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The Vice President's Meeting with  
Guatemalan President Vinicio Cerezo

BACKGROUND:

- o President Cerezo is beset by political and economic problems. Violence (bombings, kidnappings and killings) continues to rise. A sharp increase in inflation is triggering labor unrest. Corruption within the administration is reaching an all time high. As a result, Guatemala's international image has severely deteriorated and domestic disgruntlement with the Cerezo government is high.
- o We have pressed the GOG to move on a number of fronts, human rights, judicial reform, drugs, rooting out of corruption, to no avail. The Cerezo government, counting on our interest in preserving political stability and economic growth, feels it can continue to be unresponsive to our interests.
- o Despite assurance to the contrary, the GOG has done nothing to investigate the killing of several university students and the stabbing of two Peace Brigadists (one of which was a U.S. citizen). Similarly, although we presented evidence to President Cerezo that a close associate of his is involved in narcotrafficking, Cerezo has not removed him from his new job as the head of the country's largest port. Recently, at President Bush's personal request, we have pressed the GOG for information on the 1985 killings of U.S. citizens Nicholas Blake and Griffith Davis. It still has not been provided.
- o Our long-term goals for Guatemala remain unchanged: to support democratic institutions, foster economic growth and the peaceful transfer of government to an elected civilian administration in November, 1990. Yet, the GOG's lack of commitment to combat terrorism, human rights abuses, corruption in government, and drug trafficking is making it very difficult to make the Guatemala case for sustaining past levels of assistance in the face of a shrinking assistance pie for FY90.

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- o President Cerezo has stated he will make a formal request to the U.S., Spain, Italy and France for assistance in the investigation of the January 13 murders in Guatemala of Hector Oqueli, Secretary of the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) of El Salvador, and Gilda Flores, member of the Guatemalan Social Democratic Party. They were reportedly kidnapped as they were on their way to the Guatemala City airport. Although we have approached the FBI for technical assistance, we will not act until we receive the formal request, given Cerezo's track record of not following through on commitments.
- o Guatemala maintains a policy of "active neutrality" in foreign affairs. As a result, the GOG has been inconsistent in its support of our policy goals in Central America. This fall, it appeared that a shift to a more engaged pro-active policy was taking place. The GOG expressed a desire for more frequent dialogue with the U.S. on regional issues, disinvited Panama from the Conference of the American Armies and was much more active in the San Jose meeting of Central American heads of State. However, more recently, Guatemala has reverted to its previous stance, first abstaining on the OAS resolution against the U.S. action in Panama (the moderate position taken by other Central American countries), then voting in favor of the U.N. resolution condemning the same event, despite personal assurances from President Cerezo to our Ambassador that he would not vote against us.

## OBJECTIVES:

- o To press the GOG to investigate immediately the kidnapping and killing of the San Carlos University students and the stabbing of the International Peace Brigadists and to obtain information on the Blake/Davis deaths.
- o To express our concern for the killing of Salvadoran Socialist Hector Oqueli and Guatemalan Socialist Gilda Flores, to ask for an update on the investigation, and to indicate that we await Cerezo's formal request for assistance.
- o To encourage Cerezo to reform further the security forces and judiciary in the promotion of the rule of law.

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Talking Points

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- o I am sure that you will want to leave a lasting legacy of your administration when you step down next January.
- o With one year remaining, there is much good that could be accomplished.
- o While we are deeply disturbed by the continued high level of violence in Guatemala, we do not understand why investigations of violent politically-motivated crimes either do not occur or are rarely through. Some of these cases involve U.S. citizens.
- o We recognize that the perpetrators are trying to destabilize your government and prevent new elections in 1990. Our policy aims to assist Guatemala to strengthen its democratic institutions, foster the peaceful, constitutional transfer of power in the 1990 elections, and encourage economic growth.
- o Guatemala's international image is deteriorating due to the violence and the absence of investigative follow through. The lack of progress in the investigation of such major cases as the deaths of the San Carlos University Students and the stabbing of the Peace Brigadists is severely hampering our efforts to argue for assistance for Guatemala. We are already facing substantial cuts in our global level of economic and military assistance for FY90.

— By supporting the training of the police and the judiciary, we have worked alongside committed Guatemalans to strengthen the rule of law in Guatemala. The rapid approval of the legislation currently in the Guatemalan Congress for the reorganization of the National Police and your inauguration of the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) would greatly assist in this effort.

— As you know, President Bush has personally requested information on the status of the investigation of the deaths in 1985 of two U. S. citizens, Nicholas Blake and Griffith Davis. I would appreciate your assistance in this matter.

— We are deeply concerned about the recent killings of Hector Oquellil and Gilda Floras. This is a heinous crime and its perpetrators must swiftly be brought to justice. I understand that you will be making a formal request for assistance from us as well as other countries. We will do our best to respond when we receive your request.

- o We welcome your desire to engage in more frequent dialogue on issues of mutual concern, particularly the Central American Peace Process. The upcoming elections in Nicaragua will be a key test of democracy in the region and we welcome your views on situation.

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