

CHAPTER 17

Crises and Concessions in Latin America

Presidents Nixon and Ford adopted a low-profile approach to Latin America. The Defense Department in turn sought to maintain U.S. standing and influence in the region with a minimal investment of resources. Senior U.S. defense officials paid scant sustained attention to the region, and the three secretaries of defense during this period focused on Latin America only when crises arose or when they perceived American interests at risk. Deputy Defense Secretary William Clements filled the gap and became the most influential senior DoD official handling a changing Central and South American landscape. As historians now contend, during the 1970s the Cold War in Latin America presented a complex regional dynamic, largely independent of Soviet-American competition. Indeed, the Nixon-Ford years proved to be a period of dramatic change in the region—a time during which Latin American militaries became heavily involved in political, social, and economic affairs. The Pentagon sought to avoid commitments to Latin America, but important events demanded its attention and decisions, especially negotiations over the transfer of the Panama Canal to Panamanian ownership.¹

Background, 1969–1972

In early 1969, President Nixon sent New York Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller, an architect of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, on a mission to meet with leaders across Latin America. As vice president during the Eisenhower administration Nixon had witnessed first-hand the region's discontent with the United States. When he became president, he knew that all was not well in the region, and Rockefeller's survey, Nixon stated, would "be

vitaly important to not only the new relations and a better relationship between the United States and our friends in Latin America, but toward developing new policy directions in this critical area of the world.” Touring the region, Rockefeller and his entourage encountered a maelstrom of underdevelopment, poverty, nationalism, and anti-Americanism.²

The Rockefeller mission shaped the Nixon administration’s opening review of U.S. policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean. The governor’s ambitious 1969 “Quality of Life in the Americas” report included a history of hemispheric affairs; a survey of contemporary challenges; and specific recommendations for U.S. policy (and action) toward Latin America. Nixon informed him that the National Security Council would provide appropriate action. When the NSC convened a few weeks later to discuss the report—and the President’s forthcoming speech to the Inter American Press Association—Nixon was dismissive of sweeping new initiatives in the Americas, especially expansive U.S. investment in the Inter-American Development Bank. “The Latin Americans don’t have the competence,” he responded. Pursuing ambitious initiatives in the region “would be money down a rat hole. But we must make it appear that we are doing something. We must bring them along and help them. This gives the right appearance.”³

During discussions on the future of U.S.-Latin American military relations, the NSC members noted the political power and influence of Latin American military officers across the region. As Nixon observed, “We face a different kind of military leader in Latin America.... They don’t come from the elites. They are nationalistic, revolutionary, and anti-American.” Nevertheless, Nixon encouraged some U.S. engagement with them, remarking that “The influence U.S. military personnel can have is enormous.” He admitted his feelings were mixed and elaborated: “We must lower our profile.... Yet we must influence their leadership through

close contact between our military and theirs. We should do it but appear not to be doing it.”

General Earle Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, pointed out contradictions in the Rockefeller report: “On the one hand, they call for getting rid of U.S. military missions [advisers]. On the other hand, they call for increased grants for training, etc.” Although Nixon favored trimming the U.S. military presence overseas, he did not want to sever the U.S. military connections in Latin America: “Don’t cut off contact between our military and theirs. They may run the place someday [*sic*]... Don’t be overwhelmed by fashionable and popular argument that the military in Latin America are bad. It is not so. They are good. They play an important part in internal security. They shore up the government. They are a status symbol.”⁴

Nixon publicly articulated his vision for U.S.-Latin American relations during his remarks at the Inter American Press Association in Washington on October 31, 1969:

For years, we in the United States have pursued the illusion that we alone could remake continents. Conscious of our wealth and technology, seized by the force of good intentions, driven by our habitual impatience, remembering the dramatic success of the Marshall Plan of postwar Europe, we have sometimes imagined that we knew what was best for everyone else and that we could and should make it happen. Well, experience has taught us better.

Moving forward, Nixon sought a different relationship with Latin America—the United States needed to pull back, and Latin Americans needed to assume greater responsibility for their own affairs: “What I hope we can achieve, therefore, is a more mature partnership in which all voices are heard and none is predominant—a partnership guided by a healthy awareness that give-and-take is better than take-it-or-leave-it.” Nixon was articulating a new approach, a turning away from the Kennedy-era Alliance for Progress toward a partnership based on the fundamental principles of the 1969 Nixon Doctrine—U.S. allies were responsible for their own security and development and could count on U.S. assistance.⁵

The Nixon administration devoted scant attention to Latin America between 1969 and 1972. U.S. economic assistance was trimmed and the number of U.S. servicemembers in the region reduced. The Pentagon, in response to the president's instruction to reduce U.S. personnel abroad, reduced the overall number of U.S. military advisers stationed in Latin America and the Caribbean by 50 percent in 1969 and reduced the number of servicemembers stationed in the Panama Canal Zone, Naval Station Guantánamo Bay, and Puerto Rico. At the same time the administration pushed for a modest increase in military assistance, held low during the Alliance for Progress era to encourage regional economic development. The Nixon administration convinced Congress to raise the annual cap on U.S. arms sales to Latin America from \$75 million to \$150 million. Defense Department officials defended the military assistance programs against congressional pressure to reduce or eliminate them. Even so, the U.S. posture reinforced the perception that Washington was neglecting Latin America. As Mexican President Luis Echeverría Álvarez suggested, the U.S. policy in the region was "characterized by its imprecisions," and Nixon's policy was "outstanding for the way in which it has disregarded Latin America in comparison with other areas of the world."⁶

New Dialogues: Military-to-Military Relations

In 1973 the Nixon administration took a new look at Latin America. The signing of the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973 promised to end the Vietnam War and opened opportunities for further engagement with other regions of the world. In early March, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger ordered a broad review of U.S. policy toward Latin America. During that review, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) Lawrence Eagleburger urged Secretary Richardson to accept Latin America as an "economy-of-force" area relative to other regions of

the world but advised him to invest greater resources there to achieve U.S. military objectives. Interagency deliberations concluded “Military relations continued to be weakened by the restrictions on our military sales efforts, Congressional sanctions, and the erratic general course of security assistance policy toward Latin America. Congressional actions served to reinforce the impression of indifference, if not antagonism.” As for the broader importance of the region, the drafters argued, “Latin America is the touchstone of our relations with the developing world,” yet the United States lacked an effective policy toward these nations. The Latin American republics had become increasingly nationalistic, anti-American, and independent in their international affairs, and their leaders faced an array of persistent socio-economic problems. Under these circumstances, the drafters predicted “the environment for U.S.-Latin American relations in the next few years will be a difficult one.”⁷

Congressional restrictions on security assistance from the 1960s complicated the development of a Latin America policy in the 1970s. The Kuchel Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1965 authorized the termination of all assistance to any country that seized a U.S.-flagged vessel on the high seas. The 1967 Conte-Long amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 restricted the sale of “sophisticated weapons” to underdeveloped countries and required a reduction of U.S. economic aid to such countries by the amount that they used of their own resources for such purchases. In addition, the Pelly Amendment to the Fisherman’s Protective Act mandated an end to U.S. military assistance to countries that interfered with U.S. commercial fishing activities, a subject of active concern in U.S. relations with certain South American countries that did not recognize the U.S. definition of international waters. Also, the Reuss Amendment to the Foreign Military Sales Act of 1968 limited international defense cooperation by restricting military sales where they would have the effect

of arming military dictators who denied social progress to their own people, but the legislation did contain provisions allowing the president to waive the restrictions in the interest of U.S. national security. Richardson and other DoD officials objected to these restrictions and to the ceiling Congress had imposed on U.S. military sales. According to the secretary, these congressional restrictions did not reduce the investment of Latin American countries in military equipment, nor did they impede their purchase of sophisticated military equipment. Latin American nations simply bought the military items they wanted from other vendors and, Richardson argued, “We were denying ourselves opportunities for follow-on relationships.”⁸

Latin American leaders, many of them military officers, preferred to buy more equipment from the United States. Congress, however, limited the annual total in grants, cash purchases, credit sales, U.S. FMS, and ship loans combined to \$100 million. Although the president had the authority to raise the ceiling to \$150 million in a given fiscal year, the limits fell well short of the overall demand for military equipment. Latin American leaders offered various explanations for wanting more arms: They had underinvested in their militaries and defense needs during the Alliance for Progress era; several governments feared leftist insurgencies, or Cuban involvement in their international affairs; some Latin American officials also noted intangible variables. Pressing the U.S. ambassador for equipment in 1974, for example, President General Hugo Bánzer Suárez, the Bolivian military ruler since 1971, explained, “the problem is that the morale of the Bolivian Army is dependent upon younger officers having relatively new equipment to work with.... [the Government of Bolivia] has no intention of using military equipment, but there is a need to boost morale in the troops.”⁹

While Congress authorized modest sales of military equipment to Latin America between 1973 and 1976, most arms sold in the region came from European sources. Still, in May 1973,

Nixon signed a determination extending credits to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Venezuela in connection with sales of F-5 fighters, on the justification that they were important to U.S. national security. Brazil ordered 36 F-5Es and 6 F-5Bs in October 1974, and Chile signed a letter of offer for 18 F-5Es. In the hopes of expanding sales, Clements asked the assistant secretaries in the offices of ISA and Legislative Affairs to develop a plan for lifting the congressional restrictions on military assistance. In mid-August 1975, Legislative Affairs advised that little could be done on Capitol Hill to improve sales prospects. From January 1970 to mid-1975, Latin arms acquisitions from non-U.S. sources equaled 85 percent of the value of foreign military contracts over the previous 20½ years. In December 1975, the Defense Intelligence Agency predicted that this pattern of buying weapons from Western Europe would continue. “It is ridiculous for us to think we pass some law to try to force these [Latin American] countries to spend funds the way we want them to do,” Admiral Thomas Moorer, the JCS chairman, complained. “We have lost heavily and so have these countries.”¹⁰

