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LETTER DATED 12 MAY 1989 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED
TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit to you the text of the statement made by the President of the United States, Mr. George Bush, on 11 May 1989, on the situation that has arisen in the Republic of Panama.

I would be grateful if you would have this note and the text of the statement circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Thomas R. PICKERING

Annex

Statement by President George Bush

May 11, 1989

The White House

The people of Latin America and the Caribbean have sacrificed, fought, and died to establish democracy. Today, elected constitutional government is the clear choice of the vast majority of the people in the Americas. And the days of the dictator are over. Still, in many parts of our hemisphere, the enemies of democracy lie in wait to overturn elected governments through force or to steal elections through fraud.

All nations in the democratic community have a responsibility to make it clear through our actions and our words that efforts to overturn constitutional regimes or steal elections are unacceptable. If we fail to send a clear signal when democracy is imperiled, the enemies of constitutional government will become more dangerous. And that's why events in Panama place an enormous responsibility on all nations in the democratic community.

This past week, the people of Panama, in record numbers, voted to elect a new democratic leadership of their country, and they voted to replace the dictatorship of General Manuel Noriega. The whole world was watching. Every credible observer, the Catholic Church, Latin and European observers, leaders of our Congress, and two former Presidents of the United States tell the same story: the opposition won. It was not even a close election. The opposition won by a margin of nearly three to one.

The Noriega regime first tried to steal this election through massive fraud and intimidation and now has nullified the election and resorted to violence and bloodshed. In recent days, a host of Latin American leaders have condemned this election fraud. They've called on General Noriega to heed the will of the people of Panama.

We support and second those demands. The United States will not recognize, nor accommodate with a regime that holds power through force and violence at the expense of the Panamanian people's right to be free.

I've exchanged these views over the last several days with democratic leaders in Latin America and in Europe. These consultations will continue.

The crisis in Panama is a conflict between Noriega and the people of Panama. The United States stands with the Panamanian people. We share their hope that the Panamanian Defense Forces will stand with them and fulfill their constitutional obligation to defend democracy. A professional Panamanian Defense Force can have an important role to play in Panama's democratic future.

The United States is committed to democracy in Panama. We respect the sovereignty of Panama and, of course, we have great affection for the Panamanian people. We are also committed to protect the lives of our citizens. And we're committed to the integrity of the Panama Canal treaties which guarantee safe passage for all nations through the Canal.

The Panama Canal treaties are a proud symbol of respect and partnership between the people of the United States and the people of Panama. In support of these objectives and after consulting this morning with the bipartisan leadership of the Congress, I am taking the following steps:

First, the United States strongly supports and will cooperate with initiatives taken by governments in this hemisphere to address this crisis through regional diplomacy and action in the Organization of American States and through other means.

Second, our Ambassador in Panama, Arthur Davis, has been recalled and our embassy staff will be reduced to essential personnel only.

Third, U.S. government employees and their dependents living outside of U.S. military bases or Panama Canal commissioned housing areas will be relocated out of Panama or to secure U.S. housing areas within Panama. This action will begin immediately. It will be completed as quickly and in as orderly a manner as possible.

Fourth, the State Department, through its travel advisory, will encourage U.S. business representatives resident in Panama to arrange for the extended absences of their dependents wherever possible.

Fifth, economic sanctions will continue in force.

Sixth, the United States will carry out its obligations and will assert and enforce its treaty rights in Panama under the Panama Canal treaties.

And finally, we are sending a brigade-size force to Panama to augment our military forces already assigned there. If required, I do not rule out further steps in the future.

The United States and all democratic nations in this hemisphere hope that a peaceful resolution can be found to the crisis in Panama. And we urge all those in Panama, every individual, every institution, to put the well-being of their country first and seek an honourable solution to this crisis. The way is still open.
