deportations they are envisioning wholesale roundups and group returns. That is not what we're involved in here. There is no question that this law contemplated a reduced level of illegal residents in the United States, and that is our responsibility to implement and we are implementing it and will continue to implement it. As I say, this provision that we're talking about is only one part of a full range of activities. But it is certainly the case that the level of removals from the United States will steadily increase.

Q Okay, but I still don't hear -- what we need is a number. You've got a 4,000-person cap, you've got 300,000 people, are we talking tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands and in what span of time?

Commissioner **Meissner**: This is a steady buildup from year to year. Let me just help you out here a little bit. Let's just take -- let's take some of these key countries, or take the whole region. The countries that we're talking about last year, legal **immigration** from the countries in the region that we're talking about last year was 81,000. Last year we returned about 9,700 people to the region. So the net flow remains a positive flow of about 72,000. We are not yet at a point where we have the capability to do a one-to-one return and it all is a case-by-case adjudication.

Q I understand that, but what I'm saying is I'm a Nicaraguan in Miami or a Salvadoran in Los Angeles, I'm not particularly concerned about the number of my countrymen that are coming to the United States. What I want to know is do I have to leave and, under this law, when do I have to leave?

Commissioner **Meissner**: That's exactly right and that's what the Central American countries are registering concern about. As I said, we recognize that this law is attempting to return larger numbers of people over time, but one particularly provision -- the suspension of deportation provision -- is one that we believe has unintended consequences and we want to see whether there are some modifications that can be put into place.

Q What specific modifications will you be seeking?

Commissioner **Meissner**: I think we need to complete our congressional work on this before we get more detailed.

Q Commissioner **Meissner**, did the President draw this parallel to the Central American situation with the South Vietnamese situation in '75 in his meetings with the leaders?

Commissioner **Meissner**: He did make a reference to Vietnam from the standpoint of the humanitarian tradition of the United States and of the concern that he expressed or the compassion that he expressed with those circumstances of the people who left Central America during those years.

I think that what really happened here is that the position that the President presented is the position that we have been discussing at the working level with the Central American countries and with others for quite some time. But it makes a big difference when the President of the United States talks to other Presidents and is able to convey his understanding of it and his concern with it and his commitment to try to work with it as humanely as possible, consistent with the fact that this is a law overall that we endorse.

Q You mentioned unintended consequences of the law before. Was the President really aware of the cap when he signed the bill, and, if so, why did he sign it?

Commissioner **Meissner**: The cap was in the bill. Obviously, we were aware of it when the President signed it. As he has said, it is a big bill that has many provisions in it that the administration supported. I think in the case of this particular provision nobody fully appreciated at that time quite how -- what the implications of it were. And as we go through it and begin to write the regulations and begin to understand what it will mean to implement it, some of these things become clearer.

Q Does the Ins have any idea of the number of illegal **immigrants** from these countries that are in the United States?

Commissioner **Meissner**: Well, the number of illegal **immigrants** from these countries in the United States is a different number from the number of people that might be affected by these particular provisions that we're talking about. So, in the case of these particular provisions that we're talking about, we believe the number of people that could be affected is somewhere in the neighborhood of 300,000. We do not have the capacity to remove those people all at one time. We would be gradually working --

Q But my question, the other part, these are the people affected under these special rules -- how about the legal

immigrants who are there -- do you all have any idea how many hundreds of thousands are there?

Commissioner **Meissner**: We believe that there are about 5 million people in the United States illegally. I can give you a nationality breakdown on that; I don't have it right here with me.

Q Commissioner, if I could take you back to my colleague's question once again. In the case of the welfare reform bill, the President signed that knowing there were parts he didn't agree with and hoping that he could change them. In the case of this bill, is it that he thought he'd be able to deal with the unintended consequences, or that he did not realize the size of the problem, the magnitude of the problem?

Commissioner **Meissner**: I think it's a mixture. There were things in the **immigration** bill that we opposed at the time. One of them we talked about a day or two ago in Mexico, which has to do with people's ability to adjust their status in the United States.