The military Government of Brazil presented a test case for the Nixon-Ford idea of mutual and equal relations. “Brazil has responded extremely well to our enunciation of the concept of a mature partnership,” U.S. Ambassador William M. Rountree observed in May 1973. “Indeed, no other approach could have succeeded as well in this country which, following the revolution of 1964, has developed a sense of national purpose and cohesion second to none in Latin America.” In 1974, the U.S. embassy delivered a broad overview of the importance of Brazil and the U.S. connection with the Brazilian armed forces. “Brazil occupies half the land area of South America, has a population of over 100 million, and has experienced a period of very rapid and well-managed economic growth since 1968.... As a result, Brazil exercises considerable influence on its neighbors and has demonstrated its potential for eventual world

power status.” The U.S. relationship with the Brazilian military was essential to bilateral cooperation on a range of regional and international matters. For this reason, the embassy concluded that “the Armed Forces there are a primary target group in maintenance of U.S. influence with Brazil in support of broad U.S. objectives.” To be sure, the embassy added, the bilateral military-to-military relationship had been constrained in recent years by a “steady reduction in recent years of most forms of U.S. military assistance” and by “the evolution of the Brazilian Armed Forces into a more self-reliant, autonomous institution capable of developing its own doctrine, management, and training, and supplying a good deal of its own material requirements.” Unable to access U.S. equipment, the embassy reported, “some 90 percent of Brazil’s foreign military purchase in the period 1966 to 1970 were made from third country sources,” such as Britain, France, and Germany. The United States might do more, according to embassy officials, but “as Brazil moves toward the status of a world power, it will tend to reject any form of military relationship that indicates client status.”¹¹

While Washington was optimistic about the Brazilian junta, there would be temporary glitches in the relationship between Brazil and Washington. In March 1975 Brazil triggered the automatic suspension of access to FMS credits under the Fishermen’s Protective Act of 1967 after it seized a U.S. fighting boat in disputed waters. President Gerald Ford promptly waived the restriction in the name of U.S. national security interests. A short time later, Ford authorized the sale of sidewinder missiles to Brazil for the F-5E fighter aircraft that the United States sold to Brazil in 1973. In 1976 the administration resisted congressional cuts to the Military Assistance Program for Brazil, agreeing only to a “phase down” of projects directly connected to hemispheric defense. In February 1976, National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft’s report of

his trip to Brazil assured Ford that Brazil maintained a “basically friendly attitude about the United States,” and that “Brazil is important.”¹²

In contrast to U.S.-Brazilian relations, U.S. relations with the “revolutionary” military government of General Velasco Alvarado in Peru were tense, especially after it seized International Petroleum Company assets in Peru. The Peruvian Government sought a “gathering unto the Peruvian State all basic industries,” stubbornly refusing to compensate foreign investors, including many Americans, for their losses. Peruvian authorities also repeatedly seized U.S. fishing boats in what the United States considered international waters, compelling the Defense Department to follow the congressional requirement to suspend military sales to Peru. Lima responded by reducing the total number of U.S. military advisers allowed in Peru and cultivating military relationships with Cuba and the Soviet Union. Then-acting Assistant Secretary (ISA) Eagleburger told Secretary Richardson in March 1973, “the important professional relationship our military has arduously developed with the Peruvian armed forces over a number of years are [*sic*] now under severe strain.”¹³

As the Peruvian armed forces turned to Moscow for military assistance, DoD supported a presidential determination in September 1973 to authorize the sale of F-5E fighter aircraft to Peru—largely to prevent Peru from purchasing Soviet aircraft. Nevertheless, Peru acquired military equipment from the Soviet Union, including over 100 Soviet tanks. The entry of the Soviet Union into the Latin American arms market alarmed U.S. officials, who feared it would destabilize the region and expand Soviet influence in Peru. As then-NSC Advisor Kissinger concluded, “Our desire has been to be responsive to Peru’s legitimate need, and our disappointment over this purchase from the Soviets is, therefore, particularly acute. Regrettably,

it is likely to make a satisfactory relationship between us in the arms field more difficult to achieve.”¹⁴

U.S. officials found the Peruvian Government somewhat less confrontational after Gerald Ford succeeded Nixon as president. U.S. ambassador to Peru Taylor G. Belcher credited the improvement to “the shock of Allende’s downfall” in Chile (discussed below), which compelled the Velasco regime—convinced that “the U.S. Government has more than a little to do with Allende’s overthrow”—to be less antagonistic toward the United States to protect the Peruvian revolution. Nevertheless, Peru still contested U.S. power and influence in the Americas, questioning the value of the post–World War II Rio Pact (the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance) and continuing purchases of Soviet weaponry. Velasco took a less hostile tack in his relations with Washington, but his actions caused the Ford administration concern over how Peru might employ its Soviet-sourced weaponry, and indeed what intentions the Soviet Union might have along South America’s west coast. As Belcher’s successor, Ambassador Robert W. Dean wrote, “U.S. Peruvian relations will outlast Velasco. Pending changes, we are engaged in a damage-limiting operation, one which preserves our interest and our self-respect.”¹⁵

As Dean predicted, General Francisco Morales Bermúdez Cerruti deposed Velasco in August 1975, paving the way for a more moderate group of military officers to control the Peruvian Government. Nevertheless, over U.S. objections, Peru purchased SU-22 fighter-bomber aircraft from the Soviet Union in September 1976. The move sparked fear among U.S. officials over Soviet aims in the region, but in equal measure gave U.S. officials concern that Peru’s military buildup might—even inadvertently—lead Peru to armed conflict with its neighbor and rival Chile, or with other neighbors. As late as October 1976, the U.S. ambassador described

U.S.-Peruvian military-to-military relationship as “tortured and difficult.” Yet events in Peru were far less worrying than developments in neighboring Chile.¹⁶

Coup in Chile

In September 1970, leftist Salvador Allende won 36 percent of the vote in a three-way election for the Chilean presidency. After U.S. covert efforts failed to prevent him from taking office, the Nixon administration adopted a “correct but cool” public posture toward Allende while seeking to maximize pressures on his government. The Defense Department supported the Chilean military, which favored Washington’s support, as a potential counterweight to Allende. In FY 1972, the United States provided Chile \$10 million in FMS credits. For FY 1973, the administration intended to offer \$12.4 million, pared back from the \$15 million ISA officials had wanted to offer because DoD was operating under a continuing resolution in early 1973. It was a small sum compared to the credits that the Soviets were estimated to be extending on concessionary terms.¹⁷

As president Allende pursued a decidedly leftward course that led Chile into political polarization and economic deterioration. In 1972 a wave of strikes compelled Allende to bring high-ranking military officers into his cabinet, notably the commander in chief of the army, Gen. Carlos Prats Gonzalez. Turmoil continued. On June 29, 1973, a mutiny by a small number of soldiers collapsed, largely because General Prats remained loyal to the president. But another round of strikes erupted and Prats, having lost the confidence of his fellow officers, resigned as defense minister and commander in chief on August 23. His departure opened the way for coup-minded army officers to cooperate with navy and air force sympathizers.¹⁸

While the Office of the Secretary of Defense did not play any direct role in supporting anti-Allende forces, the Chilean president's weakening position did garner sustained high-level interest in the Pentagon's E-ring. At the secretary's May 29, 1973, staff meeting, Admiral Moorer briefed Deputy Secretary Clements (presiding, pending Schlesinger's Senate confirmation) on the "nationalistic and conservative" Chilean military leaders who were likely to cause problems for Allende. Chile was in such dire economic straits due to Allende's policies, the chairman noted, "something may have to give."¹⁹ Clements, a member of the executive branch's 40 Committee which oversaw intelligence operations, read real-time reports of a failed coup attempt in late June.²⁰ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED].
[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED].
[REDACTED].²¹

Days later, Chile was on the agenda of the secretary's September 4, 1973, staff meeting. An ISA read-ahead memorandum for the meeting noted that General Prats's resignation "could be a very serious blow to Allende since Prats has been a stabilizing influence and a 'friend' to Allende." ISA further noted that "Almost constant coup plotting against Allende has continued although a coordinated effort has not been evident. It is believed that the Navy has lead [*sic*] the way in the plotting."²² At the secretary of defense staff meeting on September 10, Admiral Moorer's brief noted that Chile was "on the verge of coup," and Allende was "losing his position." U.S. Navy

ships were then participating in the annual, multinational UNITAS naval exercise along South America's west coast. Schlesinger's military assistant recorded him saying, "Don't advertise connection w/coup," and proposing to pull back U.S. ships.²³ The military assistant, Brig. Gen. Robert Taylor, noted that the coup in Chile had been "postponed until Wed. when UNITAS US Destroyers are offshore." Schlesinger again asked whether the United States should pull back U.S. ships, to which Moorer and Chief Naval Officer Elmo Zumwalt responded "no."²⁴

Schlesinger received and read a flash cable message sent by the office of the U.S. defense attaché in Chile in the early morning hours the day of the coup, September 11, 1973, confirming that a coup was planned for that morning.²⁵ [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. A junta led by authoritarian, staunchly anticommunist General Augusto Pinochet took control of the country.²⁶

Meeting on September 12, members of the Washington Special Actions Group agreed that the administration should act to minimize the "inevitable" charges that the United States had favored or even abetted a coup. Warships headed for the UNITAS exercise with Latin American navies were ordered to stay clear of Chilean waters, and the exercise itself was canceled. But the group decided not to interrupt an earlier approved shipment of military supplies and equipment to Chile. In June 1973 the United States had committed to selling five ships: two landing ship tanks and one floating drydock already had been transferred. Two destroyers were scheduled for delivery in October but the State Department, which had approved security assistance, delayed action on worries that the junta's human rights abuses might stir strong reactions in Congress and

the media. ISA appealed to Deputy Secretary Clements, voicing U.S. Navy objections that the delay would result in deterioration of the destroyers' material condition and adding that State's concerns were unwarranted because destroyers were "not the type of weapon to be used for repressive operations." Further delay might force the Chileans to forego acquiring them. The specter of Soviet assistance in Peru loomed over the decision. Clements agreed, and the transfers proceeded.²⁷

The overthrow of an elected leader, followed by the junta's harsh treatment of political opponents, sparked heated criticism in Congress. Congress passed Section 25 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 (enacted on December 30, 1973), which imposed a \$25 million ceiling on military sales to Chile, "none of which may be made available for the purpose of providing military assistance (including security supporting assistance, sales, credit sales, or guaranties of the furnishing by any means of excess defense articles or items." [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. The Pinochet

regime continued to be staunchly anticommunist, but its human rights record caused many Americans, and their congressional representatives to oppose U.S. support for the military government.²⁸

Human and Civil Rights

The Chilean situation heightened U.S. scrutiny of human rights abuses across Latin America and reinforced global attention on the conduct of governments in the region. In the United States, during the mid-1970s, journalists such as Seymour Hersh of the *New York Times* exposed U.S. involvement in Chile—and the subsequent human rights calamity. Congress, meanwhile, conducted hearings into the human rights situation in South and Central America. The Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (the Church Committee) published its final report in 1976, which laid out a series of past covert operations. The question of human rights in the Americas dominated the General Assembly of Organization of American States (OAS) meeting in Santiago in June 1976. The result of these investigations was to further limit-U.S. military assistance for Latin America.²⁹

