

EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Panama, Republic of Panama

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July 12, 1972

Robert A. Hurwitch, Esquire  
Deputy Assistant Secretary, ARA  
Department of State  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Bob:

Late Tuesday, July 11, my Press Officer called to inform me that the Public Affairs Officer for the Canal Company, Mr. Baldwin, had been invited by Mr. Calvo, the man assigned by the GOP to "guide" the Panamanian press, to go on a trip with foreign press correspondents to the interior of Panama. We had no information on whom the foreign correspondents might be or even if they were correspondents. General Torrijos was taking the correspondents on one of his campaign trips to show them what he is doing in Panama. I have put out instructions that no member of the Embassy staff is to comment to Panamanians on the political campaign in Panama or do anything that could lead to the charge that we are meddling in Panama's internal affairs. Moreover, in this particular case, it is outside Mr. Baldwin's responsibilities to participate in political trips in Panama, or engage in such press and information activities. The political responsibility resides, of course, in the Embassy, and press responsibility in Panama is up to USIS. Finally, Calvo has a long record of being an opportunist and I am suspicious of his motives.

Governor Parker called to object that I would not let Mr. Baldwin accompany General Torrijos. He said that Zone authorities had been cut out of participation in public activities in Panama and this was an opening he wanted to take advantage of. (Colonel McGinnis, the Chief of Engineering for the Canal Company and recently named Lt. Governor, represented the Governor at the inauguration of the construction of Panama's new water plant last Friday.) I said that I could not agree to let a U.S.

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official participate in a campaign trip with Torrijos. I did not know who the correspondents might be. He said that he wanted to be sure I was denying his request because he planned to report it to Washington. I said that I could not have U.S. officials involved in the political campaign in Panama and that he could report my decision if he liked.

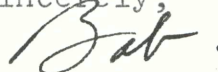
You may hear from Barney Koren. It is beyond me why Governor Parker wants his information officer to go on a campaign trip with Torrijos accompanied by foreign correspondents. Baldwin and his family have been in Panama since construction days and been active in Panamanian political life. He is married to a member of a prominent Panamanian family so politics in Panama is of particular interest to him.

The strong desire of U.S. officials in the Canal Zone to have a role in Panamanian public life and politics is natural and human. But a great deal of the problem stems from a difference in perception of our respective responsibilities. I am guided by the President's letter to me of December 9, 1969. The Canal Zone Government and company are autonomous government agencies in Panama. I do not intrude into their internal operations and concern myself only with their external affect on Panama as I am instructed to do by the President in the NSC directive on the PRCs. Canal Zone Governor have historically considered themselves independent. Traditionally they wrote the agreements and the Ambassador formalized what they decided. They dealt directly with Panamanian officials on all matters of any interest to them and for that purpose maintained close associations with Panamanian officials beginning with the President.

I have written you about the problem before. My most unpleasant task here is trying to persuade our friends in the Canal Zone to adopt a low profile and let me conduct relations with Panama.

With warmest regards,

Sincerely,



Robert M. Sayre  
Ambassador

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