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10 January 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: White House Meeting on Panama, 10 January 1964

Present were:	The President
For State:	Messrs. Rusk, Ball, Mann, Martin, and Collins
For Defense:	Messrs. McNamara, Vance, and Ailes
For USIA:	Mr. Wilson
For the White House:	Messrs. Bundy, Dungan, Salinger, and Moyers
For CIA:	Messrs. McCone and Helms

1. The meeting opened at 0930 without the President who joined at 1015. The initial effort was to establish the facts which had caused the riots of the night before in Panama City and the Canal Zone. Mr. Mann briefed on the flag incident and the background of the flag controversy between the United States and Panama. Casualty figures up to that point were cited and agreed on at least as far as Americans were concerned (3 United States soldiers dead, 34 Americans injured). Mr. McCone pointed out that Panamanian Communists had taken advantage of the flag incident to kick off trouble of a kind which we had been predicting ever since last summer would occur the end of December or early in January.

[REDACTED]

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

(Mr. McCone repeated this briefing later when the President had joined the meeting.) The undersigned spoke of the Panamanian student-organized demonstration which was scheduled to begin at 1100 today, also of the problems which might arise depending upon where it was decided to bury the students killed in the rioting the night before. There then followed a general discussion of the tactics to be used in dealing with these problems in the OAS, the United Nations Security Council, with President Chiari, etc. Attention was given to the handling of the Senate and House leadership in connection with the problem.

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2. After the President took over the meeting, he was brought up to date on the situation in Panama and on the actions which the Secretary of State was proposing. After considerable discussion of these proposals, the following were decided upon:

A) The President would speak on the telephone with President Chiari, provided that Mr. Salinger was able to ascertain through President Chiari's Press Secretary that President Chiari would receive the telephone call.

B) Mr. Mann would head a delegation representing President Johnson to leave for Panama immediately, this group to include Messrs. Vance, Martin, and Dungan. [REDACTED]

C) The OAS Peace Committee would be encouraged to make an immediate investigation of the situation on the ground.

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D) Mr. Ball would get in immediate touch with the congressional leadership to brief them on developments.

E) The White House would issue a statement to the press announcing the Mann mission and appealing for an end to violence in Panama.

3. There was considerable attention paid to the history of difficulties with Panama over the Canal Zone. Touched on were the legal problems, financial considerations, and the traditional attitudes of the "Zonies" who have always had strong support from certain congressional committees.

[REDACTED]
Richard Helms
Deputy Director for Plans

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

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