Congress embedded human rights criteria in two important pieces of legislation during the Ford administration. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 included new provisions regarding aid to regimes engaged in human rights abuses, compelling the president to “substantially reduce or terminate security assistance to any government which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.” Two years later, Congress expanded the restrictions with the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976, an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Crucially, the act’s new language prohibited security assistance to any country the U.S. Government deemed engaged in a “consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.” The act also contained limitations and requirements on military assistance and advisory groups. The amendment required the Secretary of State to submit a human rights report, prepared with State’s Coordinator for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, to Congress with each security

assistance program request. These reports determined the eligibility of countries to receive economic and military assistance, and their certifications affected U.S. Latin America relations for decades.³⁰

Many Latin American leaders found the congressional restrictions intrusive and unwarranted. Argentina, for example, claimed U.S. congressional interest in its human right record constituted “interference in its internal affairs.” After raising human rights concerns with the president of Bolivia, the U.S. ambassador received a lecture from him on the dangers of the radical left. Secretary of State Kissinger “personally” alerted the Brazilian Government “to the atmosphere on human rights here [Washington] in general and in the Congress in particular.”³¹

Secretary Schlesinger found himself drawn into a situation involving an entirely different aspect of human rights. In August 1973, the Department of the Army nominated Col. Travis M. Gafford to be the Army’s section chief at U.S. Military Group Chile. Col. Robert Lambert, USA, the J-1 at U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), asked Capt. Ray Davis, USN, who headed the Military Group in Chile, about the advisability of assigning an African-American officer. Davis recommended against doing so, apparently relying on his perception of Chilean racial attitudes. The commander in chief of SOUTHCOM, U.S. Army General William B. Rosson, decided to nominate Colonel Gafford for an equivalent position in Colombia, which then rejected him on what SOUTHCOM considered spurious grounds that he was an artilleryman rather than an infantryman. Again, Gafford’s race seemed to be a factor. In November, General Rosson asked the JCS to urge the State Department to work out understandings with foreign governments about assigning minority personnel.³²

At Schlesinger’s direction, ISA and the JCS made inquiries into the circumstances surrounding Colonel Gafford’s alleged unacceptability to the Chilean Government. A separate

Army investigation followed. All concluded that SOUTHCOM had not violated the Defense Department's equal opportunity policies, and no one was at fault. Schlesinger was not convinced. Writing to General Brown, the JCS chairman, and the service secretaries in July 1974, he declared that if no one was culpable and everyone acted in good faith, then DoD's standards of sensitivity and concern for equal opportunity were inadequate. Schlesinger perceived "a subtle—and perhaps unconscious—though effective undermining of Colonel Gafford's opportunity to serve." Doubting whether an African American officer could work effectively in Chile's "informal social milieu" unacceptably traded "the larger goal of overall equality in assignment opportunity for the purpose of trying to achieve an ultimate level of effectiveness." Schlesinger concluded that Rosson, Lambert, and Davis "appear to have failed to fully comprehend the broader compass of departmental policy with regard to equal opportunity, a reflection of questionable judgment." He directed the Army and Navy secretaries to take actions that would "preclude recurrence and ... assure more sensitive future implementation of equal opportunity goals and directives."³³

Border Disputes and Transnational Issues

Beyond human rights, regional border disputes and transnational issues complicated U.S. military assistance to Latin America. In South America, tensions between Peru and Chile escalated as the countries approached the 100th Anniversary of the War of the Pacific (1879–1883). Fearing renewed fighting between the two rivals would impact neighboring Bolivia, that nation's military leader, General Bánzer, sought U.S. military assistance and security guarantees. Meeting with Bánzer in September 1974, General Rosson found the Bolivian president "troubled about the near-term prospect of armed conflict between Peru and Chile and the probable

involvement of Bolivia.” Based on contacts with Velasco and Pinochet—two nationalistic military leaders with sharply conflicting ideological perspectives—Bánzer “concluded that in the short- or in the medium-term there will be armed conflict between the two countries.” Bánzer saw Peru as intent on revenge for Chile’s two-year occupation of Lima during the War of the Pacific and calibrated his appeal to Washington with an eye toward reacquiring the coastline his country had lost during that long-ago conflict. In response to Bánzer’s concerns, U.S. officials used military assistance to promote stability in Bolivia—and develop the Bolivian armed forces as a credible counter to neighboring forces. The U.S. ambassador in La Paz strongly resisted congressional efforts to cut U.S. military assistance, reporting, “We carefully reviewed the level of MAP funding and concluded that although Bolivia’s share of regional MAP grant resources is high, it is not excessive, and that any reduction would adversely affect ... our region-wide security interests.” Congress was not convinced. U.S. MAP assistance for equipment and training fell from \$4.5 million to \$2.73 million in 1974. “The impact [of the cuts] on President Bánzer, personally, will be quite negative,” the ambassador warned. Thereafter, U.S. officials used FMS credits to offset declining MAP grants in Bolivia.³⁴

U.S. officials sought to defuse possible regional conflict between Chile and Peru. Although human rights concerns impeded constructive military-to-military engagement with Chile, U.S. officials were able to discourage Chile from initiating another war with Peru. U.S. influence on Peru was similarly circumscribed. The U.S. ambassador reported that the U.S. lead in hemispheric security was “being challenged by Peru which has assumed leadership in questioning the validity of the Rio Pact, as it now stands, and has purchased Soviet arms (up to now 200 or more Soviet tanks and a few helicopters)... Pending changes, we are engaged in a damage-limiting operation, one which preserves our interest and our self-respect.” President

Francisco Morales Bermúdez Cerruti deposed Velasco in August 1975. The following year more moderate Peruvian military officers took control of the government in Lima. Even so, the Peruvians continued to resist U.S. overtures—and instead accept Soviet military assistance.³⁵

Fearing possible Peruvian aggression, Chilean leaders purchased approximately 150 T-55 Soviet tanks, accepted Soviet military technicians, and moved its armor school close to the border with Peru. For Peruvians, the loss of territory to Chile in an 1879 war still rankled. The Chilean Government also wanted to buy U.S. 110 M-48A3 tanks along with tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided (TOW) antitank weapons. State and ISA deemed a timely provision of limited numbers of tanks and TOWs essential to maintaining regional stability. In late April 1974, the administration approved selling 15 M-60 tanks and light antitank weapons (LAWs). Conferring with Secretary Schlesinger on September 30, the Chilean foreign minister urgently requested TOWs, criticizing the promised LAWs as inadequate in range and effectiveness. Schlesinger replied sympathetically that Washington would study TOW availability but noted that the drain on production since the Middle East war had taken a heavy toll on U.S. stocks. U.S. estimates reflected concern over possible Chilean-Peruvian hostilities that could involve the United States. Late in 1974, talks between Chilean and Peruvian senior officers somewhat diminished the tension and the possibility of another border conflict.³⁶

Transnational criminal activity—notably drug trafficking—also emerged as a national security concern during the Nixon-Ford era. The Ford administration considered options for the prosecution of a war on drugs, a campaign that would eventually involve a range of Latin American security forces. Colombian President Alfonso López Michelsen, among the few democratically elected leaders in Latin America, who pursued an independent foreign policy, became frustrated when U.S. writers blamed Colombia for the U.S. drug scourge. López pointed

out that the demand for illegal drugs in the United States adversely impacted Colombia and other Latin American countries. “While President López was, we believe, unduly one-sided in laying blame on us,” Kissinger wrote in 1975, “the issue he raised and his concern are, indeed, valid... We agree certainly that an important cause of [solution to] the drug traffic in Colombia is combating it in the U.S.” Presidents López and Ford discussed drug trafficking during their meeting in Washington in September 1975. “On the drug problem,” López began, “it is a worldwide problem, but because of our situation, we are the center of traffic. I made a strong [public] statement because the *New York Times* blamed us” for the U.S. drug problems. “They blame me for everything else!” Ford responded. “How can we help?” He continued, “We will do everything we can. It is a terrible problem for us, and we want to do everything possible.” The next day Ford offered to increase U.S. counterdrug assistance to Colombia, including the provision of helicopters.³⁷

During the months that followed, U.S. and Colombian officials wrestled with the organization and structure of a U.S.-Colombian counterdrug operation—notably the role of the Colombian armed forces. President López wanted to tap the Colombian Ministry of Defense (MOD) as the lead agency for counterdrug operations in Colombia. According to the U.S. embassy in Bogotá, the Colombian president believed “The necessary coordination cannot effectively be provided ... except by the MOD.” U.S. officials, including DoD, wanted to pursue a different course, pushing Colombian law enforcement agencies into the counterdrug arena. They were concerned about congressional sensitivities and tight budgets and did not want U.S. or Colombian armed forces involved in counterdrug operations. In the face of U.S. opposition, the Colombian MOD rejected U.S. antidrug assistance, declining an offer of U.S. -helicopters if they could only be used for antidrug operations. In June 1976, after the Colombians lectured U.S.

officials on the inadequacies of the proposed U.S. response to the drug trafficking problems, the U.S. embassy reported that the Colombian minister of defense “decided there was no point in getting involved in the narcotics fields; the ministry will therefore not undertake the coordinated major interdiction effort they talked about.” A similar dynamic unfolded in neighboring Bolivia and Peru as the region made critical decisions that would define the structure of the war on drugs for decades.³⁸

Border disputes likewise influenced the U.S. approach to Central America. After the brief 1969 “Soccer War” between El Salvador and Honduras, both countries looked to expand and improve their militaries with U.S. military assistance. The Defense Department sought to balance military assistance to the two countries to retain U.S. influence and avoid further conflict in the region. El Salvador’s purchase of French fighter-bombers from the Israeli Government tipped the military balance in its favor. In response, U.S. officials agreed to sell F-86s to Honduras. Secretary of State Kissinger engaged both parties during the OAS meeting in San José, Costa Rica, in February 1976. “It’s a family fight of resentment on both sides,” El Salvador Foreign Minister Mauricio Borgonovo Pohl told Kissinger. “The border problem is about 300–400 years old.” Later that day, meeting with Honduran Foreign Minister Roberto Perdomo Paredes, Kissinger offered to help settle the border. “If we can do anything to facilitate the process, and if you and Salvador can agree, we will be glad to help. But we do not lack problems now, so we are not looking around for new ones. [Laughing]”³⁹