On this particular provision I -- this is one where we've come to understand much more clearly as we've tried to grapple with the regulations exactly how complex it is and exactly what the consequences would be. So I think this is one where the understanding has evolved in the interim.

Q Ms. **Meissner**, if the President hadn't delayed implementation of this until the end of September, when would it have taken effect?

Commissioner **Meissner**: It would have begun to take effect April 1.

Q And when did you take that action to delay it?

Commissioner **Meissner**: We actually are about to publish regulations on that point in the next couple of weeks, but we've been in discussion with the relevant committees about it.

Q Commissioner, after the press conference the President of El Salvador, Mr. Calderon Sol, said that the amnesty proposal had been brought up in the meeting, and he quoted President Clinton -- paraphrasing him -- at this moment we don't have any real possibility of doing that; the Congress won't accept it. What you said before would seem to suggest that's not really an accurate --

Commissioner **Meissner**: I don't recall that having been said. I don't have that in my notes.

Q Commissioner **Meissner**, would you accept if you think you could reach a deal with Congress in which you legalized these people, but took the numbers from the numbers -- for the brothers and sisters category or the spouses and children category, could you do that -- reduce the overall level of legal **immigration** by those number of visas?

Commissioner **Meissner**: There are a number of things that are being talked about, but I really don't want to speculate on that.

Q Commissioner, would the problem you're talking about be solved by lifting -- raising the cap to a higher number? Or are you talking about eliminating the cap altogether?

Commissioner **Meissner**: Again, I really would like the really important thing here is that we be able to come to a consensus on this in a way that works, and I don't want to second-guess it.

Q And the reason you don't envision massive deportations is because you don't think you could go out and round those people up and you don't think they'll come in and volunteer to be removed? Is that right?

Commissioner **Meissner**: Well, as you know, we're increasing our deportations all the time and will continue to do deportations. But we don't -- we certainly don't have the capacity to go and locate all of these people and put them into proceedings and remove them within a year.

Mr. Mccurry: This will be the last one here.

Q Even if the President didn't say what he was just quoted here saying, is that an assessment that you believe is true, that it's not realistic, that Congress won't accept an amnesty?

Commissioner **Meissner**: I would say that it's not the administration's position to seek an amnesty. We believe this law is a good law and, by and large, we think it is workable and it is consistent with what the administration has been attempting to do for the last four years. There are some provisions that we want to work on.

Mr. Mccurry: Okay, anything else on other aspects of the summit? Any of the communiqués?

Q Yes, the tariffs. Can you tell us what kind of goods might be subject to tariffs?

Ms. Brainerd: Yes. The enhancement of the Caribbean Basin that is being proposed would extend preferential tariff treatment comparable to that enjoyed by Mexico to products -- a handful of products, really, which include such things as tuna, some leather goods and apparel.

Q What about electronic?

Ms. Brainerd: Electronics already enjoy preferential access into the U.S. from the Caribbean Basin countries comparable to that enjoyed by Mexico.

Q Would that be all apparel, including the machina -- industries they have down here?

Ms. Brainerd: Yes, it pertains to a whole variety of categories of apparel, some of which will include these processing kinds of operations.

Q On open skies, you're still working on Belize and the Dominican Republic, they just weren't ready in time? Is that --

Ms. Brainerd: Yes. Belize and the Dominican

Republic I think we're very optimistic about. It simply was -- we did this in a very short period of time and we still have some pieces to work out, but I think we're very optimistic that we'll get them done shortly.

Q You mentioned this is the first Central American summit in how many years -- how was Bush's visit here different? That was a different type of meeting, or what's the distinction?

Mr. Mccurry: Geoff, do you want to do the history of that?

Mr. Pyatt: As I understand it, the '89 meeting was a meeting which the Costa Rican government hosted to celebrate the anniversary of their democracy and it had participants from throughout Latin America. It was not a Central American summit. The last time we convoked the Central American leaders or the President met with the Central American leaders was 1968.

Q While you're up there, did you ever get straight which President asked for amnesty?

Mr. Mccurry: No. It was Calderon Sol? Calderon Sol, although clearly President Reina also spoke on that issue as well.

Q Did the President say that the money for deferring the cost of these tariff reductions was in the budget agreement? And, if so, what is the dollar amount?

