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JOHN WAYNE

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Beverly Hills, California 90212
October 12, 1977

SC

President Jimmy Carter
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

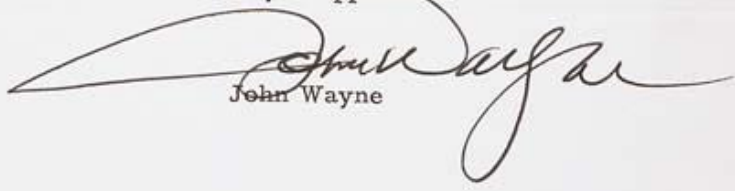
Enclosed is one American's review of the Panama Canal situation.

I appreciate the White House invitation to a briefing; but because of the provocative press, I thought it would be better to do it this way instead of a lot of publicity that I was wearing somebody else's collar.

As you can see by the enclosure, I have sent one to every Senator as well as to the people who have written me hysterical letters.

Sincerely,

Loyal Opposition



John Wayne

JW/ps

Enclosures

JOHN WAYNE

STATEMENT REGARDING PANAMA CANAL TREATY

My interest in Panama goes back to the 40's. I have friends on both sides of their political spectrum. As a matter of fact, my first introduction to the Panamanian situation was in the 30's when Harmodio Arias was president. He was probably the best liked figure in all of South America and one of the very few presidents who has ever completed a term up to and since that time. His wife and his son Tito, then about 12 years old, visited me in California. Another son Tony was Godfather to one of my daughters. I am only going into these personal things to show you that I have had reasons to give attention to our relationships down there.

I have followed the Panamanian situation since the time the State Department insured us losing good relationships with Panama by changing their policy and charging extremely high prices for tuition for the children of several Panamanian families to go to Canal Zone schools. These families were continually involved in the leadership and administration in Panama. I think it would have been quite obvious with their children attending our schools that they would have our point of view. I wrote a letter to our Administration at that time to apprise them of this situation. Nothing was done.

You say that it is a blow to you to learn from the press that I favor the surrender of the Panama Canal. I certainly did not. I was appalled when General Eisenhower did just that and gave the sovereignty of the Canal away by allowing the Panamanian flag to fly there; but at that time, neither Congress, nor the press, nor the conservatives uttered any kind of cry. I did, but it was a voice in the wilderness.

In checking to find the reason for President Eisenhower's actions, I found out that although we had the rights to the ownership and jurisdiction of the Canal that Panama had not surrendered sovereignty of same. I also found out that the United States in the Arias-Roosevelt Treaty of 1936, ratified by our Congress in 1939, recognized the sovereignty of Panama in the Canal Zone as it was originally stated in the 1903 agreement.

Under negotiations during the Kennedy Administration, it was further agreed that any place within the civil area that the American flag flew, there must be a Panamanian flag raised.

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Statement Regarding Panama Canal Treaty

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Our people in the Zone tried to avoid this by removing flag poles. This started irrational actions by both sides. During those student riots which took place in 1964, our then president, Lyndon B. Johnson told the world that there would be a gradual return of the Canal to Panamanian possession. There were still no outcries from the people who are now complaining, but the above acts plus common decency to the dignity of Panama demanded a re-evaluation of our Treaty.

Now, let's take the Treaty for what it is. We do not give up one active military installation for the next quarter of a century. We do transfer to Panama in the civil Canal area such governmental activities as police and fire protection, civil administration, post offices, courts, customs, garbage collection, and maintenance of certain areas which are not necessary to manage the Canal. The Canal will continue to be run by an American agency. The Board of Directors of that entity will be comprised of nine members--five members of the Board, American--and four Panamanians who will be selected by the United States from a list proposed by Panama. This Board of Directors will not have any authority on our military bases which we will have there for a quarter of a century to insure this Treaty.

The Treaty insures all American citizens working in the Canal their continuing jobs to retirement and the continued uses of their rented homes at the present rate which averages around \$150 per month including all their utilities, garbage collection, sewerage, upkeep of the grounds and maintenance including gardening lawns and painting of buildings. This is guaranteed to each until retirement or completion of their contracts.

When the Canal Company transfers these responsibilities to Panama, they will also transfer \$10,000,000 a year of the toll charges to take care of them. I doubt if this will cover the costs. So does our government. Therefore, this United States Canal Company Agency which will still be running the Canal for the next 20 years will be instructed to raise the toll charges 30 cents per ton or about 1/100 of a cent and a half per pound to be given to Panama to cover such contingencies as inflation and to insure the above responsibilities plus rental for the 120,000 acres which these United States will continue to hold for its military installations and also the use of a 4,000 square kilometer water shed as a water reservoir to take care of our civil and military needs in the area. This added toll charge could amount to \$40,000,000 in the years to come; but not one cent of it will come out of our pockets.

None of this will cost the American taxpayer one cent. We will not be required to pay \$1 to Panama when this Treaty is put into effect.

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I explained to the press when I was interrogated that I am only one of 200,000,000 private citizens of the United States and that I am not presuming to establish our foreign policy. I suggested that perhaps the facts as I have presented them to you might be put in a more enlightening manner to our citizens.

Regarding Communism, quite obviously, there are some Communists in General Torrijos' administration as there have been and probably still are in ours. Back in the days of McCarthy, it was proven that a great number of people in our government were Communists. For his high-handed manner with the use of the Committee, he was censored; but the truth of his findings were never questioned.

There will always be accusations and counter-accusations in this area. General Torrijos has never followed the Marxist line. Even in his speech when he visited Cuba, he stated that Castro had insured schooling and developed a system of feeding his people but at a high social cost. Because of this he stated that what was aspirin for Cuba was not necessarily the right medicine for Panama which is putting it about as plainly as possible when you are visiting in a foreign country that you are not agreeing with their methods.

Such rumors and accusations mushroom to a degree that it is hard for anyone to defend themselves. General Torrijos' government has not followed the Marxist line. He does have his Escobar Bethancourt as we have our Andrew Young, neither of whom were elected by either populus. A quarter of a century from now--when and if this agreement is carried out to the letter of the law--and we decide that it is proper to remove military installations, Escobar Bethancourt will be an old and forgotten character; and Young will probably be relegated to some posh job in our civil service from which he cannot be fired or taken care of by some liberal foundation as was Hiss.

I hope that the pragmatic view that I have of this situation is understandable. I have carefully studied the Treaty, and I support it based on my belief that America looks always to the future and that our people have demonstrated qualities of justice and reason for 200 years. That attitude has made our country a great Nation. The new Treaty modernizes an outmoded relation with a friendly and hospitable country. It also solves an international question with our other Latin American neighbors, and finally the Treaty protects and legitimates fundamental interests and desires of our Country.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Wayne". Below the signature, the date "1/9/77" is written in a similar cursive style.