Another territorial dispute that engaged the administration was Guatemala’s posture toward the soon-to-be independent neighboring nation of Belize [British Honduras]. In 1974 the Guatemalan congress selected General Kjell Eugenio Laugerud García as new president, a move that portended poorly for Guatemalan relations with Belize, then moving toward independence

from Britain. The State Department proposed holding back foreign military sales and arms sales to Guatemala to discourage any attempt to act on its existing territorial claim and reintegrate part of Belize into Guatemala. The British hoped to enlist the United States in finding a solution to the problem. According to the U.S. embassy, the Guatemalan president issued a stern warning about the independence of Belize: “[Laugerud] was afraid that Prime Minister Price [of Belize] might be contemplating some hasty and early move toward independent. President [Laugerud] said this would be disaster and could benefit no one since Guatemalan Armed Forces would feel obliged to ‘attack’ immediately.... Therefore, it was essential to talk together and to seek peaceful solutions. Even if these solutions were not easy to arrive at and the discussions should be prolonged, a situation which would precipitate use of force must be avoided.” In November 1975, Belize asked for the United Nations to create international pressure for its independence. “The fuse is getting very short,” Assistant Secretary of State William Rogers told Secretary Kissinger. Then, the earthquake rocked Guatemala.⁴⁰

Guatemalan Earthquake Response

Guatemala suffered a devastating earthquake on February 4, 1976. With its epicenter near Los Amates, the 7.5 magnitude earthquake killed approximately 23,000 people—and injured tens of thousands of others. The natural disaster left about 20 percent of the population of Guatemala homeless. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) served as the lead federal agency for foreign disaster relief missions, and U.S. Ambassador Francis Meloy supervised the U.S. response within country. At the ambassador’s disposal were the Department of State, the USAID, and the U.S. military contingent in-country, augmented by civilian and military specialists. On the day after the quake, SOUTHCOM dispatched a disaster assistance response

team from Fort Gulick in the Panama Canal Zone. Led by Maj. Merritte H. Wilson Jr., the group included “public health, engineer, and communication” personnel to “access damage and relief requirements.” Thereafter, DoD dispatched a field hospital, helicopters, and engineers. The U.S. military carried relief supplies from USAID’s stockpile in the Panama Canal Zone. Other governments and foreign entities also sent aid to Guatemala. According to the USAID administrator, the U.S. military helicopters were the most critical contribution—hauling vital supplies to isolated areas and evacuating injured people. “I must say that the U.S. helicopters have been a Godsend and I am sure that that is the way the people of Guatemala look at them, too,” the USAID administrator told President Ford on February 16.⁴¹

Within 10 days U.S. forces had deployed all the necessary assets into the country. “The Army staff section working [on] the Guatemala problem has reaffirmed that all is going well, and no additional relief/help is needed,” an OSD official informed Clements two weeks after the quake. At the height of the U.S. response, approximately 500 U.S. military personnel had deployed to Guatemala. The Department of State reimbursed the Pentagon for cost associated with the operation, and Secretary Kissinger praised U.S. military personnel and the U.S. Military Group commander in Guatemala, Col. Charles D. Corbett, USA, noting, “His excellent performance during the crisis provides proof of his outstanding professional qualities and his marked capacity to assume major and critical responsibilities and to discharge them with distinction.” Although the relief operation was not without problems, U.S. personnel performed outstanding service in the aftermath of the natural disaster.⁴²

The 1976 earthquake had enduring impact on Central America. The natural disaster eroded the Guatemala military as direct threat to Belize and defused the Belize-Guatemala border conflict. The international community nevertheless made little progress regarding the

independence of Belize. At a meeting among U.S. and British diplomats in New York on January 10, 1977, parties agreed: “It was obviously going to take some time.” The earthquake also caused a security breakdown in Guatemala. According to U.S. officials in Guatemala City, the military Government of Guatemala decided “to take advantage of post-quake disorganization to eliminate elements they regard as undesirable.” Their assessment proved accurate: after the earthquake, the military government of Guatemala grew increasingly repressive, a matter inherited by the next generation of U.S. national security officials.⁴³

Panama: Negotiating a New Canal Treaty

Military assistance, foreign crises, human rights and natural disasters drew the attention of Defense Secretaries Richardson, Schlesinger, and Rumsfeld episodically. The Nixon and Ford administrations’ negotiations over the future of the Panama Canal, however, touched on a core concern the three men shared about the future of U.S. power. Each secretary therefore followed the negotiations more closely than other regional issues. By 1973 control and defense rights over the Panama Canal had been at the heart of U.S. national security interests in the western hemisphere for 60 years. After the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty of 1903 the United States built, operated, and defended an inter-oceanic canal and controlled the land surrounding it in perpetuity, enjoying “all the rights, power and authority ... which the United States would possess and exercise as if it were the Sovereign.” Opened in 1914, the canal cut interoceanic transit time for military and commercial ships from weeks to hours. The 10-mile-wide Canal Zone around the waterway was garrisoned by U.S. troops and populated by U.S. civilians who operated its infrastructure. In effect Panama became a country divided by a modern and growing

U.S. city, and over time generations of Panamanians and their leaders deeply resented what they considered a gross infringement on their sovereignty.

Decades of Panamanian grievances met with U.S. indifference or minimal actions, and by the 1960s resentment in Panama began to boil over. In 1964 protests by Panamanian students over the flying of national flags in the Canal Zone escalated into violence and in response, the Lyndon Johnson administration appointed a special envoy and entered negotiations for a new treaty. The resulting agreement, signed in 1967, featured terms that both President Johnson and his Panamanian counterpart, President Marco Aurelia Robles, sensed were unlikely to be ratified by their legislatures. Neither submitted the treaty for ratification, and as the agreement withered, the two nations remained far apart on the core matters of control and defense of the strategic waterway. In 1969 the issue fell to President Richard Nixon and a new Panamanian leader, military strongman Omar Efraín Torrijos Herrera in Panama. For the Nixon administration, canal negotiations like most other Latin America affairs were of little concern during the first term. Less interested in an enduring settlement of the matter, the Nixon administration pursued a harder line than Johnson had; as a result, little progress was made. As Panama's ambassador to the United States remarked in 1972, "Our problem simply does not exist in the agenda of U.S. problems."⁴⁴

Determined to force Washington's hand, Torrijos thereafter adopted a new approach. The Panamanian leader knew that "to resolve a problem ... the first thing you have to do is *make* it a problem." Panamanian diplomats therefore worked to make the Panama Canal an international problem for the United States. In 1972 Torrijos's government sought to capitalize on its new seat on the UN Security Council by lobbying fellow members to support holding a meeting in Panama that would draw the world's attention to the issue. The Nixon administration opposed

the idea on two grounds: meeting outside of New York would be an unnecessary and expensive distraction, and the canal was a bilateral issue between two sovereign nations and therefore outside the UN's purview. Panamanian diplomats had done the legwork needed to overcome U.S. opposition, however, and garnered the support of nearly all the council's other 13 member nations. In the end, the U.S. delegation voted to hold a meeting it opposed, so that grievances Washington wanted kept between it and Panama could be aired before the world.⁴⁵

Panama's representatives seized the reins when the UN Security Council meeting convened in the home of Panama's shuttered National Assembly in March 1973. Torrijos opened the meeting by condemning U.S. "neocolonialism" in the Canal Zone and warning that if peaceful changes in the status quo were not forthcoming, Panamanians might have to take matters into their own hands and "carry out violent changes." On the meeting's second day, the Panamanian delegation offered a resolution that affirmed Panama's sovereignty over its territory and called on the United States and Panama "to conclude a new, just, and fair treaty" that would "fulfill Panama's legitimate aspirations and guarantee full respect for Panama's effective sovereignty over all its territory." Under instructions from Washington, the new U.S. ambassador to the UN, former ABC News correspondent John Scali, vetoed the resolution. Against Scali's "no" vote there were 13 votes in favor and one abstention (Great Britain).⁴⁶

Although the resolution failed, its effect, and the effect of holding the meeting in Panama, had the impact Torrijos and his diplomats intended. As National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger noted, the Panamanian position had gained support not just from Latin American nations, but from countries spanning the globe. Kissinger's staff assistant William Jorden recalled that the meeting convinced Kissinger "he was sitting on a potential powder keg," and that the looming prospect of disorder, instability, and violence posed a greater long-term threat to

the canal's security than any of the traditional threats the United States had long sought to defend the waterway against. Kissinger advised Nixon to take a "fresh look" at the situation. In an early May report to Congress on his administration's foreign policy, the President declared that in the 70 years since the 1903 treaty "the world has changed radically," and that the time had come "for both parties ... to develop a new relationship ... that will guarantee continued effective operation of the canal while meeting Panama's legitimate aspirations."⁴⁷

Among other issues, the presence of the U.S. Southern Command in the Panama Canal Zone upset Panamanian officials. A DoD unified combatant command, SOUTHCOM controlled U.S. military activities in Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. Established as the Caribbean Defense Command to defend the Panama Canal and the surrounding area during World War II, the command expanded during the Cold War as it took responsibility for a variety of inter-American security activities. This growth rankled a succession of Panamanian leaders, but most acutely Torrijos, who argued to U.S. diplomats that SOUTHCOM's activities beyond canal defense violated the 1903 treaty requirement that the waterway "shall be neutral in perpetuity." Moreover, Torrijos found its military structure "imposing" and its rank structure "disproportionate" to that of his own military. In 1970, responding to pressure from various quarters—including Panamanian opposition to SOUTHCOM—the secretary of state proposed eliminating the command. At that time, Kissinger and JCS Chairman Moorer convinced Defense Secretary Laird and President Nixon to retain the four-star joint military headquarters. The strategic and political value of SOUTHCOM, they argued, outweighed any of the benefits of disestablishment.⁴⁸

Many in the State Department and in the Congress, however, remained skeptical after SOUTHCOM narrowly escaped dissolution. At the outset of Nixon's second term Assistant

Secretary of State Charles A. Meyer raised Panama's well-established concerns about SOUTHCOM's continued presence with Secretary of State Rogers, adding that the command's removal from Panama "would create a more propitious climate for negotiations" and would neither impede the U.S. ability to provide military assistance to Latin American nations nor infringe on the U.S. military's ability to defend the canal. Congressional skeptics of SOUTHCOM found a powerful voice in Senator William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, whose staff had studied the matter in late 1972 and found Panamanian complaints valid. The command's wide-ranging mission did exceed what was necessary for the treaty-enshrined mission of canal defense. Moreover, the committee said it was "hard to believe" SOUTHCOM was as important to national security as the unified commands covering Europe and the Pacific were. "A good case can be made for abolishing SOUTHCOM," the report concluded, but even if it was retained, its headquarters should move either to the continental United States or to Puerto Rico.⁴⁹