Mr. Mccurry: It is, and it's \$2 billion over five years. Two billion over five years, and it's in the Fy '98 budget proposal.

Q What was the question?

Mr. Mccurry: The amount of the Cbi enhancement as proposed in the Fy '98 budget. This is, by the way, the news that we intended to make on Saturday, just so you know.

Q Where was Panama?

Mr. Mccurry: Panama was effectively implementing the Panama Canal Treaty and dealing with issues related to the new stature of the zone. What is the --

Q Why is Panama not --

Mr. Pyatt: They were invited to join and they chose -- they declined --

Q Did they say why?

Mr. Pyatt: They did not specifically say. They thanked us for the invitation.

Q What's the problem? They've already got the canal.

Mr. Pyatt: They haven't historically been part of the Central American common market or the Central American **immigration** process. They see their fate as being more

determined by -- as Panama by itself, and they're less inclined to hook themselves up with the rest of Central America.

Q Okay. I'm sorry, I'm having trouble hearing. The \$2 billion was in President Clinton's budget?

Mr. Mccurry: Fy '98 budget proposal for the enhancement of this Cbi over five years. That was in the five year window -- \$2 billion over the five year window.

Q -- when you say "apparel," does that mean textiles as well?

Mr. Mccurry: It was a clever --

Ms. Brainerd: It's a broader definition.

Mr. Mccurry: It's a somewhat broader definition, but the impacted industry and where a lot of the controversy has arisen domestically is obviously textiles.

Q Mike, when the President said that Central American refugees who had fled the violence to the United States should be in a special category, does he have anything specific in mind?

Mr. Mccurry: He is referring to existing laws Commissioner **Meissner** just articulated. There is a category, the 300,000 we were talking about, for which that is a special category already.

Q -- understand your answer -- sorry -- so is it textiles and apparel or is it --

Mr. Mccurry: It's a broader definition, but it includes textiles.

Q Mike, are there likely to be any domestic losers in this move?

Mr. Mccurry: In?

Q In the lowering of tariffs, for instance, apparel?

Mr. Mccurry: Well, there are net gains over time. Are there individual people who become affected by free trade agreements? Yes, which is why we have things like the Trade Adjustments Assistance program. But net over time we see expanded economies, we see the kind of economic and regional growth that expands economies and opportunities, and, as the President pointed out today, creates jobs that are in higher paying sectors in which we have comparative advantage, which is the whole rationale for pressing ahead so aggressively with a free trade program.

Q Does the President intend to veto this House juvenile criminal control act --

Mr. Mccurry: Well, we're very disappointed, as our statement indicates, in the action by the House. We think we've got a much more effective approach on juvenile crime prevention. We've articulated that in the strategy we've put forth and we're

going to fight hard for our strategy. We think over time we'll be able to win the case on the merits of our argument.

Q Is Clinton going to ask the Swiss to reopen the treaty that -- the 1946 treaty that they're clearly in violation of?

Mr. Mccurry: The President -- just a moment on the -- this happened yesterday, we didn't get much of a chance to talk about it. The President was very pleased with the work done by the State Department in response to his directive to open up the historical record on questions related to Nazi acquisition and expropriation of gold and, particularly, the impact of the Holocaust on exactly that question.

The State Department's Office of the Historian -- a wonderful guy named Bill Slaney, who I think is one of the real jewels in our bureaucracy -- the Office of Historian at the State Department, did a remarkable job with the assistance of 11 agencies in pulling together that report. The President has a very keen interest in what we do now to pursue additional facts and additional disclosure based on what we see as this slice of the historical record. There are things that we believe the government of Switzerland can do and will do, and there's been some indication already that they are inclined to themselves open up some of their own documentation and records. And we will consider other ways in which we can learn more, understand more about the nature of this tragic historical record.

Q Are you ruling out the idea of asking them to return some of the money, or all of it?

Mr. Mccurry: The proper way to -- we're going to have to work carefully to understand the consequences of this report. I think understanding the truth is the first step towards seeking a remedy and we're not at the point yet where we can even fully comprehend the report. We're going to let that settle, see what the response is, see what additional historical record can be established and then determine how to proceed.