With such persistent skepticism about its value on the U.S. side, SOUTHCOM's future remained uncertain. During spring 1973 the State Department and DoD tangled over whether to remove the command as a unilateral concession to Panama in the interest of sparking new progress in the talks. During his brief tenure as secretary of defense, Elliot Richardson squashed the idea, concluding that having SOUTHCOM in Panama was an "efficient and economic arrangement," and that moving some of its functions elsewhere would increase cost and decrease effectiveness. Schlesinger confirmed his predecessor's findings shortly after taking office. Yet when the NSC Under Secretaries Committee convened in May 1973 to review U.S. treaty relations with Panama, with an eye toward getting the stalled negotiations moving again, Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush, the committee chair, suggested that a treaty would likely

remain out of reach unless the United States made new unilateral concessions, such as moving or disestablishing SOUTHCOM. At that time, DoD countered that the United States should not concede SOUTHCOM at the outset of renewed negotiations, but instead address the topic as a central issue during the talks. The main concern of Deputy Secretary Clements and Assistant Secretary (ISA) Robert Hill was that putting SOUTHCOM on the table might precipitate a flood of Panamanian demands to further reduce the U.S. military presence in the Canal Zone, eroding the United States's 1903 treaty right to defend the canal.⁵⁰

The SOUTHCOM issue remained an open question on the U.S. side when, in May 1973, looking to build momentum in the wake of the UN Security Council, Panamanian Foreign Minister Juan Antonio Tack proposed to Secretary of State Rogers eight “principles” that he and General Torrijos wanted in a new treaty with the United States. They called for abrogating the 1903 treaty; rejecting the concept of “perpetuity” in favor of an agreement with “a fixed termination date”; quickly ending any U.S. jurisdiction on Panamanian territory; eliminating the Canal Zone; giving Panama “a just and equitable share” of the canal’s economic benefits; limiting U.S. Government activities to operation, maintenance, and protection of the canal; limiting U.S. military activities in Panama to “such activities as may be expressly stipulated in the treaty” (thus avoiding the mission growth that followed World War II); and ensuring that the terms of any future construction activities be mutually agreed upon by both governments.⁵¹

The Nixon administration offered only a pro forma response and took no immediate action on the Panamanian proposal. Congressional hearings on Watergate had begun that same month, and after years on the job with little concrete progress to show for it, Ambassador Robert B. Anderson resigned as lead U.S. negotiator in June. In his place Nixon nominated Ellsworth Bunker, an established diplomat who had helped mediate a solution to the Dominican crisis

(1965–1966) and then served as U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam from 1967 to 1973. Confirmed by the Senate in September, Bunker soon called on Secretary Schlesinger and members of the Joint Chiefs to solicit views on the canal issue, knowing, as William Jordan later wrote, that a treaty would be possible only if Pentagon leaders thought it could be achieved without imperiling their ability to defend the canal. Before Bunker met with the secretary, the deputy negotiator, Morey Bell, had told him that Schlesinger was “instinctively ... worried at the apparently relentless erosion of American power positions abroad,” and that the secretary considered the canal and the Canal Zone as one such position. Yet he did not think the defense secretary would be inflexible on the issue. Bell advised Bunker that once Schlesinger “has let off steam,” he would see the risks of doing nothing and the wisdom of “returning to Panama rights and properties we no longer require but Panama needs.” “The Secretary is tough on Panama,” Bell suggested, “but not irreversibly.” Schlesinger went into the meeting with Bunker having been advised by ISA that Panama would “stick to its original demands” in future negotiations (no reference was made to Tack’s recent proposal), and that its negotiators tended to seize upon previous U.S. concessions as “a point of departure” to make new demands. Once they met, Bunker found Schlesinger “only vaguely aware of the Panama issue and inclined to think any change” to the status quo would be bad. He discovered that some members of the JCS seemed more open to meaningful change in the canal status quo. Chairman Moorer, however, articulated a more traditional view—recalling the canal’s strategic importance in supplying military operations during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.⁵²

With Kissinger’s confirmation as secretary of state that September, Bunker had as his boss the administration’s principal proponent of a “fresh look” at the canal problem. Kissinger propelled talks on the Panamanian eight principles forward. Before Bunker flew to Panama on

November 26, he circulated amendments to the Panamanian principles, which he planned to offer as a counterproposal, for comment. ISA, the general counsel office, and the Department of the Army each took substantial cuts at the draft and, as William Jorden recalled, “bombarded Bunker with memos.” They questioned almost every item in the document, proposed new wording for each principle, and offered legal briefs “explaining why this or that principle would adversely affect some vital national interest.” Bunker sensed the Pentagon was trying to slow-roll his efforts by burying his draft in edits, and he telephoned Schlesinger to break the impasse: “Look, I’m going to Panama. We have read everything your people have written about it [the draft principles] and we’ve taken all that into account.” The veteran diplomat pleaded, “I have a paper, and this is what I’m going to go with.... But please, no more changes.” While DoD opposed the Panamanian principles and the idea of giving any ground to the Panamanians, Schlesinger opted to keep his powder dry for another day. “Mr. Ambassador, you have a job to do. You are the president’s representative. I think you should go ahead with what you want,” he replied.⁵³

Bunker’s talks in Panama yielded the progress Kissinger had sought. On Christmas Eve the secretary of state notified President Nixon that the ambassador’s visit had created “an entirely new and favorable climate” for progress and expressed optimism that “prospects seem good for resolving this long-standing issue within the next year.” Tack and Secretary Kissinger initialed the eight principles in Panama on February 7, 1974. Much of the language from Tack’s original proposal had changed. At U.S. insistence, for example, the final text stipulated that the 1903 treaty would only be abrogated when a new treaty was concluded. Bunker’s team also ceded some ground, acknowledging that henceforth Panama would “grant” U.S. rights for operation and defense of the canal—something that the United States had long claimed it possessed

inherently. In summary, a new lock canal treaty would have a fixed termination date, eliminating the concept of perpetuity; the termination of U.S. jurisdiction over Panamanian territory would take place promptly; for the new treaty's duration, Panama would grant to the United States the right to use lands, waters, and airspace necessary for the operation, maintenance, protection, and defense of the canal and the transit of ships; upon the treaty's termination, Panama would assume total responsibility for operating the canal, granting the United States those rights necessary to regulate ship transits as well as operate, maintain, protect, and defend the canal. The Panamanians were ecstatic. Kissinger hailed the agreement, dubbed the "Tack-Kissinger Principles," as a turning point, noting that "in the past our negotiation would have been determined by relative strength. Today we have come together in an act of reconciliation."⁵⁴

Despite the diplomatic triumph and the new momentum of the Nixon administration's "fresh look," the two nations remained far apart on fundamentals. Damning evidence in the Watergate affair was creeping ever closer to the Oval Office, consuming President Nixon and the energy and attention of his closest aides. On Capitol Hill it was far from certain whether a canal treaty reflecting the Tack-Kissinger principles could realistically be ratified. On March 29, 1974, Senators Strom Thurmond (R-SC) and John McClellan (D-AR) introduced Senate Resolution 301, affirming the need for "continued undiluted United States sovereignty and jurisdiction" over the Panama Canal. In introducing the resolution on the Senate floor Thurmond took particular issue with the fourth of the Tack-Kissinger principles, which held that "The Panamanian territory in which the canal is situated shall be returned to the jurisdiction of the Republic of Panama." The senator from South Carolina called this "an utterly false statement," noting, "No part of the canal is situated in Panamanian territory" because the entire Canal Zone was obtained legally through treaty and purchase. The bipartisan resolution had gained 30 cosponsors by the time of

Thurmond's introductory remarks, leaving it just two below the 34-vote threshold that could block ratification of a future treaty. Those two cosponsors signed on within days in a show of strength that surprised the Nixon administration. The canal negotiations' suddenly fraught political prospects accentuated the deep differences within the U.S. Government. In May 1974 Deputy Secretary Clements and ISA officials met with Dr. James Lucier, chief legislative assistant to Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), one of the resolution's 34 cosponsors. All eight principles, Lucier claimed, were wrong and based on false assumptions. Clements replied that his complaint addressed the wrong audience. Instead, Clements suggested that Dr. Lucier do his "missionary work" with State Department officials, adding that "the Pentagon has no desire to give up anything in the Canal Zone, but we in the Defense Department are not sure that we have a choice."⁵⁵

DoD's position vis-à-vis the State Department had hardened in February when the Joint Staff sent Schlesinger a study affirming the strategic importance of the Panama Canal. ISA had asked for the study to counter criticisms that the 60-year-old waterway's value to the United States had declined amid the growing girth of modern warships (many of the newest designs could not fit through the canal's lock system) and the advent of nuclear weapons that could destroy the canal as a military asset in a single strike. The Joint Staff study found that the canal remained a "major defense asset, the use of which is necessary to enhance US capability for timely reinforcement in Asia and Europe during periods of conflict." Sidestepping the issue of ship size, the study further found that the canal—or a future, larger one—"will continue to be of importance to [U.S.] national security" over the years to come. In a direct rebuke to concerns of U.S. diplomats eager for progress in the negotiations, the study noted that although Panama could threaten the canal itself, "the probability of such action is low at present."⁵⁶

While DoD leaders highlighted the value of the canal and pushed back against making concessions to Panama, their own views on the utility and future of SOUTHCOM began to shift. Schlesinger had inherited and endorsed his predecessor's position on keeping the command in Panama, along with its mission, but he also confronted growing budget constraints and pressure to reduce the U.S. military footprint overseas. In early October 1973, he ordered a worldwide review of unified command staffs with an eye toward a 30 percent reduction in personnel. In response, OSD's director of program analysis and evaluation, or PA&E, found that more aggressive reductions—up to 40 percent—were possible, and additional efficiencies would be achieved by eliminating entire commands and redistributing their responsibilities. PA&E Director Leonard Sullivan wrote to the secretary that the analysis had left him “very unsure” of SOUTHCOM's reason for being and led him to recommend eliminating the command and shifting its functions and personnel elsewhere. The department's existing worldwide structure of unified commands was “unwieldy,” “excessively layered,” and “too fragmented” to coordinate timely responses to regional contingencies. With little threat to U.S. security interests in Latin America, according to the PA&E analysis, there was little need for a combatant command in the region. In fact, either the U.S. Atlantic Command or U.S. Pacific Command could handle the essential task of defending the Panama Canal more efficiently than SOUTHCOM could.⁵⁷

At the same time, the Joint Chiefs' commitment to the Southern Command also waned. When review of the Unified Command Plan wrapped up in March 1974, JCS Chairman Moorer reported to Schlesinger that it had been conducted with an “acute awareness” of the secretary's desire to reduce headquarters and headquarters staffs across the department. He recommended as the consensus of the chiefs that SOUTHCOM be eliminated; its principal mission of canal defense should be given to the commander in chief, U.S. Atlantic Command, while military

assistance with Latin American should be taken up by a new and “austere” Latin American Mutual Security Assistance Headquarters reporting directly to the JCS. Schlesinger concurred and in early September recommended to the new president, Gerald Ford, that SOUTHCOM be disestablished as early as the end of FY1975, with the specific timing calculated to give maximum advantage to U.S. negotiators working on a canal treaty with Panama. Pressure to reduce America’s overseas military footprint and Schlesinger’s own drive for economy outweighed the kinds of arguments that had saved the command in 1970. The secretary summarized his point of view during a meeting with President Ford and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft in October: SOUTHCOM had served “a useful purpose politically” in the hemisphere, but “we just can’t afford these luxuries anymore.”⁵⁸

While he was now willing to concede SOUTHCOM in talks with the Panamanians, Schlesinger was unmoved on more central DoD concerns about the future of the canal. Bunker visited the Pentagon on July 9, 1974, to update DoD leaders on the progress of the negotiations, stressing that, when all was said and done, Panama’s consent to the imposing U.S. presence would continue to decline if no new treaty emerged from the negotiations. Such an outcome would endanger the very security of the canal that DoD was seeking to preserve. Bunker then noted that U.S. and Panamanian negotiators had reached the first of eight expected “threshold agreements” on the eight Tack-Kissinger principles—the one that covered Panamanian participation in canal operation. When Bunker completed his briefing, according to one attendee, Schlesinger did not thank the ambassador or address him by name or title but proceeded to “brusquely” read prepared questions in the “tone of a jaded professor addressing a freshman at exam time.” Taken aback, Bunker, 35 years the defense secretary’s senior, remained silent, refusing to engage with such “impertinent quizzing.” Breaking the silence and trying to ease the

situation, JCS Chairman Brown chimed in by asking Bunker to explain his “good reasons” for pressing ahead, which the ambassador proceeded to do.⁵⁹

Schlesinger pressed Bunker for his views on the Thurmond-McClellan resolution in the Senate opposing any relinquishment of sovereignty over the Canal Zone, to which Bunker responded that only 16 or 17 of the cosponsoring senators were “hard-liners.” The rest might be persuaded. Tuned as ever to the Pentagon’s budget outlook, Schlesinger bemoaned the fact that McClellan, one of the two original cosponsors, headed the Senate’s Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. He also informed Bunker that the JCS had recently updated its position on the canal negotiations, wanting U.S. negotiators to seek the longest possible treaty duration, the longest possible term in which to exercise options for canal expansion, and the longest and broadest extension of U.S. control over operations and defense following any expansion. They also desired a joint guarantee that when the treaty expired the canal would remain open to world shipping and Panama would take no action to hamper efficient operation of the waterway. Schlesinger also queried whether a provision for Panamanian participation in canal defense was merely a cosmetic formula or something that might allow saboteurs to come closer to the canal. At some point, Bunker replied, Panamanians must participate. Continuing that topic, the secretary asked whether Panamanians ever would be able to defend the canal. JCS Chairman Brown replied that combined participation with an effective working relationship probably would enhance security. Assistant Secretary (ISA) Robert Ellsworth wanted to know how long a new treaty would last. Bunker noted that the guideline issued by President Nixon in 1971 specified 50 years. Since Panamanians wanted a much shorter time, Bunker thought reaching an agreement about duration would depend largely on satisfying their desires for participation and jurisdiction.⁶⁰

Two weeks later Bunker returned to the Pentagon for a less contentious, more substantive discussion with Ellsworth. The ambassador again highlighted his team's progress but frankly admitted that he did not know how long the talks would take to bear fruit in the form of a treaty. They would certainly extend beyond 1974, he said, and might wrap up in 1975. But if negotiations extended beyond then, the 1976 election year would "be a bad year for the treaty to be presented to the Senate." Moreover, when a treaty finally did go to the Senate, Bunker allowed, it may or may not win ratification. Bunker then turned to a specific matter on which DoD might help the negotiations, saying that if SOUTHCOM was to be disestablished he would appreciate being able to use it as a carrot in discussions with his Panamanian counterparts. Ellsworth knew that Schlesinger and the Joint Chiefs were heading precisely in that direction and agreed that having that fact at his fingertips would help Bunker at the negotiating table. Later, Ellsworth informed Bunker that Schlesinger had concurred. SOUTHCOM's fate was not yet settled, but if it was done away with, the secretary agreed that Bunker should certainly use it to gain leverage in negotiations.⁶¹

As it happened, Bunker would not be able to play the SOUTHCOM trump card in bilateral canal negotiations. Schlesinger presented DoD's revised UCP to President Ford on December 17, 1974, after a period of interagency coordination that brought DoD and the State Department into agreement about eliminating SOUTHCOM and the importance of gaining maximum leverage from the decision in talks with the Panamanians. The JCS quickly began planning for the anticipated changes. The earlier recommendation for a small headquarters to coordinate military assistance to Latin America evolved into an entity called Defense Activity Panama (DAP), responsible for foreign military assistance and "senior military representation to Latin American armed forces." U.S. Atlantic Command would assume responsibility for

defending the canal from external attacks. Implementation might have proceeded smoothly from there, but the JCS memorandum to Secretary Schlesinger describing the road ahead came with a dissenting memo appended—from the JCS chairman himself—that spelled out a very different view. Up to that point, General George Brown, who had relieved the retiring U.S. Navy Admiral Moorer as chairman six months earlier, had agreed that SOUTHCOM could go. However, a January 1975 trip through Latin America caused him to reconsider. In wake of his visit, the chairman concluded that the chiefs' recommended arrangement—DAP to handle security assistance and commander in chief Atlantic Command senior representation to handle canal defense—would create “unnecessary and wasteful” command layers. Furthermore, dispersing the U.S. military role in Panama from one organization to several could complicate rather than simplify treaty negotiations with the Panamanian Government. The chairman's primary concern, however, was that disbanding SOUTHCOM and fragmenting its functions to other organizations could leave Latin American leaders with the impression that the United States was retreating from the region. That could produce “repercussions outweighing the relatively minor benefits which would accrue” from the command's elimination. In sum, Brown recommended maintaining the “status quo” of a single command based in Panama. Savings could best be realized by consolidating the numerous small U.S. defense activities in Panama under a leaner but still singular combatant command.⁶²

General Brown's dissent gave SOUTHCOM a temporary stay of execution. Kissinger advised President Ford to approve the revised UCP but hold off on any action on SOUTHCOM until DoD reached an internal consensus on how to handle the command's “residential functions.” Unlike the State Department he led, Kissinger had leaned toward retaining SOUTHCOM and had been instrumental in saving it from dissolution in 1970. He had also

voiced support for retaining the command in 1973 while his nomination as the nation's top diplomat was pending in the Senate. Kissinger's advice to the president moved SOUTHCOM farther from the chopping block.⁶³

What tipped the scales in favor of SOUTHCOM's survival was the work of Schlesinger's senior military assistant, Maj. Gen. John Wickham. He gathered recommendations on SOUTHCOM's future from the JCS, ISA, and the assistant secretary of defense for manpower and reserve affairs (M&RA). ISA officials and Chairman Brown believed that manpower savings alone did not justify shuttering SOUTHCOM and were outweighed by the damage its dissolution would inflict on U.S. prestige in Latin America. They continued to favor a single, smaller command in the Canal Zone. The remaining chiefs, out-of-step with their chairman, pressed for divvying up SOUTHCOM's portfolio among several organizations while retaining a small activity in the Canal Zone to handle security assistance and military representation throughout Latin America. None of these recommendations hit home with General Wickham. To supplement these internal DoD perspectives, he sought outside advice from Central Intelligence Agency Deputy Director Vernon Walters, an old friend and retired Army lieutenant general with considerable experience in Latin America. Walters warned against breaking up SOUTHCOM's core functions and advised keeping a single command in Panama as a signal of Latin America's importance to the United States. Wickham shared these views with Secretary Schlesinger in March 1975.⁶⁴

In short order, a new consensus emerged from DoD that proved acceptable to the White House and the State Department—one that U.S. treaty negotiators believed would be acceptable to the Panamanians. Instead of eliminating SOUTHCOM, DoD would revise the UCP to reflect “a smaller unified command,” still in Panama, with a “reduced joint headquarters.” In early June

1975 Secretary Schlesinger laid out the specifics of his decision to retain a leaner SOUTHCOM with fewer general officers and an overall staff reduction of up to 20 percent. As a specific concession to Torrijos, who had long been concerned about the rank imbalance between SOUTHCOM's top brass and those in his own military, a three-star rather than a four-star commander would head the command. With this compromise, the on-again, off-again, on-again dissolution of SOUTHCOM was off again—this time for good. In the end, Schlesinger, who pushed hard during his tenure for headquarters staff reductions throughout DoD's sprawling worldwide enterprise, came down on the side that less—not none—was more when it came to a combatant command headquarters in Latin America. Schlesinger recommended Maj. Gen. Dennis P. McAuliffe for promotion to lieutenant general and assignment as SOUTHCOM commander-in-chief. Nominated by President Ford, and confirmed by the U.S. Senate, McAuliffe would be the first officer below the four-star level to head a unified combatant command, one that would have a “unique organizational form” that was “not suitable for other unified commands where area, critical responsibilities, and forces assigned are much greater.” Having been promoted to fill the new second deputy secretary of defense position, Robert Ellsworth approved the final, two-phased implementation plan for the reorganization of SOUTHCOM on December 23, 1975. The bureaucratic back-and-forth that produced consensus did not spur canal treaty negotiations forward, but it did remove SOUTHCOM as a roadblock in the talks.⁶⁵

While the SOUTHCOM issue was on its way to resolution, the differences between DoD and Ambassador Bunker regarding the wider treaty negotiations centered increasingly on treaty duration and defense rights. On February 12, 1975, Bunker had updated Assistant Secretary (ISA) Ellsworth and his team on negotiations, saying a status of forces agreement had been

“nailed down” and talks about land use had gone well. Convinced that Panamanians would not accept a treaty lasting 50 years, Bunker suggested trading a shorter duration covering canal operation for a longer duration on canal defense. When Ellsworth referred to the “strong concern” of Deputy Secretary Clements and Army Secretary Howard Calloway on scaling back the 50-year duration, Bunker replied no concession meant no treaty. While he did not say so to Bunker, Ellsworth was also advancing the established views of Secretary Schlesinger and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Panamanians, the ambassador predicted, would propose terminating the treaty by 2000 but might accept a longer period for canal defense. Although it would be little consolation for the Pentagon, he pointed out that the Panamanians had agreed that the United States would participate in post-treaty protection of the canal.⁶⁶