Let me do one other thing. I think that we announced earlier -- and I just want to talk a minute about the three commencement addresses the President will deliver this year. The President on Sunday, May 18th, will deliver the

commencement address at Morgan State up in Baltimore. He will deliver his -- every year the President speaks at the commencement of one of the service academies and he'll speak at West Point on Saturday, May 31st. And he will speak at the University of California-San Diego on Saturday, June 14th.

Let me talk for a minute about these three commencement speeches, because interestingly they were all built around one theme, which is preparing America for the 21st century; but will speak to that proposition in three very different and interesting ways. The first speech, at Morgan State, will focus on science and technology. It will reflect on some of the miracles of modern science and technology that you've heard the President talk about anecdotally over the last several years.

He'll also talk about some of the ethical dilemmas that scientific improvement and technological improvement produced in this world, talking a bit about things as diverse as the implications of computer technology with respect to free

speech, some of the recent discussions of bioethical issues with respect to cloning. But really sort of a philosophical speech about science and technology and its impact on our culture and our humanity as we think of the future.

The second speech at West Point, in a different way, will talk about America preparing for a new world in the 21st century in which we really have to think clearly about American responsibility in the world. This will be a speech that he gives two days after delivering a major speech in Europe at The Hague at the time of the U.S.-Eu summit. And so, in a sense, that speech is a mirror image of the speech that he will make to the people of Europe about the rationale for America's continued engagement in Europe and the expansion of Nato specifically.

He'll come two days later to West Point and make the same argument to the American people about why it's manifestly in the interests of the people of the United States to remain engaged in Europe and to look ahead to a united democratic Europe free of conflict all the way from the United Kingdom to the Urals.

The last speech, at the University of California at San Diego, will talk more in a spiritual and maybe even emotional way about an issue that is very directly connected to what most of this briefing has been about today, the diversity of the American people. And he will speak specifically to the scar that racial prejudice and bigotry has made in our own political culture and in our own history. He'll talk specifically about how we can reconcile antagonisms between races and bring people together in one America to celebrate our diversity and use our diversity to make progress together as one people in the 21st century.

Three speeches, a single theme about America rising to and responding to the challenges of the 21st century, doing so first with the most obvious and important challenge, responding to the new global information age and how Americans can personally and collectively respond to the issues we face based on science, technology, and the improvement of our ability to understand and absorb information.

Second, how we can respond to the challenges we face in this world that is growing more interdependent because of the global information age. And third, how do we use the incredible diversity that is America to give us a competitive in that world, and the primary challenge with respect to using diversity positively is to overcome instances in the past in which diversity has been a blemish on our own history -- race being the obvious point there.

Q I missed the word on the U-Cal speech --

Mr. Mccurry: No, no Uc-San Diego. University of California at San Diego, Ucsd.

Q What was that date?

Mr. Mccurry: That's June 14th.

Q You said the what and racial and ethnic bigotry has --

Mr. Mccurry: The scar.

Q The scar, I'm sorry, thank you.

Q A somewhat lighter question. The President has peppered his speeches here and in Mexico with a few Spanish remarks. Does he have someone who is coaching in those Spanish phrases, or how does he arrive at those?

Mr. Mccurry: No. He does, as a way of respecting -- expressing some respect to foreign cultures, he very often tries to use a phrase from the indigenous language when he's travelling. That's not an unusual thing, and he has had -- a couple people have written things in the speeches for him.

Q Mike, Attorney General Reno today confirmed that the Justice Department is investigating the possibility of a high-level Israeli spy in the U.S. government. How is it going to impact relations with Israel at this point?

Mr. Mccurry: No comment on that subject.

Anything else today?

Q Mike, anything new about the fate of President Mobutu, and his intentions?

Mr. Mccurry: Nothing beyond what we have already said in the past. Ambassador Richardson has made clear our principles with respect to the future of Zaire and they center around a transition to a new structure that will respond to the needs and the aspirations of the people of Zaire. That clearly should be a transitional process that leads to new elections and our views on the rule of Mobutu I think have been made fairly clear. I don't want to speculate about his future at this moment which he is no doubt contemplating his own course.