At an impasse, Bunker soon concluded that for the negotiations to advance, the years-old negotiating instructions that bound him to pursuit of a 50-year treaty—the same ones his predecessor had operated under—would need to change. But OSD was not ready to bow on the issue of duration. On February 27, Clements informed Kissinger that DoD still wanted a 50-year duration for canal defense. To justify a U.S. military presence for the longest possible time, Clements cited the need to assure transit of ships supporting strategic war plans considering Panama’s long history of political instability and potential security problems posed by Cuba and the Soviet Union. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED].⁶⁷ On April 21, 1975, with Saigon’s surrender a few days away halfway around the world, attendees of the secretary of defense’s regular staff meeting discussed treaty options. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED].⁶⁸

At an NSC meeting on May 15, 1975, Bunker said a treaty was within reach, but he needed flexibility to bargain on the durations for canal operation and defense. Confrontation with Panama, he predicted, “would turn what is now a basically free country radically to the Left.” Schlesinger, nonetheless, identified himself as a treaty opponent. Since 1945, he said, “one of the biggest mistakes the United States has made ... was not to acquire sovereign base rights in a number of places around the world.” The canal was one of these assets, and already, he claimed, the eight principles Kissinger and Tack had negotiated amounted to a generous sacrifice of land and sovereignty. What Bunker described as flexibility struck Schlesinger as a substantial erosion of the U.S. position, “reducing our requirements to what we think Torrijos will accept.” Kissinger argued that failure to conclude a treaty would spark riots and harassment in Panama, diminishing canal security and spreading rapidly throughout the hemisphere. Schlesinger disagreed: “When the U.S. shows strength and determination, it receives respect. When it recedes from its position, it whets appetites.” Clements, by contrast, foresaw no problem about State and Defense “coming to some reasonable solution.” However, fearing that the treaty might become an explosive issue in the 1976 presidential campaign, he suggested “making some accommodations, working out the details, and holding everything as it is for 18 months.” Summing up, Kissinger anticipated that a treaty would extend U.S. sovereign rights through

2000. Then sovereignty would phase out over three years, U.S. control over canal operations would end after 25 years, and U.S. defense rights would terminate after 40 to 45 years.⁶⁹

Following that meeting Clements, whose strained relationship with Schlesinger was no secret, broke with his boss and began to freelance on the duration issue. In a follow-up discussion with Bunker and Kissinger on May 23, he advised that trying to achieve a treaty before the election would be both impractical and politically damaging. The deputy defense secretary instead recommended creating “a sense of momentum” by inviting General Torrijos to Washington and explaining to him the electoral reasons why a treaty should not be initialed until early 1977, as well as proposing durations of 25 years for canal operation and 40 to 50 years for defense. But Ambassador Bunker counseled Kissinger that these were not enough. He wanted defense duration lowered to 35 years, with a fallback position of 20 years on canal operation. Clements, in turn, advised President Ford that the Pentagon preferred 45 years’ duration for defense and would not accept anything less than 40. In amplification, he described the “fundamental disagreement” with State as stemming from DoD’s distrust of the Torrijos government: under Panamanian control, “United States citizens associated with the canal operation would be subject to whims of an illegally spawned dictatorial regime which has repeatedly demonstrated abusive power, disregard of civil liberties, harassment of private citizens, capricious treatment by police and judges and repressed freedom of press, as well as increasing association with communist nations.”⁷⁰

When the NSC convened on July 23 to discuss canal negotiations, Kissinger reported that the talks “are stalled and everyone is getting itchy.” He recommended adopting, as a fallback position, 40 years’ duration for canal defense and 20 for canal operation. Schlesinger restated his basic reservation: giving away sovereignty would give away “85 percent of what is important to

us.” Then Clements broke ranks with Schlesinger openly, telling the president “we need to have a more enlightened view” than simply trying to maintain sovereignty. When Ford asked for the JCS views, General Brown straddled: “Everyone who has communicated with us is dead set against it [concessions to the Panamanians], but we’ve already started down the road and we can’t back out now.” The Joint Chiefs would accept durations of 40 to 45 years on defense and 25 years on operation. Schlesinger commented that whether duration lasted 40 or 35 years, “we are creating a phantasm in that once [Panamanians] control operations, then they can stop the Canal. Defense would be moot.” Perhaps, therefore, 30 years each for operation and defense would make more sense. Schlesinger told the president that he faced three choices: acquiesce; recant; or procrastinate. Clements interjected, “Opportunity is another choice.”⁷¹

In early August 1975, Clements and Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll sent the president their recommendations for new negotiating instructions. For canal defense, they agreed that Bunker should seek a 50-year duration but should be willing to fall back to 40. For canal operation, the aim should be a 25-years duration. If necessary to achieve an extended period of defense rights or other critical objectives, they agreed that Bunker could fall back as far as 20 years. President Ford approved these instructions on August 18. In short, Clements had done an end-run around Schlesinger and had helped forge agreement on a difficult, longstanding international problem. A *New York Times* headline declared “Pentagon Yielded to Ford on Canal.”⁷²

On September 3, at Contadora Island off Panama, Clements and General Brown met with Torrijos. Clements opened by saying that political problems made completing a treaty impossible before the end of 1976. “Two years,” Torrijos replied, “are nothing in the fight for the liberation of the Panamanian people.” Brown gave Torrijos his “word as a soldier that we will work for a

fair and just treaty.” Clements and Brown worried that the talks with Panama were the only major negotiations in which the DoD played no direct top-level role. Promptly, Brown arranged for Lt. Gen. Welborn G. Dolvin, USA (Ret.), to serve as deputy negotiator; his appointment took effect on November 6.⁷³

Bunker and Dolvin flew to Panama City, where talks resumed on November 19. Implementing the president’s instructions, Bunker agreed to shorten the durations for canal defense to 40 years and for canal operation to December 31, 1999. He also offered a watered-down clause on residual defense, by which the two sides could work out long-range security arrangements before the defense agreement expired. Returning to Washington, Dolvin faced a tongue-lashing from Clements for giving away a post-treaty right to keep U.S. troops in Panama. Subsequently, Bunker assured Clements that a right to defend the canal probably could be worked into treaty clauses guaranteeing the canal’s neutrality. During the next round of discussions, in February 1976, Panamanians ruled out any presence of U.S. combat troops after 2000 but seemed willing to accept some U.S. defense rights extending beyond that time.⁷⁴

During the rest of 1976, residual defense rights looked to be the last remaining obstacle. Clearly, Panamanians benefited by intransigence in the negotiations. Schlesinger continued to oppose concessions, but Bunker, Kissinger, and Ford decided that they must adapt to new realities. Thus, General Brown advised Senator Thurmond that the status quo simply was not sustainable: “Based on the experience of the British in the Suez, the French in Morocco and Algeria, and the Portuguese in Angola and Mozambique, in the face of rising Panamanian nationalism, we could expect to find little comfort in legal or historical justification of our position, substantial though they may be.” When President Ford lost to Governor Jimmy Carter in the 1976 presidential election, it fell to the new administration to finalize the negotiations.

Carter's success in concluding two canal treaties with Panama and securing their Senate ratification is due in part to the persistent work of the Ford administration, and to the constructive role key Pentagon leaders played in the canal negotiations.⁷⁵

From 1973 to 1976 OSD followed the lead of Presidents Nixon and Ford and adopted a low-profile approach toward Latin America. The Pentagon continued the long-established U.S. practice of cultivating Latin American military leaders on the assumption they could be a positive force in their societies and maintain a stability favorable to American interests. The U.S. military assistance program and foreign military sales continued at a modest level and were hampered by congressional restrictions. Territorial disputes and human rights issues increasingly concerned Washington, but not enough to spur bold, sustained departures in policy. DoD confronted transnational challenges of drug trafficking and disaster response in limited ways. As Washington continued expecting Latin America to follow its lead, strains grew in its relationship with the region. The rise of Latin America nationalism, growing independence from U.S. policy, and anti-Americanism combined to encourage more assertive Latin American nations.

This upsurge in nationalism caused grave concern for defense secretaries Richardson, Schlesinger, and Rumsfeld in Chile and Panama. From 1970 to 1973 the Nixon administration looked for ways to weaken and undermine the democratically elected leftist president of Chile, Salvador Allende, convinced that he was a threat to U.S. regional interests and stability. While the Pentagon was not directly involved in the efforts to encourage Chile's military to overthrow Allende, the secretary of defense, deputy secretary of defense, and other senior leaders were fully aware of the operation and concurred with its aims. They more actively shaped the U.S. response to Panamanian demands for control over the canal and the Canal Zone. The Nixon-Ford

administration's willingness to negotiate a solution forced DoD leaders to make important decisions revolving around questions of how long the canal and the swath land surrounding it—which included SOUTHCOM—should remain under U.S. jurisdiction and how long the United States should have the right to defend the canal. Defense Secretaries Richardson, Schlesinger, and Rumsfeld feared that giving in to Panamanian demands would mean consenting to the decline of U.S. power, and each pushed for retaining as much control over the waterway as possible. OSD ultimately supported U.S. negotiators as larger political realities softened the Ford administration's positions on canal control, defense rights, and treaty duration. DoD helped to create a negotiating strategy that resulted in a timetable for transfer and defense. The Carter administration then signed the U.S.-Panama agreements and successfully convinced the Senate to ratify the canal treaties.

President Nixon's initial hopes for a more mature partnership with all countries south of the U.S. border with minimal cost were not realized. During the tenures of Richardson, Schlesinger, and Rumsfeld, the relationships did not always work out as Nixon and his successor, Ford, anticipated. Many Latin American countries no longer accepted that U.S. leadership and policy was necessarily best for them. Rather they followed policies that they believed were more responsive to their own interests. This new independence from the "giant to the north" was just a beginning, but it would dominate U.S. Latin American relations in the years to come.

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46. Richard Severo, "Panama's Chief Denounces U.S. and Warns of 'Violent Changes'," *New York Times*, 16 Mar 1973, 16; "Text of Draft Resolution," *Department of State Bulletin* 68, no. 1762 (Apr 1973): 497; Richard Severo, "U.S. in U.N. Council Vetoes Panama Canal Resolution," *New York Times*, 22 Mar 1973, 1.
47. Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 206; Richard Nixon, "Fourth Annual Report to Congress on United States Foreign Policy," 3 May 1973, *Nixon Public Papers 1973*, 5:443.
48. Memo, Meyers for Rogers, 17 Jan 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 22:3–4 (doc. 2). Jorden recalled that SOUTHCOM's "large and highly visible command structure" was "a longtime irritant to many Panamanians." Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 152; Edward J. Drea et al., *History of the Unified Command Plan, 1946–2012* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, 2013), 25, 28.

49. Memo, Meyers for Rogers, 17 Jan 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 22:3–4 (doc 2); ltr, Fulbright to Laird, 12 Jan 1973, folder Panama 091, box 79, Acc 330-78-0001, NARA.
50. Ltr, Richardson to Fulbright, 31 Mar 1973, folder Panama 091, box 79, Acc. 330-78-0001. Schlesinger's approval of the status quo set by Richardson, while not pinned to a specific time, is captured in a document produced in early September 1973 entitled "Status of the USC Directed Study on the Desirability/Feasibility of the Transfer of USOUTHCOM from Panama." It notes, "Dr. Schlesinger recently approved the previously coordinated DOD position that USSOUTHCOM should be retained as a unified command and should remain in Panama." Although undated, the document was attached to NSC Under Secretaries Committee memo, 16 May 1973, subj: Civilianization of the Canal Zone Governorship, folder Panama 821 Sep-Dec, box 79, Acc 330-78-0001, NARA. See also memo, Rush for Crimmins, 14 May 1973; and memo; Rush for Kubisch, 23 Jul 1973, subj: The Panama Canal: both also in folder Panama 821 Jan-Aug, box 79, Acc 330-78-0001, NARA. Rush's July 23 memo directed the committee to consider the transfer of SOUTHCOM from the Canal Zone, but the detailed instructions attached to the memo (the "Terms of Reference") directed the committee to consider transfer from Panama as well as disestablishment. Memo, Hill for Director Joint Staff, 30 Jul 1973, subj: US Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), folder CINCSO, box 4, Acc 330-76-0117, NARA; memo, Hill for Clements, 11 Aug 1973, folder Panama 821 Jan-Aug, box 79, Acc. 330-78-0001.
51. Memo, Kubisch to Rogers, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 22:41 (doc. 13).
52. Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 208; memo, Bell for Bunker, 21 Nov 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 22:69–71 (doc 25); "Talking Paper for use by Secretary Schlesinger during a courtesy call by Ambassador Bunker on 21 November 1973" (stamped "SecDef Has Seen"), folder Panama 821 Jan-Aug, box 79, Acc 330-78-0001, NARA; Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 208–209.
53. Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 211–212.
54. Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, 24 Dec 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 22:77–79 (doc 28); Long, *Latin America Confronts the United States*, 94; Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 211–217, 219–221. See also "Joint Statement ... on February 7, 1974 at Panama City," folder Panama 821 1974, box 71, Acc 330-78-0011, NARA; Dan Morgan, "Proposed Outlined for New Treaty on Panama Canal," *The Washington Post*, 6 Feb 1974, A5; David Binder, "U.S. Agrees to Yield Sovereignty of Canal to Panama," *New York Times*, 8 Feb 1974, 2.
55. Senator Thurmond, speaking on U.S. Sovereignty and Jurisdiction over the Panama Canal, 29 Mar 1974, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* 120, 8832–8836; "31 Senators Support U.S. Canal Role," *Washington Post*, 30 Mar 1974, A4; "32 Senators Back Resolution Opposing Panama Canal Pact," *New York Times*, 30 Mar 1974, 3; memcon, 26 Jun 1974, subj: Present Attitude in Congress toward Treaty with Panama, on 10 May 1974, folder Panama 821 1974, box 71, Acc 330-78-0011, NARA.
56. Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 209; memo, Colladay for Schlesinger, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 22:89–90 (doc 33).
57. Drea et al., *History of the Unified Command Plan*, 30; memo, Sullivan for Schlesinger, 30 Oct 1973, subj: Unified Headquarters Staffpower; working paper, n.d., subj: The Unified Command Structure: both in folder 322, box 37, Acc 330-78-0001, NARA.
58. Memo, Moorer for Schlesinger, 19 Mar 1974, subj: Unified Command Plan Changes; memo, Schlesinger for Secretaries of the Military Departments, 3 Sep 1974, subj: Unified, Specified and Subordinate Command Structure: both in folder 322 UNIFIED, box 31, Acc 330-78-0001, NARA; memcon, Ford, Schlesinger, and Scowcroft, 10 Oct 1974, document CK2349604393, U.S. Declassified Documents Online, Gale Research.
59. Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 250–252 (quote on 251). Jorden, who did not attend the meeting, presumably was reporting the recollection of a State Department participant. According to this account,

Schlesinger began by asking, “Why should we jeopardize our national security by giving up our vital sovereignty?”

60. Memcon, Kissinger, Schlesinger, et al., 9 Jul 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 22:139–141 (doc. 49).

61. Memcon, Bunker, Ellsworth, et al., 25 Jul 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 22:141–144 (doc 50).

62. Memo, Schlesinger for Ford, 17 Dec 1974, subj: Unified Command Plan, folder 322 (S-Z); ltr, Clements to Ingersoll, 25 Nov 1974, folder 322 UNIFIED; ltr, Ingersoll to Clements, 29 Nov 1974, folder 322 UNIFIED: all in box 31, Acc 330-78-0001, NARA. See also Drea et al., *History of the Unified Command Plan, 1946–2012*, 28–33; Cynthia Watson, *Combatant Commands: Origins, Structure, and Engagements* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011), 85–117; memo, Brown for Schlesinger, 29 Jan 1975, subj: Unified, Specified, and Subordinate Command Structure; memo, Brown for Schlesinger, 19 Jan. 1975, subj: Unified Command Plan for Latin America: both in folder SOUTHCOM, box 79, Acc 330-78-0058, NARA.

63. Memo, Kissinger for Ford, 22 Feb 1975, subj: Proposed Changes to the Unified Command Plan, folder 322 S-Z, box 31, Acc 330-78-0058, NARA. In a September 14, 1973, meeting with Deputy National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft and then-JCS Chairman Admiral Moorer, Moorer had raised the issue of SOUTHCOM’s future in the context of the Nixon administration’s 1970 decision to retain it—saying that the command’s real importance was “purely its political value.” To that, Kissinger responded, “SOUTHCOM will stay.” See memcon, Kissinger, Scowcroft, and Moorer, 14 Sep 1973, document CK2349565933, U.S. Declassified Documents Online, Gale Research; memo, Ford for Schlesinger, 24 Feb 1975, subj: Unified Command Plan, folder 322 S-Z, box 31, Acc 330-78-0058, NARA.

64. Memcon, Bunker, Brown, et al., 21 Feb 1975, subj: Panama Canal Negotiations, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 22:186–188 (doc 67); memo, Brehm to Schlesinger, 14 Mar 1975, subj: Reassignment of US Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) Responsibilities, folder SOUTHCOM, box 79, Acc 330-78-0058, NARA. Walters had been in the car with Richard Nixon in Caracas, Venezuela, when an anti-American mob attacked the vice president in 1958. Note, Wickham to Schlesinger, 17 Mar 1975 (stamped SecDef Has Seen on 24 Mar 1975), folder SOUTHCOM, box 79, Acc 330-78-0058, NARA.

65. Memo, Wickham for Scowcroft, 21 Apr 1975, subj: US Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), folder SOUTHCOM, box 79; memo, Schlesinger for Secretaries of the Military Departments, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Directors of the Defense Agencies, memo (Attachment B), 6 Jun 1975, subj: Unified, Specified and Subordinate Command Structure, folder 322 S-Z, box 31: both in Acc 330-78-0058, NARA. Ford signed his approval of McAuliffe’s nomination on June 30, 1975. Memo, Schlesinger for Ford, 27 May 1975, subj: Army General Officer Nomination; memo, Ellsworth for Secretaries of the Military Departments and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 23 Dec 1975, subj: Unified, Specified and Subordinate Command Structure: both in folder SOUTHCOM, box 79, Acc 330-78-0058, NARA.

66. Ltr, Schlesinger to Kissinger, 12 Aug 1974, folder Panama 821 1974, box 71; memcon, Ellsworth and Bunker, 21 Feb 1975, subj: Status Report by Ambassador Bunker—Panama Canal Treaty Negotiations, on 12 February 12, 1975, folder Panama 821 (Jan-Jul) 1975, box 77: both in Acc 330-78-0058, NARA.

67. Memo, DepSecDef for ATP(NSA), 27 Feb 1975, subj: Panama Canal Negotiations; memo, Bunker for ATP(NSA), 28 Mar 1975, subj: U.S.-Panama Treaty Negotiations: both in folder Panama 821 (Jan-Jul) 1975, box 77, Acc 330-78-0058, NARA.

68. [REDACTED]. In March 1974 the JCS recommended replacing SOUTHCOM with an austere Latin American Mutual Security Assistance Headquarters. Secretary Schlesinger concurred, but on April 21, 1975 he advised the president against proceeding until negotiations for a new canal treaty were concluded. President Ford agreed and

SOUTHCOM survived, albeit with a reduced size and structure. See Drea, *History of the Unified Command Plan, 1946–2013*, 31–33.

69. NSC, meeting minutes, pt. 2, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., 15 May 1975, NSC Minutes, Ford Library.

70. Memo, DepSecDef for ATP(NSA), 23 May 1975, subj: Panama Canal Treaty Negotiations; memo, Bunker for ATP(NSA), 3 Jun 1975, subj: U.S.-Panama Treaty Negotiations; memo, DepSecDef for President, 20 Jun 1975, subj: Panama Canal Treaty Negotiations: all in folder Panama 821 (Jan-Jul) 1975, box 77, Acc 330-78-0058, NARA.

71. NSC, meeting minutes, 4:50 to 5:45 p.m., 23 Jul 1975, NSC Minutes, Ford Library.

72. Memo, Clements and Ingersoll for Ford, 7 Aug 1975, subj: U.S.-Panama Treaty Negotiations, with attached NSDM 302, 18 Aug 1975, folder Panama 821 (Aug-Dec), box 77, Acc 330-78-0058, NARA; “Pentagon Yielded to Ford on Canal,” *New York Times*, 16 Sep 1975, 11.

73. Draft msg, AsstSecState Rogers to State, 9 Sep 1975, folder Panama 1975, box 77, Acc 330-78-0058, NARA. General Brown quoted in Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 293. The U.S. delegation at Contadora included Assistant Secretary of State William Rogers and U.S. Ambassador to Panama William Jorden. Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 299; ltr, DepSecDef to DepSecState, 24 Oct 1975; memo of understanding, signed by DepSecState, DepSecDef and SecArmy, 6 Nov 1975: both in folder Panama (Aug-Dec) 1975, box 77, Acc 330-78-0058, NARA. S. Morey Bell served as deputy negotiator from the State Department.

74. Memo, Dolvin for DepSecDef et al., 1 Dec 1975, subj: November 1975 Negotiating Round, Panama Canal Negotiations; “Talking Points for Ambassador Bunker’s Meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 5, 1976”: both in folder Panama 821 (Jan-Apr) 1976, box 80, Acc 330-79-0049, NARA. See also Jorden, *Panama Odyssey*, 299, 308–309.

75. Poole, *JCS and National Policy 1973–1976*, 275–276.