Q Just on a personal note, can you tell us if the President's enjoying the trip, is he homesick, does he miss Washington?

Mr. Mccurry: Miss Washington? You haven't been following what's been going on up there? No, he's having a very good time. He's been very -- today he talked a lot about how interesting the personal stories are of all these leaders that he's seen. In a way, they are a microcosm of the change that has occurred in this region, and the personal histories of each of these leaders and what they have gone through and what they've struggled with and what they have overcome as they've built a new Central America based on democracy and market economics as opposed to authoritarianism and military rule and military conflict, this is truly extraordinary, and their own personal stories are very compelling.

He's enjoyed the dialogue with them, there have been lots of moments in which he has engaged in personal conversation with each of them. I think you saw a little bit of that reflected at the press conference. He's very much looking forward to the trip tomorrow because both that excursion and the

one in Mexico yesterday are something the President feels like he doesn't get enough opportunities to do, to actually go out and see something about the countries that he's visiting, so he's been happy that the schedule has accommodated that.

He's been getting a regular update on things going

on. Back home, by the way, for wire purposes he has been told about the chemical plant explosion in Arkansas. Obviously, he's very concerned about that. He knows the facility itself. Bruce Lindsey, in fact, was very -- knew exactly the bypass that this facility is located at and knew the hospital that has apparently been evacuated. So Bruce has been in touch -- was going to try to be in touch with people in Arkansas and get more information for the President, because he'll be concerned about that.

So he's been following things back at home, but fully absorbed in the details of this trip. He's obviously very, very pleased with the response in Mexico to his trip there. That was a very important moment in U.S.-Mexican relations and the way in which he was received in Mexico and the commentary and discussion about that trip and what it means for the long-term future of our relations with Mexico is very significant and the President feels quite satisfied with that outcome.

I think what's happened here today with the personal engagement of the President and these leaders is profoundly important as we structure a new relationship with Central America. You heard Steinberg say a minute ago that we really are entering an era in which -- we've got the possibility to establish a whole new way of dealing with these countries and a whole new mechanism for conducting our diplomacy, and some of that begins to emerge from the discussions the Attorney General will now have related to law enforcement, that our labor ministers will have on worker rights issues, that our trade ministers will have through the new council that's been established today.

We're putting a much more formal structure into the diplomacy we do in this region, and that's a very exciting thing. The President -- some people have said, why did it take you so long to get down here -- I think the President in some way shares that sentiment, that there is a lot going on in this region, in this hemisphere that excites him. He's said several times now how much he looks forward to the additional trips that he'll be taking here both later this year and then leading up to Santiago for the next Summit of the Americas.

Q Did we get clarification on which President had asked for amnesty?

Mr. Mccurry: The consensus after debate here was, it was President Calderon Sol.

Q Of El Salvador.

Mr. Mccurry: El Salvador.

Q And also, how much would the U.S. spend on this police --

Mr. Mccurry: What?

Q I thought it was Nicaragua -- that he chimed in.

Mr. Mccurry: President Reina also talked about that issue, but they think amnesty itself was put in place by Calderon Sol. That's what they --

Q Is there a number attached to the international law enforcement academy -- how much would we spend?

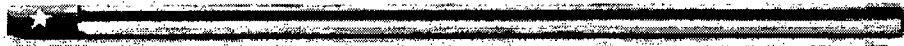
Mr. Mccurry: As our fact sheet said, there are several million dollars that are contained in our budget that would allow for that. I don't know that there is a specific figure; I'd have to go look and see. But the material that we've got indicated there were several million dollars set aside in our budget proposal that would accommodate the creation of that academy.

Anything else in the world? We are hoping to have an embargoed text of the President's toasts tonight. To my knowledge, that's the only real remaining thing that's out there tonight. And with that we intend to call it quits for the day. So, given that it's getting late back on the East Coast, you should have a pretty free and clear evening. Right, Mary Ellen? (Laughter.) Pretty free and clear evening if we can get the embargoed toasts?

Okay, good. See you.

End

4:20 P.M. (L)



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